

# A CRIME OUTSIDE COVERAGE

Report monitoring grave violations in suppressing Al Duraz peaceful assembly in Bahrain



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# CONTENTS

|  |    |  |
|--|----|--|
|  | 5  | <b>REPORT SUMMARY</b>  |
|  | 11 | <b>PREFACE</b>   |
|  | 12 | <b>METHODOLOGY</b>   |
| Profile of Sheikh Isa Qassim<br>Moderation and Tolerance in<br>Sheikh Isa Qassim's Actions   | 13 | <b>PART ONE</b><br>WHY SHEIKH ISA QASSIM?                        |
| Calls before the Trial<br>Prosecuting Sheikh Isa Qassim<br>Reasons behind the Verdict<br>Violations against Laws<br>The Authority's Terminology and Inciting Hatred<br>Hearings of Sheikh Qassim's Trials<br>Sheikh Qassim's Last Hearing<br>International Condemnations<br>Public Rejection | 18 | <b>PART TWO</b><br>THE ARBITRARY SANCTION                        |
| The Ongoing Peaceful Sit-in Protest<br>Governmental Siege on Duraz<br>The Right to Circulate Information Internet Blackout<br>Media and Inciting Sectarian Hatred<br>Sentencing Shiites Clerics<br>Pending Friday Prayer   | 32 | <b>PART THREE</b><br>A YEAR OF PEACEFULLY<br>ASSEMBLING IN DURAZ |

A Change in American Policies and  
the Deterioration of the Human  
Rights Situation in Bahrain  
Arms Sale

44

#### **PART FOUR**

THE AMERICAN-BAHRAINI  
RELATIONS AND THEIR  
IMPACT ON THE HUMAN  
RIGHTS SITUATION

Raid on Duraz  
Unknown Fate of Sheikh Qassim  
Extrajudicial killings  
Biography of the victims  
Untruthful Allegations  
In their eyes  
Testimony of the first witness  
Testimony of the second witness

48

#### **PART FIVE**

RAID ON DURAZ

International Attitudes  
The Victims  
Suspensions on their Executions  
The Victims' Families Attitudes  
The Second Crime  
Violations Committed  
Detention Campaign  
Unknown Fate of Sheikh Qassim  
Summoning up the Activists  
The Popular Rage

65

#### **PART SIX**

THE AFTERMATH OF USING  
EXCESSIVE FORCE TO END  
THE DURAZ PEACEFUL SIT-IN

Results and Recommendations

79

#### **PART SEVEN**

RESULTS AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS



## REPORT SUMMARY

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The four Bahraini human rights organisations, Salam Organization for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM), Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR) and Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR), call for an urgent investigation on the recent raid on the peaceful sit-in in Duraz village, west of Manama the capital city, in solidarity with Sheikh Isa Qassim, whose nationality has been arbitrary revoked in June 2016.

The organisations support the call of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to open an independent investigation by an independent commission, and to hold those involved accountable.

The organisations call for an independent and transparent investigation regarding the allegations of using excessive force during the raid on (May 23, 2017), which resulted in the death of five, more than 90 injured, and 326 detainees, after the security forces suppressed the peaceful demonstrators.

Furthermore, the organisations condemn the security option implemented by the government of Bahrain against its peaceful

citizens, who exercise their due right to express their opinion; rejecting the revocation of Sheikh Isa Qassim's citizenship, his unfair trial, and the confiscation of the religious rights of the Shiite citizens in Bahrain.

The organisations expressed deep regret over the superiority of the logic of force and sectarian oppression, over the logic of dialogue and listening to the demands of the protesters. They slam the raid, which was launched by the Ministry of Interior, after it announced on Twitter its security operation in the village of Duraz to remove **“legal irregularities”**, referring to the peaceful sit-in, as it claimed.

Witnesses and released detainees were interviewed and confirmed that the security forces committed flagrant human rights violations, most notably extrajudicial killings, excessive force against peaceful demonstrators, torture, Internet blackout and damaging the residents' properties.

The report includes the testimonies of two witnesses who were interviewed among others, most of whom are residents of Duraz. Due to security reasons, the report does not mention their names and other personal information, for fear of being targeted by the security authorities.

Based on the testimonies and other documented information, the four human rights organisations conclude that the eyewitnesses' testimonies are consistent, and very similar to the live testimonies documented by other Bahraini human rights organisations.

These organisations emphasise that the testimonies reveal that the choice of security, the infringement against public freedoms and the policy of torture is a systematic plan implemented by the government.

Moreover, the organisations point that the raid on Duraz was preceded by a campaign of **‘official incitement to hatred’** in the media, newspapers and social media sites, funded and subsidized by the government, in violation of article 20 (2) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain by Law No. 56 of 2006, which rejects **“any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.”**

At the date of writing this report, the government of Bahrain did not investigate on the raid on Duraz, which is a clear violation of its obligations, in particular, its commitment to implement the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Besides, the organisations confirm that the raid on Duraz is one of a series of human rights violations, committed by the security authorities against the residents, since June 2016, including violations on the religious freedom, obstruction of the right to freedom of movement, internet blackout, repression of protesters, excessive use of internationally prohibited weapons and tear-gas bombs, etc. They add that the village of Duraz is still sieged for illegal reasons, to date.

The organisations expect the escalation of the human rights crisis in Bahrain. They express concern over the situation of double standards measures, lack of accountability, impunity, undermining the political activism, exerting pressure on human rights activism, and giving comprehensive power to these security authorities to prosecute and torture citizens, for merely exercising their fundamental rights; guaranteed by the constitution, and international treaties ratified by Bahrain.

At the end of their report, the organisations conclude that they are deeply worried on the lives of thousands of Bahraini citizens, who are today victims of the security option, extrajudicial killings in the village of Duraz, and the rest of the villages of Bahrain.

These organisations urge the government of Bahrain to halt the restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, to allow peaceful protesters to exercise their rights without fear of reprisal, and to reinstate the citizenship of Sheikh Isa Qassim.

**Further, they call on the international community, represented by international human rights organisations and the allies of Bahrain, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, to urgently exercise their active role to,**

- 1. Break the security siege on the village of Duraz, and end the house arrest imposed on Ayatollah Qassim,**
- 2. Open a transparent and independent investigation, in which independent civil society organisations (CSOs) are participated, to hold accountable those involved in the killing of five peaceful protesters, and to compensate the victims,**
- 3. End the violation against public freedoms, and putting an end to the human rights violations taking place in the village of Duraz,**



- 4. End the excessive use of force while dealing with peaceful demonstrators,**
- 5. Stop the prosecution of the participants in the Duraz peaceful assembly.**
- 6. Find a serious solution to deal with the human rights crisis by implementing the recommendations of the Independent Commission of Inquiry and the recommendations of the UPR according to a timetable and under the supervision of the United Nations.**

The organisations find that in spite the international condemnations and the escalation of human rights abuses in Bahrain, the consecutive US administrations, UK governments and other European countries have turned a blind eye to the blatant repression against the peaceful popular Bahraini protests, amid the absence of freedom, accountability, justice and transparency .

Furthermore, influential States have facilitated the government's crackdown on the popular democratic and social aspirations of the masses, rendering citizens stateless, and condemning them to death. The organisations slam this silence, instead of denouncing the massive human rights violations in Bahrain.

The undersigned organisations conclude that, unarguably, the long series of tension in Bahrain happened amid the absence of accountability and the culture of intolerance. Impunity in Bahrain fortifies the figures involved in violations who have no sort, nor percentage of respect to civil rights.

## **SIGNED,**

- » **Salam Organization for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM),**
- » **Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR),**
- » **Bahrain Forum for Human Rights (BFHR),**
- » **Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR).**

## PREFACE

Angry protests continued to be staged in Bahrain calling for the release of the prisoners of conscience, in condemnation of the deterioration of human rights situation in the state, and the continuous attacks by the security forces against peaceful protesters.

