

BAHRAIN

Issued by the "Bahrain Freedom Movement" to promote human and constitutional rights

The struggle continues to liberate Bahrain from tribalism

The ongoing strife in Bahrain is gradually shaping up the political landscape of the country. The lack of any political reform by the khalifi regime, despite the eruption of the largest ever political uprisings in the history of the country has convinced large sections of the people that it is impossible to accept the khalifi regime, grant it legitimacy or accept its dictatorship. It is now a deeply-rooted conviction that the only way forward is to achieve regime change. This is enforced by several facts. The first is the inability of the khalifi hereditary dictatorship to adapt to modern day trends of popular governance. The second is the regime's insistence on imposing its will on the people by force, coercion or subjugation. The third is the people's total rejection of the khalifi tribal rule especially after the recent experiences following the 14th February Revolution in 2011, when the regime committed heinous crimes against the people and the country. The fourth is the incompatibility of the khalifi regional policies with the wishes and aspirations of the natives especially in regards to the Gulf Security, the compromise on the country's sovereignty and the normalisation of relations with the occupiers of Palestine.

It is thus not surprising that the situation in Bahrain has never stabilised. This is evident from several facts. The first is the continuing political strife including the almost daily demonstrations and protests. The second is the regime's continuing attack on civil liberties and the imposition of strict rules on public gatherings and demonstrations. The third is the absence of public liberties especially that of freedom of speech and freedom of political choice. The third is the continuing spate of arrests and detentions. Rarely a week passes without arrests among the activists or those taking part in public protests. The fourth is the total lack of trust between the natives and the khalifi tribal rule. Both have serious suspicions of the other and both have deep resentment towards the other. Martial law may have been shelved under international and domestic pressures, but the mentality of the ruling elite is based on the need to adopt military-style regime that does not allow for public freedoms and which resorts to violence to stay in power.

There are limited choices available to the people. They are constantly made aware of the enormous sacrifices they had made in the past half century, i.e. since "independence" in 1971 when the British forces withdrew from the country. The post-colonial era has been marred by escalating regime's cruelty and lack of passion. The people had hoped that they would "live the days that they had not lived yet" and that democracy would replace authoritarianism, but that has not happened. The people are also aware of their recent history and the commitments given to them to achieve a real democratic transformation after 150 years of the British rule. That has not materialised and is unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. The natives feel they have to continue the struggle to achieve this transformation in order to bring the country's political system to acceptable international standards of democracy and representation. They remain committed to achieving this sooner or later. They have shown themselves to be resilient and responsible throughout the black era imposed by the khalifi dictators. Despite the enormous pressures by the regime Bahrainis have persevered and jumped over the obstacles and all kinds of impediments. They are going in one direction: forward to achieve freedom and political change.

The ruling dictators have adopted several approaches in its attempts to stop the people's march to democracy. The clearest of these is repression. This is evident in everyday life in the country. The prisons remain home to hundreds of activists and leaders, some of whom are in their seventies. Arrests and detentions never ceased at any time since 1971 when the British withdrew from the country and the region. The extent of human rights violations is unfathomable with multitude of international bodies listing Bahrain among the worst abusers. Under domestic and international pressures the khalifis resort to releasing some prisoners only to go back to their habit of human rights violations, arrests and abuses. Another method of subduing the people is to present pseudo democracy that has repeatedly failed to address the people's issues and concerns. These bodies have boldened the people to

forge ahead with more activism, resistance and determination. The regime's parliament has proven to be disastrous with no credibility among the citizens and no respect even from the allies of the regime. A third means of deception is the media that has been totally dominated by the agenda of the regime. The limited media outlets have been drastically marginalised and become totally ineffective. With the advent of the social media the people have found their own alternative media that has filled the vacuum and continues to embarrass the regime and its agents.

So, what is next on the regime's agenda? Having exhausted all means of repression and used all available lifelines including the foreign assistance and protection, it is clear that the people are gaining the upper hand in the struggle to achieve democracy. The Western supporters of the regime have become perplexed by the inherent weakness of the khalifi household. The dictator is running the country as his own family enterprise with his sons grabbing the national wealth and functioning as playboys. The eldest son who was imposed on the people as the prime minister has been discredited by those who had supported him in the past and promoted him as "Man of reform". He has failed to attract the respect or acceptance of the people. His economic policies are not working and the country's debts are mounting. They have surpassed the acceptable level of borrowing that should not climb above 100 percent of the GDP. It is now estimated around 130 percent. That is among the highest in the world and international monetary institutions are likely to impose restrictions on further borrowing. The income from the domestic oil production is dwindling as the processing capacity of the country's only refinery shrinks due to bad maintenance and lack of extra funding for expansion and further investment.

