



ANNUAL
REPORT
التقرير السنوي



BAHRAIN

Repression of Speech and Deprivation of Rights

A report documenting human rights violations committed by the regime in 2018

Contents

About us

Executive summary

The First Quarter's Milestones 1 January – 31 March

The government accelerates pace of arbitrary arrests:

The judiciary issues arbitrary rulings

Peaceful protest is forbidden and suppressed

The government disrupts peaceful political action and imposes restrictions on civil society institutions

The Second Quarter's Milestones 1 April- 30 June

The government arrests 152 citizens, including two women

221 peaceful protests launched, 14% of which suppressed by the regime

441 citizens hands down harsh sentences totaling 6,383 years

The court revokes citizenship of 249 people over charges pertaining to the country's human rights and political situation

US State Department reports highlight Bahraini government's human rights violations against citizens

The Third Quarter's Milestones 1 July – 30 September

The government continues to carry out arbitrary arrests

221 peaceful protests launched, 14% of which suppressed by the regime

Despite judicial recess, 39 citizens were sentenced over 15 cases

Restrictions on the Shiite community continue

The Fourth Quarter's Milestones 1 October – 31 December

Arbitrary arrests, the regime's methodology to silence mouths

96 peaceful protests launched, the government ignores demonstrators

The judiciary continues its arbitrary judgments against citizens

Activists internally restricted win international awards

Conclusion and Recommendations

About us

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in 2002, and registered with the Bahraini Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs in the same year. The Center was officially shut down in 2004 following the arrest of its president at that time, Abdel Hadi Al-Khawaja, in relation to a conference he had organized to address the issue of poverty in Bahrain, a matter that was deemed by the government to be an overt incitement of hatred against the regime. It is worth noting that since 2011, Khawaja has been serving a life sentence in connection to his human rights activities. The Center's current President, Nabeel Rajab, is also languishing behind bars, on charges pertaining to freedom of opinion and expression and the use of social media. Access to BCHR website has remained blocked to the public since 2007 at the behest of the government. Given the detention of Nabeel Rajab, the acting President now is Nedal Al Salman, who is also the head of

International Relations and Women & Children's Rights
Advocacy at BCHR.

Despite such arbitrary decisions and practices targeting BCHR and the prosecution of its members, either by sending them to prison or by detaining them on security grounds, the organization remains one of the most important and credible rights groups in Bahrain. Thanks to its ongoing work and struggle to promote human rights in Bahrain, it has been able to gain a wide local and international support and respect, within the country and beyond.

As members of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, our goal is to build a prosperous democratic country that respects the values of justice and freedom and is free of discrimination and other violations of human rights. Our mission is to encourage and support individuals and groups to be proactive in the protection of their own and others' rights; and to struggle to promote the values and principles of democracy and human rights in accordance with the

international norms, charters and conventions. The Center's work also focuses on strengthening public freedom and basic civil, political and economic rights, combating all forms of discrimination and providing support and protection to victims of human rights abuses as well as the vulnerable.

Executive summary

On 14 February 2011, the movement calling for democracy and the right to self-determination began in Bahrain, where tens of thousands of Bahraini citizens took to the streets to demand political reforms and defense of basic human rights, including the right to freedom of expression. The authorities in Bahrain, on the other hand, consider participation in human rights activities as a practice of disloyalty.

On 15 March 2011, Bahrain declared a state of emergency, which suspended the articles of the Constitution and handed over power to the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces. This constitutes, per se, a violation of human rights charters that provide for freedom of opinion and expression that citizens demanded in February protests.

On 28 April 2011, nearly a month and a half after declaring the State of Emergency Law in Bahrain, the country froze Articles 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 21 and 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights¹. That was through a letter sent by the Permanent Representative of Bahrain, Tawfiq al-Mansour, to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. During the state of

emergency period and the ensuing months, the authorities had committed manifold violations in front of the international public opinion.

Methodology

The following report is mainly based on summing up cases of violations documented by the Monitoring and Documentation Team at the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. Additionally, the report reviews daily monitoring of incidents occurring within the scope of the exercise of rights and freedoms that are met by arbitrary procedures carried out by the government agencies and their affiliates in Bahrain.

In some statistics and due to the absence of unbiased sources, we had to monitor data from daily newspapers which belong to entities that are backed by official bodies.