On Tuesday (May 23, 2017), the Bahraini security forces, used excessive force against the peaceful protest in solidarity with the Shiite authority in Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Qassim, whose nationality has been revoked, since June 2016, as a part of the ongoing crackdown on Duraz village, west of Manama the capital city, which had been under an entire siege since June 2016. The raid led to the death of five protestors, while dozens injured, and 286 arrested.

The Human Rights organisations participating in this report seek to shed light on the systematic sectarian campaign led by the Bahraini government, through tightening the grip on citizens in general and the Duraz residents in particular, and targeting the religious leader of the Shia. The report aims at urging the international community and human rights organisations and bodies to take effective and clear measures in Bahrain, and to put an end to the scenario of sectarian persecution practiced against Shiites at all levels in Bahrain.

**The report also aims at presenting a series of events from the moment of revoking Sheikh Isa Qassim's citizenship on June 19, 2016, and passing by other critical accidents.**



## METHODOLOGY

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**This report provides an analysis and evaluation of the recent raids on Duraz village, which is the birthplace and residence of Sheikh Isa Qassim. It has been prepared based on the study, analysis and fact-finding of the documents and reports issued by various international and local institutions, human rights organizations, media, and prominent newspapers, in addition to social media posts by Bahraini activists and human rights defenders, and the presentation of the texts of the treaties and agreements of the human rights law and the human rights international law documented by photos and videos.**

## Part One

### WHY SHEIKH ISA QASSIM?



Peaceful  
methods have  
been our choice  
since the first  
day."

## PROFILE OF SHEIKH ISA QASSIM

Sheikh Qassim is a Bahraini citizen, one of the most prominent Shiite religious scholars in Bahrain, privileged by the religious rank of Ayatollah, according to the Hawza studies of Shiite scholars. He is a Faqih (Islamic jurist) and a Mujtahid (Islamic scholar who is qualified to perform independent reasoning), and he is highly esteemed in Bahrain and the Islamic world.

He was one of 21 elected members of the Bahraini Constituent Assembly, which, in 1972, drafted Bahrain's first constitution after the independence. He was a member of the first Parliament elected in 1973, and he won the most votes. After the dissolution of the Parliament in 1975, he directed his energies to religious affairs as a religious scholar.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Sheikh Isa Qassim traveled to Qum, in Iran, to continue his religious studies, and returned on (March 8, 2001) after the beginning of the period of political openness in the country. Since then, Sheikh Qassim has followed public affairs and the demand for political reform in the country, as he strongly believes that reform is the best mean for enhancing the security of Bahrain and meeting the aspirations and the welfare of all Bahrainis, regardless their background or belief.

## MODERATION AND TOLERANCE IN SHEIKH ISA QASSIM'S ACTIONS

Sheikh Qassim is a moderate figure who has worked to prevent slipping into violence in the country, and has opposed extremism policies and sectarian incitement. His guidance has preserved the peacefulness of the continuous popular uprising.

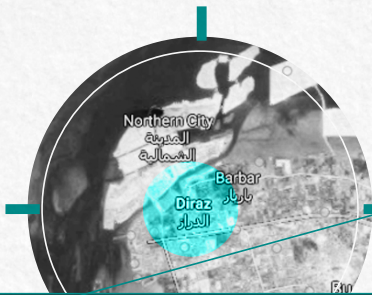
Since his return to Bahrain in 2001, up to June 2016, he used to preach in Duraz at the largest Shiites mosque in the country, Imam Sadiq mosque, where he usually talked about local, regional, and international political topics during his Friday sermon that was followed by the public, the media and the authorities.

He is one of the prominent religious and political figures in Bahrain, a preacher of tolerance and national and Islamic unity. He calls for dialogue as an approach to surpass political disputes.

Sheikh Isa Qassim stresses in his speeches on encountering the "Sectarian conflict scheme". He firmly directs his followers to peaceful methods saying, **“Peaceful methods have been our choice since the first day.”**

He further says on violence, **“This ignorant and unjust voice has sparked fire in many countries of the Arab arena, created situations and earthquakes often tragic, and broke a lot and gave what gave of results which testifies to the idiocy of this opinion, the absurdity of this statement, and the foolishness of this view.”**

# Who is Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Ahmed Qassim



He was born in **1941**  
in the village of Durza, Bahrain



In the late 1950s, he studied religious sciences for many years in Al-Naim, Manama. He was taught by the late religious scholar, Sayed Alawi Al-Ghuraifi, one of the leading Shiite clerics in Bahrain

He attended Manama School, and finished high school in **1959**.

He taught at the Budaiya Elementary School for Boys between **1960** and **1962**.

## Early 1960s

He travelled to Iraq to pursue religious studies in Najaf, attended the college of Jurisprudence there, and graduated with a bachelor's degree.



**1970**

He returned to Najaf and studied at the Hawza for two years.

**1968**

He returned to Bahrain and taught at Al-Khamis School for two years.

He returned to Bahrain in **1972** to participate in the Constituent Assembly election

In **1972**, he was elected a member of the Constituent Assembly, which ratified the Bahraini Constitution issued in **1973**.





He contributed to establishing and publicizing the Islamic Enlightenment Society.

1972

In **1973**, he was elected a member of the National Assembly until its dissolution in **1975**.

He headed the Islamic Enlightenment Society until the early 1980s.

In **February 1984**, the Islamic Enlightenment Society was dissolved for the first time

It was reactivated in **2001** after voting for the National Action Charter

It was closed down again on **June 16, 2016** as part of the sectarian persecution campaign.



1992

He attended the Hawza in Qum

On **March 8, 2001**

He returned to Bahrain after voting for the National Action Charter.

Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society considers him to be its spiritual father

(It was founded in 2001, and closed down on June 16, 2016, in a flagrant violation of freedom of political action).

He established the highest Shiite religious authority in Bahrain

(Islamic Ulama Council)

The authorities dissolved it in 2014.

He is considered the leader of the Shiite community in Bahrain and one of the leading religious scholars there. He is a Faqih (jurist) and a Mujtahid Motlaq (religious rank).

He used to lead the largest Friday Prayer in Bahrain, at Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque in Duraz.

His nationality was revoked on June 20, **2016** based on a decree issued by the king of Bahrain.

The High Criminal Court started the first hearing of his trial over the practice of khums on **July 27, 2016**.

The verdict was issued on May 21, **2017**



## Part Two

### THE ARBITRARY SANCTION



Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

## CALLS BEFORE THE TRIAL

Dozens of angry protests took to the streets across Bahrain because of Sheikh Qassim's trial. Bahrain's Shiite scholars called for the public mobilization in all Bahraini areas. A group of Bahraini human rights organisations issued an appeal calling on international high-ranked officials and agencies to take public actions regarding the case of Bahrain's Sheikh Isa Qassim, before his trial scheduled to be held on (May 21, 2017).

## PROSECUTING SHEIKH ISA QASSIM

On June 20, 2016, the Bahraini government issued a Royal Decree to strip Sheikh Qassim of his citizenship, under the Royal Decree 552016/, **“based on a request by the Minister of Interior who explained the reasons for revoking the Bahraini nationality, which was attained yet its right wasn’t preserved, causing harm to the interests of the kingdom and behaving in a way inimical with the duty of loyalty to it, based on the decision of the cabinet to approve the revocation of the nationality,”** according to the Decree.

On May 21, 2017, the Bahraini court sentenced Sheikh Isa Qassim and two others to one year in jail suspended for three years term, over the charge of money laundering, which is related to his participation in the management of the religious practice of khums.

In the Shiite jurisprudence, Khums is an obligatory annual religious practice of donating funds, organized by specific and expert clerks. It is spent for religious and charitable purposes to assist the most vulnerable classes, including orphans, and it seeks to eliminate poverty and build harmony within society.