The khalifi regime has fallen victim of its own policies, especially the alienation of the natives through repression, marginalisation and demographic change. It is thus bound to fail. People must work hard to formulate an alternative regime that observes justice, freedom and independence.

Post-Release Restrictions: Systematic Violations Against Bahraini Activists

Despite the release of several activists and human rights defenders in Bahrain, particularly under the royal pardon issued in April 2024, their suffering has not ended. Instead, it has entered a new phase of repression.

In its new report, "Post-Release Restrictions", Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) sheds light on how Bahraini authorities continue to target released activists and human rights defenders—keeping them under surveillance, stripping them of basic rights, and turning their release into little more than a shift from prison to open-air confinement.

Husain Abdulla, Executive Director of ADHRB: "This isn't reintegration – it's retaliation, just dressed up to look nice for the international community. The reality is that stripping activists of their rights post-release isn't reform. It's just punishment by another name."

The report documents the stories of four individuals who illustrate an ongoing pattern of post-release abuse. These former prisoners are still being denied their right to employment, housing, and movement. They face repeated interrogations and veiled threats, pushing them toward silence and self-censorship.

Release Does Not Mean Freedom

The documented cases show that the release of activists in Bahrain has not been accompanied by genuine steps toward transitional justice. Instead of reintegration, they face ongoing legal, social, and economic hurdles, denied essential documents such as the "Good Conduct Certificate," which is required for employment and access to public services.

Naji Fateel, a human rights defender released from prison after spending more than 11 years in arbitrary detention, was dismissed

from his job following political pressure. Since then, he has not been able to secure a new job because authorities have refused to issue him a Good Conduct Certificate. As a result, he has fallen into debt and has been repeatedly summoned for questioning without ever being formally charged. Moreover, his son was later arrested in what appears to be an act of retaliation.

Mohamed AlSankis, a former employee at the Ministry of Works, was also imprisoned for 11 years and has since been denied his right to return to work. Despite multiple protests and official appeals, he has not been reinstated to his previous position. He has also faced security summonses simply for peacefully demanding to be allowed back into his job.

Ali AlHajee, a human rights defender released after more than a decade behind bars, has been re-arrested several times since his release. He was charged with "threatening a public employee" simply for requesting the removal of his travel ban and continues to face harsh legal restrictions, including house arrest.

Activist Najah Yusuf, who was previously imprisoned over social media posts, has not been reinstated to her job and continues to face repeated security summonses. The reprisals have extended to her family as well, as her son has been subjected to electronic monitoring for more than three years, reflecting a broader policy of collective punishment.

Violations of Constitutional and International Obligations

The report finds that denying activists their rights to employment, housing, and freedom of movement, alongside the imposition of unlawful security restrictions, amounts to clear violations of both the Bah-

raini Constitution and international human rights standards. These actions breach Bahrain's commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The report further highlights that repeated summonses and threats are being used not just to harass those who have been released, but also to foster a climate of fear and prohibit activists from continuing their peaceful human rights work.

Call for Accountability and Reform

ADHRB urges the Bahraini government to immediately end its retaliatory practices against released activists and fully restore their rights, including:

Lifting all administrative and security restrictions imposed on activists following their release.

Issuing Good Conduct Certificates to all released individuals without imposing unreasonable conditions.

Reinstating those who were arbitrarily dismissed from their jobs, or providing them with fair compensation.

Granting released activists their long-denied housing and financial support.

Investigating all reported violations and holding those responsible accountable.

Ending unlawful summonses and arrests, and guaranteeing the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

ADHRB also calls on the international community, particularly the UN Human Rights Council and relevant UN bodies, to pressure the Bahraini government to end these practices and uphold its international human rights obligations.

Tension rises as more Bahrainis detained, Saudi women travel ban

Political arrests have continued unabated in Bahrain. Yesterday (Tuesday 21st May) three young people from Bilad Al Qadeem and Al Musalla towns were detained. They had been summoned by the CID officers for interrogation. The three: Nasrallah Jaffar, Sayed Hashim Ra'id (both from Bilad Al Qadeem town) and Yahya Abdul Hassan (from Musalla town) were incarcerated without charge or trial.