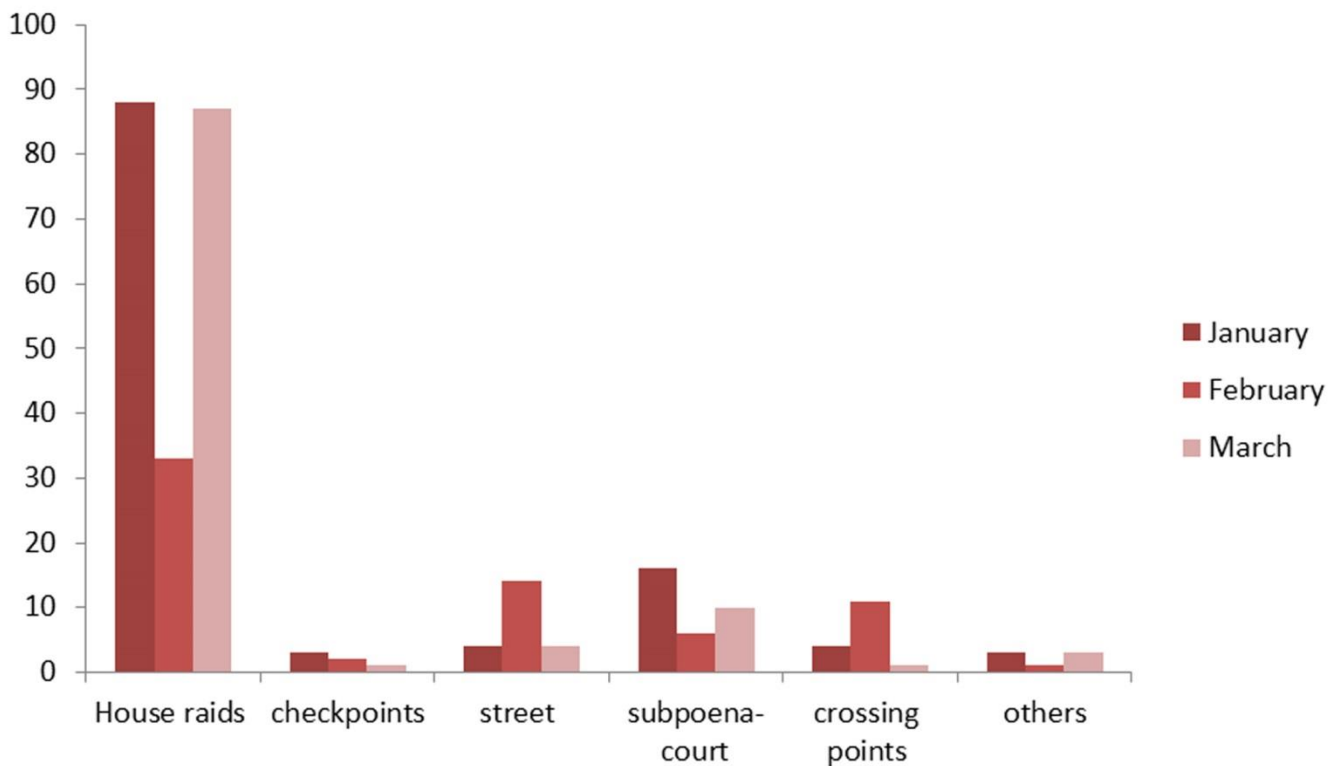
A group of people, some wearing face coverings, are gathered outdoors, holding several flags. The most prominent flag is the national flag of Qatar, featuring a white upper triangle and a maroon lower triangle with seven white serrated bands. The scene appears to be a public demonstration or rally. The background shows a dirt ground and some buildings in the distance.

The Third Quarter's Milestones

1 July – 30 September

The government accelerates pace of arbitrary arrests

During the first quarter of 2018 (1 January - 31 March), the authorities in Bahrain arrested 287 citizens, including 46 children (under the age of 18) and one woman. 88% of these arrests had been arbitrarily carried out; through the illegal dawn raids of houses and the arrest of some people at crossing points (the airport, King Fahd Causeway) or checkpoints. Some others were also arrested from the street, as some protesters were chased during daily marches, and the wanted persons, who preferred to be far away from the eyes of the Ministry of the Interior's affiliates to avoid arrest and torture, were being also prosecuted.



The above graph shows that during the first quarter of 2018, the policy of arbitrary arrests was rampant; by raiding homes at dawn without showing an arrest warrant or even holding a legal permit for inspection. Members of the security services usually leave behind destruction and chaos after their inspections.

The first quarter of each year is marked by peaceful protests called by youth groups condemning the dispersal of the peaceful sit-in for two times: the first in February and the second in mid-March.