## REASONS BEHIND THE VERDICT

Stripping Sheikh Qassim's citizenship and his prosecution appear to be reprisals against his constant calls for the importance of reform in the country. In this regard, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom said that **"The measures taken by the authorities targeting Shi'a Muslims, including clerics, come over peaceful protests and criticizing the government's human rights and religious freedom record."**

It was noteworthy that the Public Prosecution had resorted to deliberately abusing and insulting Sheikh Qassim, stating, **"One who allowed himself to follow the law of the jungle."**

Such language from the government encourages religious sectarianism and intolerance, human rights activists and observers emphasise.

## VIOLETIONS AGAINST LAWS

The politically motivated trial of Sheikh Isa Qassim constitutes a violation of the rights to freedom of religion and expression. Additionally, it has led to additional violations of basic human rights in Bahrain.

**Article 17 of the Bahraini constitution of 2002 states, among other things, that,**

**“Bahraini nationality shall be determined by law. A person inherently enjoying his Bahraini nationality cannot be stripped of his nationality except in case of treason and other cases as prescribed by law.”**

Rendering Sheikh Isa Qassim stateless violates his right to nationality, as guaranteed in Article 15 of the UDHR, which states,

- 1. “Everyone has the right to a nationality.**
- 2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.”**

His trial in absentia constitutes a violation of his right to a fair trial, as guaranteed in Article 11 of the UDHR, which states,

3. **“Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defense.**
4. **No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.”**

**Article 15.1 of the ICCPR stipulates,**

**“No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time when the criminal offence was committed. If, subsequent to the commission of the offence, provision is made by law for the imposition of the lighter penalty, the offender shall benefit thereby.”**

Further, his prosecution appears to threaten the religious freedoms, enshrined in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which applies to Bahrain since it signed and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

**“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”**

Both Sheikh Qassim and his followers' right to normal religious life was violated without cause, as opposed to Article 18.1 of the ICCPR,

**“Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”**

Moreover, Sheikh Qassim's prosecution constitutes a heinous violation of his rights to nationality, a fair trial, and the freedom of religion. The Prosecution belittled the 70% of Shiites majority who look to Sheikh Qassim for guidance. Sheikh Qassim never received a summon by the court, and his office was searched without warrant. More than 80 Shiites clerics were questioned or detained, in relation to their right to expression and assembly.

**Article 21 of ICCPR emphasizes,**

**“The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are**



**necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (ordre public), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.”**

The village of Duraz was sieged, and consequently Friday prayer has been banned since then in Imam Sadiq mosque, where Sheikh Qassim used to preach, in a clear violation to the freedom to religious practices.

Besides, the prosecution charged Sheikh Qassim with money laundering. This relates to his role in the collection and redistribution of khums.

Khums wealth were also confiscated, openly violating a religious practice of a major religious group, in a time laws call to equally guard the practices and beliefs of majorities and minorities.

The Bahraini authorities frankly violate the Convention relating to the ‘Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961’.

## THE AUTHORITY'S TERMINOLOGY AND INCITING HATRED

Revocation of Sheikh Qassim and many other peaceful dissenters' citizenship is a political tool utilized by the Bahraini authority, due to the political division based on political and sectarian lines. The authorities' terminology is purely a blatant assault on an esteemed religious figure.

Takferi (Doctrine which accuses others of apostasy), backed ideologists promote the culture of sectarian intolerance in Bahrain. They, freely and publicly, promote the systematic campaign against Sheikh Qassim and his followers. They call for purifying Bahrain from Shiites, dubbing them as **'Iranians, Infidels, Majoosis, Rafidas, Traitors, Safawis, Unpatriotic'**, and many other degrading social frames.

These acts are not a new occurrence, and they have been happening for decades, according to USCIRF 2016 Annual Report .

Sheikh Qassim has repeatedly stressed that discrimination, systematic violations of human rights affiliated with religious beliefs, preferential treatment to certain religious groups and prohibition of certain religious rituals can no doubt lead to further chaos, frustration, and fanaticism.

Announcing the sentence, the Interior Ministry, claimed that Sheikh Qassim had **“adopted theocracy and stressed the absolute allegiance to the clergy”**. It added that he had been in continuous contact with **“Organisations and parties that are enemies of the kingdom.”**

**Obviously, the language of prosecution encourages religious intolerance.**

## HEARINGS OF SHEIKH QASSIM'S TRIALS

On June 19, 2016, Sheikh Isa Qassim's citizenship was illegally stripped without due procedures of law. Sheikh Qassim is rendered stateless to date, being treated as an illegal resident in his own home country, which is a flagrant violation to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954 and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961.

Bahrain's Fourth High Criminal Court held 13 trials in the case against Sheikh Isa Ahmed Qassim along with Sheikh Hussain al-Qassab and Mirza al-Dirazi.

## Article 10 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates,

**“Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.”**

Indeed, no legal procedure was carried out in the case of Sheikh Isa Qassim and his co-defendants. The trial in absentia was unfairly held, and was postponed by the high criminal court of Bahrain, for several times.

This has only offered the government a pretext to repress the opposition and conduct a harsh crackdown on ongoing peaceful protests in Duraz area against the government’s aggressive political and security measures against the religious leader.

Ahead of every trial, international human rights bodies, senior officials from effective countries, Bahraini human rights organisations, civil society organisations, activists, human rights defenders and bloggers used to loudly call the Bahraini government to drop the charges against Sheikh Isa Qassim, and to swiftly reinstate his citizenship that has been discretionally confiscated.

Human rights organisations have called on diplomatic missions of the UN Human Rights Council member-states to intervene in the trial of Sheikh Isa Qassim, the most prominent Shiite leader in Bahrain.

Nonetheless, the Bahraini government showed no responsive nor proactive actions in addressing these demands.

**The fourth high criminal court decided on (May 7, 2017) hearing to postpone the verdict issuance in the case of Sheikh Isa Qassim, and members of his office Sheikh Hussein Al-Mahrous and Mirza Al-Durazi until (May 21, 2016).**

## SHEIKH QASSIM'S LAST HEARING

The Fourth High Criminal Court, presided over by Judge Ali Al-Dhahrani, held its 13th session on Sunday (May 21, 2017), in the case of Sheikh Isa Qassim, and members of his office Sheikh Hussein Al-Mahrous and Mirza Al-Dirazi, over charges linked to illegal fundraising and money laundering without a license.

The court sentenced Sheikh Qassim, Hussein al-Qasab, and Mirza Al-Dirazi, to one year in jail suspended for three years term. It also ruled the confiscation of Khums wealth, two properties used to accommodate religious scholars, in addition to a fine of BD 100,000 fine, (\$265,000).

## INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNATIONS

United State Department Press Secretary John Kirby condemned the verdict saying, **“We are alarmed by the Government of Bahrain’s decision to revoke the citizenship of prominent Shiites cleric, Sheikh Isa Qassim. We remain deeply troubled by the Government of Bahrain’s practice of withdrawing the nationality of its citizens arbitrarily, the overall precedent that this case could establish, and the risk that individuals may be rendered stateless.”**

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has also recently reported on Sheikh Qassim’s case. In its latest annual report, USCIRF found **“a deterioration in the religious freedoms of Bahrain’s Shiites, in the campaign of judicial harassment targeting Shiites clerics, mostly on unfounded or unsubstantiated charges.”**

In addition, the USCIRF report documented that, **“since June, the Bahraini government has interrogated, charged, or sentenced at least 80 Shiites clerics”**.

Released in April 2017, the USCIRF annual report for 2016 for the first time intensified the ranking of Bahrain and categorized the country as a Tier 2 violator of religious freedom. According to the report, Tier 2 country is defined as one “in which the violations engaged in or tolerated by the government are serious and characterized by at least one of the elements of the ‘systematic,

ongoing, and egregious' CPC [Countries of Particular Concern] standard."

Five UN Special Rapporteurs last year expressed concern over the systematic persecution and repression of Bahrain's Shiites, **"Sheikh Qassim's prosecution deepens that persecution"**.