The eighth anniversary of the "Battle of sacrifice" in Bahrain was marked with demonstrations and protests. On 17th May 2017 the forces of the Khalifa regime opened fire on a group of native Bahrainis around the house of the most prominent religious figure, Sheikh Isa Qassim, in Duraz, killing six people. It was a turning point in the struggle of the Bahraini people who have been calling for a modern democratic transformation in the country. Those taking part in the anniversary raised banners insisting on the people's demands and the release of political prisoners. They ex-

hibited a spirit of defiance, steadfastness and seriousness against the hereditary dictatorship.

Political prisoner, Mohammed Abdul Razzaq Salman has started a hunger strike in protest at the persecution he has suffered since his detention almost one year ago. He has not been charged, tried or told the grounds of his detention. His health has been deteriorating for some time.

The health of political prisoner Hassan Abdul Karim has deteriorated in recent weeks. He is held at the Dry Dock prison and has been denied proper medical care. He suffers from lung fibrosis and has been ignored for ten months. He returned from exile only to find himself persecuted behind bars. He said that the prison environment in addition to the lack of medical care and proper medication contributed to the deterioration of his health. He said he was taken to the hospital once and had X-rays, but not further action was taken, thus his health deteriorated further. Last year, Has-

san returned to Bahrain from exile.

On Monday 19th May the trial of five political prisoners from Samaheej town was adjourned, once again, this time for one week. Abdulla Yousuf Al Mo'athen, Hassan Masood, Ali Yousuf Al Habib, Ahmed Abdul Latif and Ali Reda Mashakheel were detained last September and falsely accused of baseless crimes.

From his prison cell, senior political leader, Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain issued a statement urging people to show solidarity with the political prisoners. He said many of them are sick and suffering various illnesses. They deserve your support and care.

On Monday 19th May the people of Jidhafs town staged a protest calling for the release of the political prisoners. On Sunday 18th May the people of El-Ekr town protested in solidarity with the political prisoners. They called for their immediate and unconditional release.

Bahraini political activists detained, Trump's Saudi visit scrutinised

The kangaroo courts of Bahrain's regime have extended the unlawful detention of five native Bahrainis. Yesterday, their imprisonment was extended 30 more days. Hussain Al Qaidoom (from Sqayah town), Abdulla Hussain Al Mawt (from Sanabis), Hussain Ali Ahmed (Sanabis), Salman Abdul Razzaq (Maqaba) and Mohammed Abdul Razzaq (Maqaba) had been arrested on 17th January from a street in Sanabis town.

On Monday 12th May, regime's courts adjourned the trial of five native Bahraini political prisoners (from Samaheej town) for one more week. Abdulla Hassan Al Mo'athen, Hassan Masood, Ali Yousuf Al Habib, Ahmed Abdul Latif and Ali Redha Mashakheel were arrested on 29th March.

On Wednesday 7th May, regime's court adjourned the trial of two under-aged political prisoners for two more weeks. Ahmed Faisal Mansoor and Abbas Mahmood Al Hbaishi from Daih town were arrested on 29th March. The two are part of a group of six children unlawfully detained for their peaceful expression of opinion.

The Bahraini people are adamant on retaining their right to protest despite the regime's repression and harsh treatment. When the people of Abu Saiba planned their protest in support of Gaza, the regime deployed large number of forces on 10th May to stop them.

On 12th May, twenty-seven international NGOs signed an open letter to the United Nations Human Rights Council calling for the release of the senior figures of the opposition and human rights activists. It said: Ahead of the 59th session of the Human Rights Council (16 June – 11 July 2025), we are writing to you and your delegation regarding the continued detention of leading human rights defenders, bloggers, journalists, opposition and religious activists,

and death row inmates who are at imminent risk of execution in Bahrain. The letter presented three demands: 1- to urge Bahrain's regime to include human rights defenders, leading opposition activists, and all those detained solely for exercising their human rights or for their political beliefs in the upcoming royal pardons. 2- Issue a statement calling on Bahrain to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Hassan Mushaima, Sheikh Mohamed Habib Al-Muqdad and Sheikh Ali Salman and 3- Cease persecuting activists and critics and Address these concerns with the special rapporteurs and independent experts for freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, summary executions, health, and independence of judges and lawyers.

Bahrainis have mourned a young man who left this world in his exile in Iraq yesterday. Ali Abdul Jalil Fateel, 23 from Bani Jamra town met his fate after years of suffering, away from his home. He fled the country in 2018 when two life sentences were imposed on him for his peaceful activism. He did not suffer serious illnesses before, but fell into a coma four days before his death.