Among those arrested were 4 religious leaders: Mahmoud Al-Aali, Hamza Al-Deri, Sayed Adnan Sayed Hashem and Issa Al-Mo'men, who were arrested on charges related to the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

On 21 February 2018, citizen Jalila al-Sayyed Ameen was detained from the courtroom after the court upheld against her a one-year prison sentence, a fine of 1,000 BD and confiscation of all her electronic devices. She was further detained to complete the remainder of her sentence after being accused of misuse of social networking websites, a case directly related to the right of individuals to freedom of opinion and expression.

The judiciary issues arbitrary rulings

Bahraini courts (primary, appeal, and the Court of Cassation) issued judgments against 212 citizens in 34 cases related to the political and legal situation in the country with a total of 2,338 years' sentences and fines totaling more than 122 thousand BD.

Among these sentences, the court issued life sentences against 38 persons, while 10 were sentenced to death and 93 citizens had their citizenship revoked.

*** 10 citizens were sentenced to death in various cases, one of them is through a military court**

On 29 January 2018, the Court of Cassation upheld a death sentence against detainee Maher Abbas al-Khabaz. The court had previously confirmed the ruling after the Public Prosecution charged al-Khabaz with deliberately killing a policeman using a fire extinguisher. Amnesty International² has demanded in an urgent appeal to abolish the death sentence of torture victim Maher Abbas al-Khabaz, and to declare a formal moratorium on executions in order to abolish the death penalty.

On 31 January 2018, the Fourth High Criminal Court in Bahrain issued sentences to 60 citizens in the case of "joining a terrorist group"; two of them were sentenced to death and revocation of citizenship, 19 were sentenced to life imprisonment and revocation of citizenship, 17 to 15 years' imprisonment and 9 defendants to 10 years' imprisonment. The court, on the other hand, acquitted two defendants of the charges assigned to them.

On 1 February 2018, the Fourth High Criminal Court³ sentenced one detainee to death and 13 other detainees to life imprisonment.

Additional sentences were: 15 years' imprisonment against eight, five years' imprisonment against two defendants, three years' imprisonment against two others and revocation of citizenship against 25 defendants, in addition to obliging 22 other defendants to pay charges for the damages and confiscation of seizures. These verdicts were handed down to the defendants for the charges leveled against them, which included causing a blast in the Abu Saiba area that killed a security officer and injured many others and many civilians.

On 21 February, the Military High Court of Appeal issued its verdict on the appeals against the first- instance judgment handed down in the case of "forming a terrorist cell and committing a number of other terrorist offenses". The Court turned down the appeals submitted by four defendants and, accordingly, upheld the death sentence and the citizenship revocation decision⁴ on charges of attempted murder and inciting murder. The appeal of the Military Prosecution against other convicts was also rejected since the conviction was handed down in absentia.

It should be noted that the detainees accused in this case had

previously provided allegations of torture and ill-treatment, not to mention the enforced disappearance that they had been subjected to and the incommunicado detention they had been held in, where they were denied access to the outside world or communication with their lawyers- that was stipulated in the international conventions- as documented by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR).

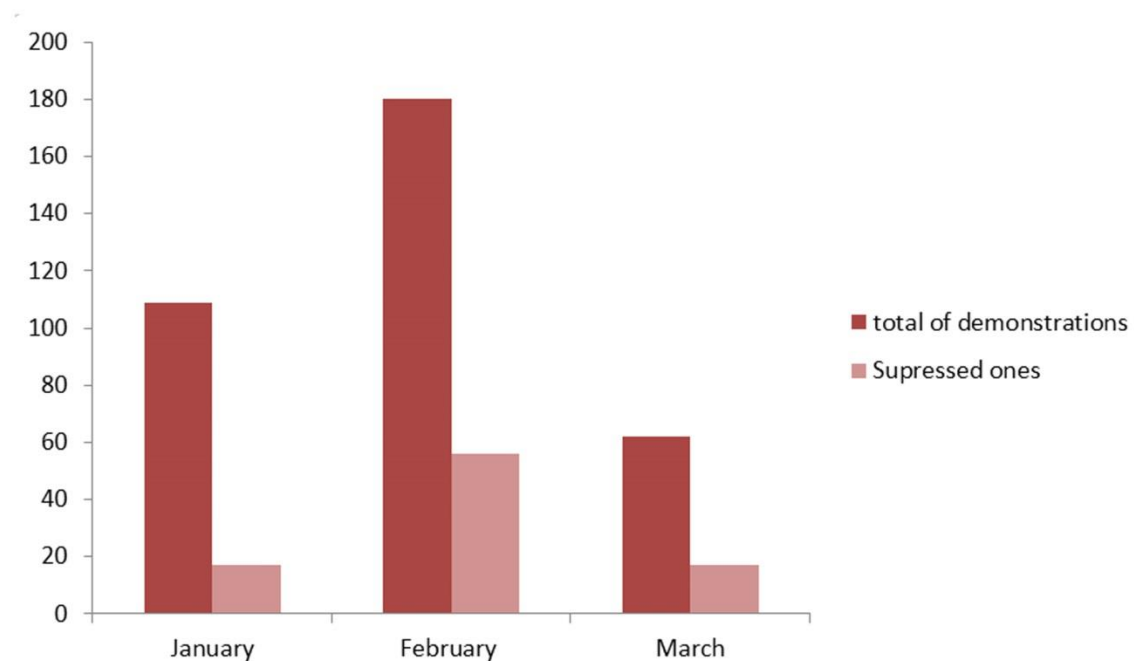
*** The appeal court supports a suspended prison sentence against Sheikh Issa Qassem⁵**