## PUBLIC REJECTION

The decision of revoking Sheikh Qassim's citizenship left him stateless and at risk of deportation. The sentence enflamed feelings of disenfranchisement within Bahrain's Shiites community, and made the Shiites citizens feel more deprived of their basic rights and facing the continuous policy of systematic persecution against them. Thus, they were forced to defend their rights and their religious symbol through daily peaceful demonstration in various areas of Bahrain, and a peaceful sit-in near the house of Sheikh Qassim was held since the day of announcing the revocation of his nationality.

Bahrainis took to the streets to peacefully protest the decision on daily basis, and in different villages. This incurred the rage of his followers and prompted them to stage a peaceful sit-in near his domicile, for 11 consecutive months.

## Part Three

A YEAR OF PEACEFULLY  
ASSEMBLING IN DURAZ



Everyone  
has the right  
to freedom of  
movement and  
residence within  
the borders of  
each state.



## THE ONGOING PEACEFUL SIT-IN PROTEST

The citizens who were in solidarity with Sheikh Qassim and denounced revoking his nationality and prosecuting him decided to peacefully express their views and positions. So, in order to protect him from possible reprisals by the authorities, they gathered and held a sit-in around the clock near Sheikh Qassim's house, and they called the location of the gathering the 'Square of Sacrifice.'

Since the very beginning of the open-air sit-in, the Bahraini government tightened security and besieged Duraz from every side. Security forces set up checkpoints at all entrances of the area, staffed with police who prevent non-Duraz residents from entering.

Police blocked off nearly all entrances to the village and established checkpoints at the remaining two main entrances, excessively restricting the right to freedom of movement of Duraz's residents, business owners and visitors.

**The Bahraini authorities have disregarded individuals' internationally-sanctioned right to assembly by shooting protesters gathering in Duraz with live ammunition and tear gas several times.**

## GOVERNMENTAL SIEGE ON DURAZ

Symbolically speaking, Duraz is the birth place and home town of Sheikh Isa Qassim and other prominent dissenters. Its population is approximately 20,000 residents, the majority of them are Shiites, and particularly have long endured the organized persecution practiced by the government for decades.

Durazi people, along with the vast majority of the Bahrainis cannot practice their right to freedom of opinion and expression, they have raised their voices loudly and occasionally against oppression, repression and tyranny.

Many reports about the siege on Duraz, including a report issued by the Arabic-language Al-Wasat newspaper, which was shut down on (June 4, 2017), indicate the following:

- » Internet usage is not available within certain times in and surrounding Duraz.
- » The sieged Duraz has been in financial and social isolation from the rest of Bahraini regions.
- » Many businesses have suffered dramatically, with major losses incurred on local businesses.
- » Only two entrances allow access to Duraz, while the rest are fully cordoned off by the security forces.

» **Duraz residents can barely meet their relatives and friends outside Duraz.**

The authorities restrictively targeted residential areas in Duraz, making the movement of the residents terribly difficult. Military vehicles were deployed at all the main entrances, and minor entrances were sealed off with concrete slabs and barbed wires. Duraz residents were subjected to repeated questioning and inspection, humiliated and had their beliefs insulted by the security men.

The security forces cut off all roads leading to Duraz, so people were not allowed to reach the area without displaying their identity cards to assure that they are Duraz's residents. They have to wait for a long time in a queue. Thus, those who do not live in Duraz cannot reach it, employees cannot reach their offices early, and students cannot reach their schools and universities. The security forces still attack the residential neighbourhoods, firing fission bullets (birdshot) and tear gas.

**By taking these measures, the government violates the following articles:**

**Article 19.b of the Bahraini Constitution, which stipulates,**

**“No person shall be arrested, detained, imprisoned, searched or compelled to reside in a specified place, nor shall the residence of any person or his liberty to choose his place of residence or**

**his liberty of movement be restricted, except in accordance with the law and under the supervision of the judicial authorities;**

**Article 13.1 of the UDHR, which stipulates,**

**“Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.”**

**Article 12.1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which stipulates,**

**“Everyone lawfully within the territory of a State shall, within that territory, have the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence.”**

These imposed sanctions are regarded as a systematic approach to silence the people in order to paralyze the pro-democracy popular uprising. Furthermore, security forces continue to confront the residential areas in Duraz, on daily basis, firing fission bullets (birdshot) and tear gas.

## THE RIGHT TO CIRCULATE INFORMATION

### INTERNET BLACKOUT

Communication rights, which involve freedom of opinion and expression, were equally violated. The intensified strict measures, including Internet blackout is taken by the authorities on daily basis, in Duraz, since June 2016, approximately from 7:p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

The Al Wasat Newspaper mentioned that disrupting Internet services has increased since the security forces raided the village resided by 20.000 citizens, adding that the Internet access is cut off for 12 hours daily. This act aimed at preventing the residents from informing the local and public opinion of the violations committed against them.

### MUSTAFA HAMDAN

The reprisals against Sheikh Qassim has led to further grave violations. On (January 26, 2017), masked, plainclothes officers raided the peaceful sit-in outside his home in Duraz, fatally wounding 18-year-old Mustafa Hamdan. MOI officials infringed upon Hamdan's right to health when they did not allow prompt medical care, he needed to survive, for his injury.

Hamdan is well known today by the title of the **'Martyr of Sacrifice'**, as Shiites believes that he was executed in defense

of his religious beliefs, which should already be defended by the government of law and justice.

**Geneva Convention IV, Article 10 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I provides,**

**“In all circumstances, they shall be treated humanely and shall receive, to the fullest possible extent and with the least possible delay, the medical care and attention required by their condition.”**

**Hamdan died** on (March 24, 2016), two months after security forces fired at him live ammunition in head and rendered him comatose.

It is suspected that Bahrain’s National Security Agency (NSA), particularly its domestic intelligence agency, was involved in the raid. However, no governmental entity has acknowledged responsibility, nor released no statements for this raid, nor have any independent and impartial investigations occurred to date, amid the culture of impunity, and the absence of accountability in Bahrain.

Hamdan's right was violated according to Article 2.3.b of the ICCPR, **which stipulates,**

**“To ensure that any person claiming such a remedy shall have his right there to determined by competent judicial, administrative or legislative authorities, or by any other**

**competent authority provided for by the legal system of the State, and to develop the possibilities of judicial remedy.”**

Mustafa Hamdan was the victim of excessive use of force. His right to life and freedom of assembly, as protected under articles 6 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bahrain acceded to in 2006, were violated by the security forces.

### **Biography of Mustafa Hamdan**



**NAME: MUSTAFA AHMED HASSAN HAMDAN**

- **Date of Birth: 8/17/1997**
- **Marital status: single**
- **High school student**
- **He was arbitrarily detained twice before his death**

- On 1/26/2017, masked security forces attacked the peaceful sit-in area near the house of Sheikh Isa Qassim, as a result, Mustafa Hamdan was hit by a bullet in his head. However, doctors refused to treat him for approximately 6 or 7 hours, fearing security accountability and repercussions; security authorities began an investigation. He was then transferred to the special care room, where he stayed for two months before he passed away. Security authorities announced conducting an investigation but did not disclose the results of the investigation to this day.

- **Place of burial: Karbabad**

## MEDIA AND INCITING SECTARIAN HATRED

Activists and human rights defenders who spoke about the case of Sheikh Qassim were disenfranchised by government and its media tools that are greatly suspicious of their loyalties.

As was well documented by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, which was established by King Hamad to investigate human rights abuses in 2011, Iran had no involvement in Bahrain's uprising. However, Media backed and financed by the government encompassed the sectarian divide, dubbing Sheikh Isa Qassim and his followers as the Shiites of Iran, in a clear violation to the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.



The level of such accusations comes amid an ongoing effort to silence human rights defenders through restrictive measures, and amid the aggressive storm of inciting hatred. 56 hate-inciting materials were recorded after the announcement of the deterioration of Sheikh Isa Qassim's health after November 26, 2017.

These measures are in violation of Article 19 of the ICCPR, which Bahrain has been a signatory to since 2006. It also contradicts its obligations to protect activists and human rights defenders, as derived from their obligation to protect all human rights under Article 2 of the ICCPR.