The khalifi regime is now embroiled in its own fallacies and criminal policies. It is humiliated daily as it is forced to release native Bahrainis who want its downfall. The Committee for Prisoners Affairs is now collecting signatures for the release of more than 400 political prisoners from khalifi torture cells. President Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia has been marred with controversy and disgust. He has re-embraced the Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), who was castigated worldwide as a callous murderer after the fiasco of the horrific dismemberment of Jamal Khashoggi in November 2018 by his men. Now MBS is back in the fold,

people can all ignore executions carried out in Saudi since the start of 2025, particularly targeting the people of Qatif for protesting peacefully. The official Saudi Press Agency said at least 111 named individuals have been executed this year so far (as of 12 May). This is approximately 70% more than at the same stage in 2024.

Ahead of U.S. President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia on May 13, the Committee to Protect Journalists and 15 other human rights organizations condemned the kingdom's deteriorating press freedom, including journalists' arrests, travel bans, surveillance, and disinformation aimed at silencing the media. The groups called on Saudi authorities to release all detained journalists, lift arbitrary travel bans, and end legal and digital attacks. They also urged U.S. President Donald Trump's administration and the U.S. Congress to protect U.S.-based journalists from Saudi transnational repression and spyware.

Nourah al-Qahtani, a mother of five, has been held in solitary confinement since February, with her health rapidly deteriorating. She is Professor of Modern Literature and Criticism at King Saud University (KSU), specialising in modern Saudi literature. She was arrested in 2021 on charges related to alleged social media usage that criticised aspects of Saudi society. Her initial sentence of thirteen years imprisonment was appealed by the prosecution and she was re-sentenced in 2022 to 45 years imprisonment. This change to her sentencing, based on revised charges, resulted in many human rights organisations, such as International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Amnesty International, International Service for Human Rights and CIVICUS requesting her release.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
14th May 2025

Pictures of the prisoners lined the roads of the town as well as slogans calling for political freedom and rights. This activity is one of many organised by the Committee of the Bahraini Prisoners which calls for the 463 political detainees to be set free from the khalifi torture cells.

On Friday 16th several demonstrations were held in various parts of the country. In Karranah town the protesters called for the prisoners release. Also, the people of Aali town took part in a similar protest. In Karbabad town, the participants in a peaceful protest on Friday raised the pictures of some political prisoners highlighting their predicament. In Bilad Al Qadeem town a rally was held to call for the released of the political prisoners. Banners and pictures were raised along the streets of the town calling for an immediate end to arbitrary detention. A similar activity was held at Bani Jamra town.

This week a cross-party group of 10 UK parliamentarians has written to Foreign Secretary David Lammy urging the UK government to use all available diplomatic tools to address the cases of Saudi sisters Manahel and Maryam al-Otaibi, along with other women facing arbitrary imprisonment and travel bans in Saudi Arabia. The letter presents the sisters' cases as emblematic of the contradictions in the official narrative of women's empower-

ment in Saudi Arabia. Their plight highlights the continuing repression of women's rights advocates in the country despite a number of recent reforms. The signatories called on the UK government, as a close ally of Saudi Arabia, to use its diplomatic leverage to press for Manahel's immediate release, the lifting of Maryam's travel ban, and the release of other women detained or facing similar restrictions for exercising their basic freedoms.



Human rights activists have called for the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees from Saudi jails and lift all imposed restrictions on them. This followed the release of medical student Sara al-Jaar who had been sentenced to 27 years in prison and a travel ban of the same length for exercising her right to free speech. While her release has been welcomed, she should not have been detained in the first place.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21st May 2025

Bahrain: Joint letter on human rights situation to member and observer states of the UNHRC

Re: Upcoming 59th Session of the Human Rights Council and Eid al-Adha
12 May 2025

Ahead of the 59th session of the Human Rights Council (16 June – 11 July 2025), we are writing to you and your delegation regarding the continued detention of leading human rights defenders, bloggers, journalists, opposition and religious activists, and death row inmates who are at imminent risk of execution in Bahrain.

As Eid al-Adha approaches on 6 June 2025, when Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa is expected to issue further royal pardons, we strongly believe that your engagement will be critical in securing the release of those who remain arbitrarily detained in Bahrain.