Rabat Plan of Action states, **“further guidance is needed in the real world when weighing freedom of expression against the prohibition of incitement to hatred.”**

## SENTENCING SHIITES CLERICS

Following the revocation of Sheikh Isa Qassim’s citizenship on June 19, 2017, over 80 Shiites religious scholars were summoned, and a number of them were sentenced to prison terms because they refused the violations against Sheikh Qassim and exercised their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, according to the documented reports of local and international human rights organizations.

In this regard, five UN Special Procedure mandate holders issued, in August 2016 a joint statement urging Bahrain to **“end the persecution of Shiites.”, and to “stop such arbitrary arrests or summons and release all those who have been detained for exercising their rights.”**

**By these arbitrary measures, Bahrain has violated the International standards on freedom of religion and belief protected by;**

- » **Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**
- » **Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**
- » **The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.**

## **PENDING FRIDAY PRAYER**

**Since May 2016 to date, the authorities have banned the Friday Prayer in Duraz's Imam Al-Sadiq mosque, the largest Shiite mosque in the country, where Sheikh Isa Qassim used to lead the worshipers. The authorities prevented worshippers and clerks from accessing the area and performing the prayer.**

**The freedom to practice religious rites without government interference is a fundamental human right. It is a civil right as well, basically protected by the Bahraini Constitution, and the international treaties that Bahrain has ratified. Consequently, the government cannot prevent any citizen from worshiping in a chosen manner.**

**This right not only gives citizens the freedom to practice their religious rites and beliefs, but it also prevents the government from interfering with how they practice them.**

## Part Four

### THE AMERICAN-BAHRAINI RELATIONS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION



president Trump is accused of giving the green light to Bahrain's king, whom he met in Riyadh, to escalate oppression against his Shiite citizens.

## A CHANGE IN AMERICAN POLICIES AND THE DETERIORATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BAHRAIN

US President Donald Trump said Sunday morning (May 21, 2017) that the relations between the United States and Bahrain were set to improve. This stance came during his meeting with Bahrain King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during his visit to Saudi Arabia.

Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa welcomed the positive changes in the USA policies towards the region and its countries, and the understanding of the US Administration, led by President Donald Trump, of the situation there. He stated, **“Everyone is looking forward to the outcomes of President Trump's upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia and expects them to have positive impacts on the Arab and Islamic worlds.”**

France24 channel said in an article on its website that **“president Trump is accused of giving the green light to Bahrain's king, whom he met in Riyadh, to escalate oppression against his Shiite citizens.”**

Observers, activists and human rights activists considered that the government of Bahrain raided the peaceful sit-in in Duraz, and besieged the house of, Sheikh Isa Qassim, after receiving Saudi and American support.

## ARMS SALE

The U.S. State Department told Congress it backs the sale of 19 Lockheed Martin Corp.F-16 fighters to Bahrain without preconditions on improved human rights previously demanded by the Obama administration. The newly elected American President Donald Trump ignored the demands of the Bahraini people to reforms and to protect their fundamental human rights, in bid to Sell Bahrain F-16 Jets.

**“The request of support for the sale of up to \$2.7 billion in jets doesn’t include a package to upgrade older F-16s, which officials said last year could bring the proposal to as much as \$4 billion”**, according to Bloomberg. Paradoxically, this deal is operated amid the critical economic crisis in the country.

Defense One website specialized in American military affairs said that the move taken by the Trump administration and represented by removing human rights conditions from a multibillion-dollar F-16 sale to Bahrain is likely to have severe repercussions for American interests in the Middle East.

Human rights organizations criticized U.S. President Donald Trump for selling arms to his country and Saudi Arabia, referring to the deteriorating human rights situation in the two countries.

Besides, a group of international NGOs sent letters to the heads of state of the US, the UK, the EU, and to the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, asking officials to publicly call on the Bahraini government to drop the charges against Sheikh Isa Qassim and to reinstate his citizenship.

Several US-based NGOs sent a letter to King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, urging the government to drop all charges against Sheikh Isa Qassim and reinstate his citizenship.

Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society confirmed in a statement that the government is leading Bahrain into a new crisis believed to be the biggest and widest.

**Activists on social media outlets called for massive protests on the eve of the sentence hearing of Sheikh Isa Qassim.**

## Part Five

### RAID ON DURAZ



the infringement against public freedoms and the policy of torture is a systematic plan implemented by the government of Bahrain.



## RAID ON DURAZ

After assurances by Trump, Bahrain witnessed the deadliest raid in years on peaceful demonstrators in Duraz, at the morning of (May 23, 2017). This occurred after the Bahraini Interior Ministry announced a security operation in Duraz to **“maintain order and remove violations punishable under the law that hinder the movement of citizens.”**

**The raid which targeted the house of Sheikh Isa Qassim left at least five demonstrators dead – who are Muhamad Kathem Zain Al Deen, Ahmad Al A'asfur, Muhamad Hamdan, Mustafa Hamdan, and Muhamad Al Sari – more than 100 injuries and 286 residents arrested in an assault in which security officers fired sound bombs, tear gas, and shotguns at protesters, during the operation.**

Activists published photos on social media outlets showing security forces affiliated to the ministry of interior while raiding the besieged village of Duraz using dozens of vehicles and number of armors and accompanying some of the detainees who were arrested as a result of the raid on Duraz.

Circulated photos showed deploying Bahraini security forces over the roof of Sheikh Isa Qassim's house, imposing a security siege in the vicinity of his house, and placing him under house arrest.

Residents of Duraz confirmed that they faced huge difficulties in making normal phone calls, and that the internet services in the area have been cut.

Eyewitnesses confirmed that what happened at the peaceful sit-in site is not a security operation but an armed raid. Scores of security men in armoured vehicles with various weapons attacked the peaceful protesters.

## UNKNOWN FATE OF SHEIKH QASSIM

So far, Sheikh Isa Qassim's house is under imposed security blockade and undeclared house arrest – although the security authorities deny it. Bahrainis are greatly concerned about exiling Qassim outside Bahrain, as a possible measure to be taken by the Bahraini authorities, at any time. The verdict left him stateless and at risk of forced deportation.

In addition, there are still tight security measures near Ayatollah Qassim's house, which hinder his private doctors from following-up his medical condition and harass his family members wishing to visit him because they are being held for long periods and subjected to strict measures.

**On November 26, 2017, Sheikh Isa Ahmed Qassim suffered a sudden relapse. It is worth mentioning that the night before his relapse, tear gas was heavily and unlawfully fired near his house. As a result of the house arrest imposed on Sheikh Isa Qassim by the security authorities – without a judicial or administrative order – no one, including doctors or relatives, is allowed to enter his house. The security authorities also violate his right to receive the necessary and appropriate treatment as he wishes.**

**Moreover, his personal doctors have been unable to visit him since June 21, 2016, and he have had restricted access to his medications since the beginning of the imposition of house arrest on May 23, 2017. In addition, since his nationality was revoked on June 20, 2016, he has not undergone the periodic medical examinations he has needed, and he has depended on the old medicine, which has not always been easily available since the beginning of the security siege on Duraz. Medicines were secretly brought to him while his wife and sons entered the house.**

**The other diseases Sheikh Isa Qassim has been suffering from throughout the period of the security siege are heart diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, and abdominal hernia. The hernia was small and increased in a scary manner, and is now in a state of severe inflammation and swelling and requires an urgent surgery, but the house arrest prevents Sheikh Qassim from obtaining treatment. Also, he had undergone a cardiac catheterization at the Military Hospital in Bahrain in October 2010, and he had suffered a pelvic fracture in December 2014, thus, it is difficult for him to move and he needs continuous medical follow-up.**

## EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS

**Eyewitnesses said that youth Mohammad Kadhem Zainuldine (39 years) was the first who was killed in the attack, an environmental activist who sustained several gunshot injuries in his body by security forces. A number of protesters tried to save his life but the attacking forces did not allow them, which resulted in his death.**

Later, the Ministry of Interior announced the names of four victims who were killed during the attack, Muhamad Kathem Zain Al Deen, Ahmad Al A'asfur, Muhamad Hamdan (brother of Mustafa Hamdan), and Muhamad Al Sari.

MOI added that it was still looking into the identity of a 5th victim, who was later announced as Muhamad Al Ekri.

## BIOGRAPHY OF THE VICTIMS



**NAME: MOHAMED AHMED HAMDAN**

- **Date of birth: 9/21/1995**
- **Marital status: single**
- **Profession: he is a university student**
- **Interests: Reading books and writing poetry and personal thoughts**
- **He was arbitrarily detained three times previously for political reasons**
- **He wrote a lot of literary thoughts, which reveal that he was attached to the peaceful assembly in the area of Duraz and influenced by the personality of Sheikh Isa Qassim, and he expressed solidarity against the revocation of Sheikh Qassim's nationality.**
- **Place of burial: Al-Mahooz – he was buried without the knowledge and consent of his family and in violation of local customs and national law**



**NAME: MOHAMMED ABDUL KARIM HASSAN AL-EKRI**

- **Date of birth: October 7, 1999**
- **Marital status: single**
- **Profession: Third-year secondary student**
- **His interests: He was a fan of reading, technology, and playing ball, and he adored creative ideas, challenging and adventurous games, and volunteering. He had a leading personality.**
- **Place of burial: Muharraq – he was buried without the knowledge and consent of his family and in violation of local customs and national law**



**NAME: AHMED JAMIL AHMED MOHAMMED AL-ASFOUR**  
( NICKNAME: ABU MUJTABA)

- **Date of birth: December 21, 1983**
- **Marital status: married with five children, the youngest is his daughter who was born 50 days after his death.**
- **Place of birth: Shakhoura**
- **He studied computer science in India and obtained a bachelor's degree**
- **He was one of the pioneers of charitable work in the village of Abu Saiba and Duraz, where he was engaged in religious education either as a student or as a teacher, and he was a participant in the religious singing groups.**
- **Place of burial: Al-Mahooz - buried without the knowledge and consent of his family and in violation of local customs and national law**



**NAME: MOHAMMED ALI IBRAHIM AHMED AL-SARI**

- **Date of birth: April 5, 1989**
- **Age: 28 years old**
- **Marital status: married with two children**
- **Holds a Diploma in electrical engineering**
- **He was seriously wounded by a live bullet which was 1 cm away from his heart while he participated along with citizen Abdulredha Buhmaid in an attempt to peacefully assemble at the Pearl Roundabout. Buhmaid was killed by the security forces on February 18, 2011, but Al-Sari miraculously survived his injury.**
- **He was jailed for two years. After the protesters were dispersed by the army in Al-Salmaniya Hospital, he was taken to prison despite his serious injury, and two charges were fabricated against him, hatred of the regime and assaulting security men.**
- **He was released on April 7, 2013**
- **He is the founder of an Instagram account about the people born in Bahrain and Al Sharqiya.**
- **Place of burial: Muharraq – buried without the knowledge and consent of his family and in violation of local customs and national law**





**NAME: MOHAMMED KADHEM MOHSEN ZAINUDDIN**

- He was born in Duraz on March 6, 1973
- He is married with three children
- His family is well-known. His grandfather is Mullah Ali bin al-Mulla Nasser Zainuddin, a reader of Husseini Majlis, a poet, and a prominent religious preacher in Bahrain
- He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science and works as an engineer and programmer of computer and electronic networks in a banking institution in Bahrain
- He participated in several scientific and development projects and was sent by the company in which he worked to many countries including Kuwait, Nairobi, Oman, Libya and Iraq
- He had a number of social and charitable activities and was elected president of the Friends of the Environment Association since 2000. He delivered many environmental lectures locally and internationally
- He was a founding member of the Holy Prophet Cultural Centre project, which is related to Al Shehab Matam in Duraz
- His hobbies were reading about various scientific fields and photography

**- He was characterized by his humbleness and gentleness within his family and community, and the permanent smile on his face**  
**Place of burial: Muharraq - buried without the knowledge and consent of his family and in violation of local customs and national law**

**The raid and its ensuing aftermath, which was accompanied by further arrests and attacks on protesters, is a worse violent and illegal raid, and a crackdown on the due fundamental human rights in the country. Unfortunately, practicing a right in Bahrain is associated with criminal act in accordance to the calculations of the government.**

## UNTRUTHFUL ALLEGATIONS

The Bahraini authorities have consistently justified their systematic violations by false and unrealistic allegations. Further, laws and courts are in fact employed greatly to maintain this policy.

The Bahrain authorities have accused Sheikh Qassim of promoting ‘sectarianism and violence’; however, the peacefulness of the protest needs proofs to refute these allegations.

**In the first place**, the protesters who follow firmly the instruction of their leader, were and still totally committed to his religious rules. Religiously speaking, Sheikh Isa Qassim has illegitimated any act of violence.

**Secondly**, in various statements and calls, senior officials and human rights organisations assured the peacefulness of the protesters. For instance, Amnesty International point out the peacefulness of the protesters in Duraz, **“Our information indicates that police attacked what started out as a peaceful demonstration”**.

The ministry of interior claimed that fugitives who had escaped from the Jau prison were among the 286 people arrested at the protest, and alleged, **“Several of the outlaws were carrying hand grenades and knives.”**

Bahraini MP Abdullah bin Huwail said in a statement, "**the security operation showed the government's resolve to confront an Iranian-backed security threat**". He added, "**Some areas in Duraz village had transformed into a teeming sanctuary embracing terrorists, saboteurs, and fugitives from justice.**"

## IN THEIR EYES

Below we list two of the eyewitnesses' testimonies, interviewed by the monitoring team of "Bahrain Center for Human Rights", among others, most of whom are residents of Duraz. Due to security reasons, the report does not mention their names, and other personal information, for fear of being targeted by the security authorities.

Based on the eyewitnesses' testimonies and other information documented by the monitoring team, we conclude that the testimonies are consistent and very similar to the live testimonies documented by independent Bahraini human rights organisations.

Consequently, this reveals that the choice of security, the infringement against public freedoms and the policy of torture is a systematic plan implemented by the government of Bahrain.

## TESTIMONY OF THE FIRST WITNESS

The witness said that on (May 23, 2017), at 9:20a.m., the security forces raided the sit-in from several directions. Then, a heavily armed group approached, at 9:40a.m., and started firing tear gas and shotguns, indiscriminately, at a close range.

He continued that the security forces pursued the demonstrators; he entered a nearby house to hide in. There were ten demonstrators in the house, including two wounded with shotgun bullets. Civilian security officers, including two men with pistols, climbed up from the adjacent house, stormed the house, and detained them, at 3:40 p.m.

The witness adds that one of those being pursued was severely beaten, simply because he told the security forces that he was from 'Sitra'. A quarter of an hour later, the security forces took him with the rest of the detainees from the house to Sheikh Isa Qassim's domicile, where the sit-in took place.

The spokesman says that a security officer ordered them to stand with their faces against to the wall, and to loudly chant provocative and insulting slogans, for a whole hour, and every detainee who did not repeat these slogans was severally beaten.

He, further, says that he was transferred along with 45 detainees to the "Jau Central Prison". The security men handcuffed them; squeezing their wrists painfully, blindfolded them, and took them to the second floor of the prison.

The witness recounts the journey of torture, which was accompanied by slaps and punches on the face, abdomen and back. The security men left them standing against the wall, for a long time, without providing water or food, and was prevented from entering the bathroom. Then, every 12 detainees were placed in a cell.

On Friday, (May 26, 2017), the detainees were transferred to the criminal investigations directorate (CID) building. They were questioned about their presence at the sit-in. Security men filmed the detainees in their underwear, some of whom were forced to take off their clothes and were photographed naked, as the witness claims.

He says that after being prevented from any contact with family or legal counsel, they were allowed to make short calls with their families and inform them of their presence in the criminal investigation building.