The latest royal pardons were issued by Bahrain's King for a total of 1,526 inmates on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr (marking the end of Ramadan) on 27 March 2025 and to mark Bahrain National Day on 15 December 2024. However, no political prisoners or human rights defenders were released through these pardons and were instead offered only conditional releases through the open prisons program, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD).

We have previously raised concerns about human rights defenders and leading opposition and political activists serving unjust life imprisonment sentences in Bahrain, including:

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, 64, is an award-winning human rights defender, prisoner of conscience and Bahraini-Danish national who has been arbitrarily detained since 2011. On 9 April 2025, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor stated that "he has been tortured, he has been stigmatised, and he has been cut off from his family" and urged the Danish Prime Minister to call for Al-Khawaja's release with her Bahraini counterpart directly.

Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, 63, is an award-winning human rights defender, blogger, and respected academic, arbitrarily detained since 2011. He is now approaching four years since he began a solid-food hunger strike after authorities confiscated his research manuscripts, sustaining himself only on multivitamin liquid supplements, tea with milk and sugar, water, and salts.

Hassan Mushaima, 77, is a Bahraini opposition leader and Bahrain's oldest political prisoner, arbitrarily detained since 2011. He and Dr. Al-Singace have been held in prolonged solitary confinement since 2021 at a medical centre in Bahrain, where they continue to be denied adequate medical care, sunlight and ventilation.

Sheikh Mohamed Habib Al-Muqdad, 62, is a dual Swedish-Bahraini national and a religious figure and social activist in Bahrain. Similar to Al-Khawaja, Al-Singace and Mushaima, he was arbitrarily and violently arrested, forced

bly disappeared and subjected to severe physical, sexual, and psychological torture for his prominent role in the 2011 uprising.

Sheikh Ali Salman, 60, is the leader of the now-dissolved opposition political party, Al-Wefaq, arbitrarily detained since 2014 and convicted based on speeches he delivered against parliamentary elections that his party boycotted. In 2018, he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment on politically motivated charges related to espionage, which Amnesty International called "a travesty of justice."

Additionally, twenty-six individuals in Bahrain remain on death row at risk of imminent execution, eleven of whom were convicted following manifestly unfair trials that relied solely or primarily on confessions allegedly extracted under torture. This includes Mohammed Ramadan and Hussain Moosa, who have been arbitrarily detained for over a decade. On 12 August 2024, three UN human rights experts highlighted concerns about the conditions of detention in Jau Prison and Bahrain's lack of adherence to standards of humane and dignified treatment.

The death of a political prisoner in custody on 5 December 2024, which marked the second death in 2024 under similar circumstances, led to renewed concerns about Bahrain's failure to provide emergency care and first aid in Jau Prison. Authorities then reportedly used excessive force and collective punishment against hundreds of political prisoners to violently suppress a strike that had been ongoing for nearly eight months, according to BIRD. There are currently an estimated 322 political prisoners still imprisoned in Bahrain, with an additional 40 prisoners part of the open prisons, according to BIRD.

We are alarmed by the continued harassment of Bahraini human rights defenders — including former political prisoners Naji Fateel and Ali AlHajee — and echo the UN Special Rapporteur's concerns regarding ongoing reprisals against Fateel on 17 February 2025 and AlHajee's brief detention on 3 March 2025.

In light of the above, we respectfully urge you and your delegation to:

1. Ahead of Eid al-Adha (6 June 2025), directly engage with Bahrain's leadership and mission in Geneva in your national capacity and jointly, and urge them to include human rights defenders, leading opposition activ-

ists, and all those detained solely for exercising their human rights or for their political beliefs in the upcoming royal pardons.

2. Issue a statement at the upcoming United Nations Human Rights Council session publicly calling on Bahrain to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Hassan Mushaima, Sheikh Mohamed Habib Al-Muqdad and Sheikh Ali Salman and cease persecuting activists and critics. We also urge you to call on Bahrain to release death row inmates Mohamed Ramadan and Hussain Moosa, commute all outstanding death sentences, and establish an official moratorium on executions.

3. Address these concerns with the special rapporteurs and independent expert for freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, summary executions, health, and independence of judges and lawyers.

With assurances of our highest consideration.

Sincerely,

Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)

ALQST for Human Rights

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)

Amnesty International

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)

CIVICUS

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

DAWN

FairSquare

Front Line Defenders

Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)

Human Rights First

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement

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International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

MENA Rights Group

PEN America

Rafto Foundation for Human Rights

REDRESS

Rights Realization Centre
Salam for Democracy and Human Rights
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World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