The witness adds that one of the detainees in the prison cell told him that he saw the security forces firing the victim Muhammad Hamdan by three live bullets, at a close range, near the house of Sheikh Isa Qassim. He immediately died, and was pulled out of the area.

He concludes that he was forced to sign a record that is totally different from what he had stated, during the investigation. The

record states that he participated in marches calling for ‘the overthrow of the regime’ on Sitra, and that he had engaged in subversive activities, and was among others carrying axes and knives. Finally, after signing a pledge to attend if asked to do so, he was released.

## TESTIMONY OF THE SECOND WITNESS

The witness says that on (May 23, 2017), the security forces raided the sit-in in the village of Duraz, and heavily fired shotgun bullets and tear gas bombs.

He tells that he witnessed the victim Muhamad Kathem Zain Al Deen, lying on the ground with severe injuries. He asked from the protesters for help, and they took him to his house near the sit-in site. One of the paramedics gave him first aid, but his condition was very critical. He began to scarcely breathe. He could not be taken to hospital because of the siege imposed by the security forces, which led to his death, immediately.

The witness says, at 3:00 p.m., the security men stormed the house of the victim, Zain Al Deen. They searched the house, broke the furniture, and stole money and expensive items. The protesters in the house were insulted and abused.

The witness tells that the security forces confiscated the protesters' phones, and photographed them with their hands on their heads. Then the protesters were sorted according to their area, and were tortured, in a room in the house. The witness says that he heard the screams of detainees who have been severely beaten and tortured.

They were then handcuffed and blindfolded and transferred to "Jau Central Prison", building 15. There, the detainees were interrogated about the sit-in, and their activities. According to the witness, the security forces allowed them to contact their parents after two days of detention on (May 25, 2017).



## Part Six

### THE AFTERMATH OF USING EXCESSIVE FORCE TO END THE DURAZ PEACEFUL SIT-IN



bloody  
violence of  
governmental  
authorities

## INTERNATIONAL ATTITUDES

The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, said in a statement, **“I urge the Government to investigate the events of 23 May, in particular the loss of lives, to ensure that the findings are made public and that those responsible are held accountable.”**

Human Rights First called on the Trump Administration to condemn the actions of Bahraini security forces who reportedly attacked peaceful protesters in the village of Duraz.

Human Rights Watch described the raid as a crackdown on freedom of expression, **“Yet again the architects of bloody destabilizing violence in Bahrain appear to be the Al Khalifa government, and the timing of this operation – two days after King Hamad’s convivial meeting with President Trump – can hardly be a coincidence”**

Amnesty International expressed that the brutal raid on Duraz highlights **“rampant impunity enjoyed by [Bahraini] security forces”**. It added, **“Our information indicates that police attacked what started out as a peaceful demonstration. International**

**standards require that law enforcement must not use lethal force unless unavoidable to protect against a threat to life or risk of serious injury.**

Dozens of Arab and international figures condemned the oppression practiced by the Bahraini government against peaceful protestors in Duraz, expressing concern over the **“bloody violence of governmental authorities”**.

Saudi Arabia defended the actions of Bahraini authorities who opened fire on a protest by supporters of Sheikh Isa Qassim. It said that it supports what it called **“the measures that Bahrain takes to protect its security, stability and safety, such as the latest measures taken by the Bahraini security apparatuses in the village of Duraz to protect public security and order.”**

United Arab Emirates said that it welcomes **“the measures taken by the government of Bahrain to extend the rule of law in Duraz.”**

## NATIONAL ATTITUDES

**Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society said in a statement that the Bahraini government has committed, with international complicity and silence, a heinous crime and historic sin and blatant violation of all international norms protecting the principles of human rights.**

Bahrain's religious scholars warned the Manama government that it will not get away with the atrocities it committed and that a time will come when the people of Bahrain will get even.

Imprisoned Bahraini opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman condemned the ruling issued against the spiritual leader of the country's Shiite population, Sheikh Isa Qassim, describing it as an **“arbitrary sentence”**, and a **“reinforcement of a policy of systematic sectarian oppression and organized targeting of the Shiite community.”**

Al-Wefaq Deputy Secretary General, Sheikh Hussein Al-Daihi addressed a televised speech on Monday (May 29, 2017) in which he said that the government's inclination to escalate the situation regarding Sheikh Qassim's case means declaring a total alienation from the majority of the population. **“It is no doubt the period after attack on this prominent figure in not as period before”**, he noted.

The Bahraini National Democratic Movement Forces said that they followed up **“the unfortunate and disturbing development that began Tuesday morning when the Ministry of Interior announced the entry of its forces to the village of Duraz.”**

Activists in the French Capital, Paris, staged a protest to condemn Duraz massacre and raid carried on the house of spiritual leader of Shiite majority in Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Qassim.

Activists on social media outlets published photos for activists protesting outside the European Union headquarters on Monday (May 29, 2017) in Brussels, Belgium, against Duraz massacre and raid carried on the house of spiritual leader of Shiite majority in Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Qassim.

**“By violently raiding the home of the country’s most prominent Shiites cleric, the Bahraini government is purposefully inflaming religious tensions and demonstrating its resolve to crush any form of peaceful dissent”**, said Husain Abdulla, the executive director of Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB).

Head of the Bahraini Hawza (Shiites religious institute), in Iran, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Daqaq said that the verdict issued against Sheikh Isa Qassim, hides between its lines dangerous mazes leading to his exile from Bahrain in 6 months.

## THE VICTIMS' FAMILIES ATTITUDES

The families of the Duraz's raid victims, who were extrajudicially killed, reiterated their demands to the official authorities to hand them over their sons' corpses so that they can perform the burial rituals in accordance to their religious beliefs and bury them in the cemeteries they specify.

The families said they had received a call from a police station to send two male members to the station, this meant that the authorities' intention was to bury the victims in the absence of their families. Therefore, they refused to go, demanding instead that the bodies be handed over for proper funeral services according to their religious beliefs, which include bathing and shrouding the bodies, followed by a prayer for the deceased, and finally burying them in cemeteries specified by the families.

The victims' families were shocked that the security forces buried the five bodies on Friday (May 26, 2017) in various cemeteries in the country without their knowledge, in violation of all religious, constitutional and humanitarian norms. In this regard, the families addressed the concerned authorities by a recorded speech expressing their absolute disapproval of that procedure, and also accused the authorities of depriving them of saying goodbye to their sons, after the bodies were buried without the permission of the families. They called on the authorities to

return the bodies to them in order to bury them in the cemeteries they specify.

Two days after burying the bodies of the five victims, who were killed in the Duraz raid, the Bahraini Interior Ministry admitted to burying the victims without handing over their bodies to their families.

## THE VICTIMS

### **SUSPICIONS ON THEIR EXECUTIONS**

The Ministry of Interior announced the names of four victims, killed during the security raid on Duraz Tuesday (May 23, 2017), adding that it is still looking into the identity of a 5th. They are Muhamad Kathem Zain-a-deen, Ahmad Al A'asfur, Muhamad Hamdan (brother of Mustafa Hamdan), Muhamad Al Sari. Later the fifth executed was announced as Muhamad Al Ekri.

The five youth joined their late counterpart Mustafa Hamdan, and they are all publically dubbed as the "Martyrs of Sacrifice", who were executed in defense of their freedom of belief and expression.

Their families demanded to arrange proper rituals. However, the government ordered that only two members from each family

attend the funeral at a cemetery of its choosing. The families refused to abide by any such requests, and they are doubted that their sons were killed deliberately. They claimed that the security forces attempt to cover up their murder.

## **VIOLATIONS COMMITTED**

Lawyer Abdullah Al-Shamlawi pointed out that burying the bodies of those killed in the raid on the Duraz sit-in is contrary to:

**Article 22 of the Constitution, which stipulates that,**

**"Freedom of conscience is absolute and the State guarantees the inviolability of places of worship and the freedom to perform religious rituals, processions and gatherings in accordance with the established customs in the country".**

**He noted that Article 52 of Law No. (3) for the year 1975 on public health stipulates that,**

**"The relatives of the deceased shall arrange for the burial of his body. The executing authority may do so in some cases, particularly in case of death of a person as a result of a contagious disease, which takes place in compliance with the provisions of the Shari'a and supervision of the relatives of the deceased if the deceased had any".**

**Al-Shamlawi further stressed that the burial is a blatant violation of the National Charter of Action, the Constitution and the law.**



# Violations

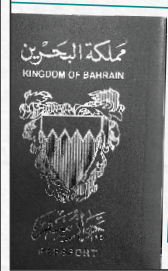
## Related to the Trial of Sheikh Isa Qassim

June 20, 2016  
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siege on Duraz  
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June 20, 2016  
Revocation of the  
nationality of  
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Restriction of freedom  
of movement in Duraz

July 27, 2016, the first hearing of Sheikh Isa Qassim's trial



Prosecutions and  
arbitrary arrests  
against Duraz protesters



Prohibition  
of  
Friday Prayer



Provocative coverage  
by official media



5 victims of  
extrajudicial killing



House arrest  
on Sheikh Isa Qassim for  
more than 100 days



Using excessive force  
to end the Duraz peaceful sit-in,  
with hundreds injured and arrested

## DETENTION CAMPAIGN

The government of Bahrain's, heavily armed, security forces raided the house of Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, and arrested protesters there. During a security raid on the village of Duraz, the Ministry of Interior announced in a statement on (May 23, 2017) that the police arrested 286 Bahrainis in an assault in which officers fired tear gas and shotguns at protesters.

Activists on social media outlets said that the security authorities arrested on Wednesday (May 24, 2017) member of Al-Wefaq Society's secretariat, Sayed Taher Al-Moswai.

The Third Grand Criminal Court reduced Dr. Taha Al-Durazi's sentence, from six to three months, in detention under charges of "illegal gathering".

Dr. Al-Durazi was immediately taken into custody to begin serving his sentence. Charges against him stem from his arrest, interrogation and subsequent release on August 14, 2016, after taking part in a peaceful assembly on July 19, 2016 in the village of Duraz protesting the arbitrary revocation of Sheik Isa Qassim's citizenship.

Various cases of impunity are documented, and many trials are being held, unfairly, based on confessions extracted under torture.

The detainees are not allowed to access their lawyers. They are subjected to severe torture, ill-treatment, medical negligence, defamation, electric shocks, sexual harassments and sectarian assaults.

**ICCPR, Article 9 states that,**

- 1. “Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as are established by law.**
- 2. Anyone who is arrested shall be informed, at the time of arrest, of the reasons for his arrest and shall be promptly informed of any charges against him.**
- 3. Anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorized by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release. It shall not be the general rule that persons awaiting trial shall be detained in custody, but release may be subject to guarantees to appear for trial, at any other stage of the judicial proceedings, and, should occasion arise, for execution of the judgment.**

- 4. Anyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings before a court, in order that that court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful.**
- 5. Anyone who has been the victim of unlawful arrest or detention shall have an enforceable right to compensation.”**

286 peaceful protesters were arbitrary arrested, not informed of the reason of their arrest, tortured, not entitled to a fair trial, insulted and not compensated. They are indeed prisoners of conscience, due to their political and religious beliefs. Summoning up the Activists

During and after the raid, activists spoke to media, posted latest updates and published photos on social media outlets showing what was been happening on ground. They documented the raid by the security forces, affiliated to the ministry of interior, while raiding the besieged village of Duraz using dozens of vehicles and a number of armors and accompanying some of the detainees who were arrested as a result of the raid on Duraz.

However, days later they were summoned into investigations. They were severely beaten, forced to suspend and resign from their activities, reportedly ill-treated, threatened and forced to publicly announce their resignation from their human rights activities during interrogation by the Bahraini National Security Agency.

**On (May 23, 2017),** Activist Adel Al-Marzook, was summoned by the National Security Agency (NSA), in Muharaq, and was kept in custody. Following his release, he announced his resignation and said that he will stop all his human rights activities. It has been reported that he was tortured during his detention and forced to remain standing for 18 hours.

**On (May 27, 2017),** Activist Ebtisam Al-Saegh, was summoned by the NSA. After seven hours, she was released and immediately taken to the hospital in a very concerning psychological state, following a severe nervous breakdown. During her interrogation, Al-Saegh reported that she was asked about the work of activists inside and outside Bahrain, severely tortured, sexually abused, insulted and threatened to be raped if she continued her human rights work.

**On (May 28, 2017),** Blogger Hassan Al-Sharqi, was insulted during his interrogation, beaten and ordered to stop his activities on twitter. Besides, Activist Abduljalil Yousef, was interrogated for four hours, subjected to insults and psychological torture and was threatened that if he does not stop his human rights activities, he and his family will be targeted.

All of this takes place in Bahrain without any regard to the human rights mechanisms and international laws, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the right to freedom of opinion.

**"No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"**, Article 5 of the UDHR stresses.

## THE POPULAR RAGE

Angry protests continued to be staged in condemnation of the raid by the security forces against protesters in Duraz.

**Civil disobedience was declared for three days. Besides, clashes broke out between demonstrators and Bahraini government forces in several areas across Bahrain. Shops were closed in many villages, as youth protesters set tires ablaze, blocking a number of streets.**

The security forces raided symbolic funeral procession held for the five Duraz victims, who were killed by the Ministry of Interior during the raid on protesters in Duraz, before it buried their bodies in a secret way on Friday.

## Part Seven

### RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**In spite of its alleged commitments, the government of Bahrain has consistently failed to cooperate meaningfully with its obligations, through placing illegal restrictions on public freedoms; particularly religious freedoms, eroding the space for peaceful expression and undermining the right to assembly.**

We, the undersigned human right organisations, are thoughtfully concerned on the increasing use of excessive force to target peaceful protests, and to suppress dissent in Bahrain. We, greatly, condemn the recent disastrous raid on Duraz, as well as the judicial prosecution of Sheikh Isa Qassim.

### **THUS, WE CALL THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN TO, IMMEDIATELY:**

- 1. Accountability of all officials responsible for extrajudicial killings of the 5 victims during the raid on Duraz;**
- 2. Adopting a serious solution to deal with the outstanding political and human rights issues that are causing instability in the country;**



- 3. Restore all arbitrarily revoked citizenships and amend the citizenship law to restrict these practices;**
- 4. Remove the restrictions on the right to assembly and other regulations that forbid citizens from expressing their opinions, without fear of reprisal;**
- 5. Fully and transparently, ratify and implement the ICCPR, which protect civil rights and freedoms, and to adhere to international standards of human rights.**
- 6. Release and/or drop all charges against human rights activists and members of CSOs, prosecuted for their work, and for exercising the rights to free expression, association, and assembly.**

**FURTHER, THEY CALL ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, REPRESENTED BY INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS AND THE ALLIES OF BAHRAIN, PARTICULARLY THE UNITED STATES, THE UNITED KINGDOM, TO URGENTLY EXERCISE THEIR ACTIVE ROLE TO,**

- 1. Break the security siege on the village of Duraz, and end the house arrest imposed on Ayatollah Qassim.**

- 2. Open a transparent and independent investigation, in which independent civil society organisations (CSOs) are participated, to hold accountable those involved in the killing of five peaceful protesters, and to compensate the victims;**
- 3. End the violation against public freedoms, and putting an end to the human rights violations taking place in the village of Duraz;**
- 4. End the excessive use of force while dealing with peaceful demonstrators;**
- 5. Stop the prosecution of the participants in the Duraz peaceful assembly.**
- 6. Find a serious solution to deal with the human rights crisis by implementing the recommendations of the Independent Commission of Inquiry and the recommendations of the UPR according to a timetable and under the supervision of the United Nations.**

## A CRIME OUTSIDE COVERAGE

Report monitoring grave violations in suppressing Al Duraz peaceful assembly in Bahrain

December 2017

designed by: 

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