On Monday, 29 January 2018, the Court of Cassation upheld the first-instance ruling to withdraw the nationality of prominent Shiite cleric and opposition leader Sheikh Issa Qasim and held him in detention for one suspended year. Qasim had been under house arrest after he was sentenced in 2016 for being accused of serving foreign interests, raising illegal fund and conducting money-laundering operations. The sentence included a 265,000 \$ fine against Qassem and two other defendants involved in the same case, not to mention the confiscation of money and property that had been seized.

Peaceful protest is forbidden and suppressed

According to the statistics of BCHR's Monitoring and Documentation Section, 351 peaceful protests had been launched during the first quarter of 2018. The Interior Ministry's affiliates suppressed 90 of these peaceful protests and dispersed the crowd using tear gas. Intensive security presence prevented most of the peaceful demonstrations from being launched out of fear of arrest.

The graph below shows the details of the peaceful demonstrations that were launched and suppressed during the first three months:



The government disrupts peaceful political action and imposes restrictions on civil society institutions

* Al-Wefaq⁶ and 'Wa'ad' groups disbanded⁷

On 19 February 2018, the Court of Cassation permanently closed the case of the Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society after it issued its ruling upholding the decision to dissolve the group, liquidate its business account and devolve its ownership to the state. The Court of Cassation then ruled, in its final judgment, to uphold the ruling and reject both appeals filed by the Ministry of Justice and Al-Wefaq, while obliging the appellants to pay for the expenses.

The case dates back to June 14, 2017, when the Minister of Justice filed a lawsuit before the Administrative Court demanding that Al-Wefaq headquarters be closed and that all its accounts, fixed and movable funds, to be seized and its activities to be suspended. The court stated, based on the minister's claims, that al-Wefaq does not respect the principle of the rule of law and does not adhere to the provisions of the law regulating and protecting the principles of coexistence, tolerance, and respect for others. The Court also

also argued that the organization fosters an atmosphere for the incubation of terrorism, extremism, and violence, and accused it of calling for the foreign interference in the national affairs of the country.

On 19 March 2018, the Court of Cassation rejected an urgent request to halt the implementation of the ruling to dissolve the National Democratic Action Society “Wa’ad” and confiscate its assets for the benefit of the state. The court referred the case's file to the technical office for filing a note of their legal opinion. The Court of Appeal had earlier upheld a ruling to disband the organization and liquidate its funds.

Bahrain's Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments filed a lawsuit demanding the dissolution of the National Democratic Action Society (Wa'ad), claiming that the organization had committed gross violations, including; breaching the principle of respect for the rule of law, supporting terrorism and promoting violence by "glorifying convicted terrorists and saboteurs who used weapons in killing and wounding several security [personnel]",

in addition to supporting entities convicted of incitement and the practice of violence and promoting violent and forceful overthrow of the country's political system.

* Political Isolation Law put into effect, citizens deprived of their political rights

The Parliament had passed, during the February 20 session, a motion forbidding the leaders and members of dissolved political societies (upon final verdicts) to run in the municipal and parliamentary elections; because they violated the provisions of the Kingdom's Constitution and its laws. The proposed bill also prohibits anyone who intentionally harms or disrupts constitutional life by ending or leaving parliamentary service or by having his membership be revoked for the same reasons. This means that more than 70,000 Bahraini citizens would be deprived of their political rights, in a flagrant violation of the provisions and conventions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

* The government uses citizenship as a weapon to punish the opposition

In the first quarter of 2018, the court stripped 93 citizens of their nationality, 75 of them by virtue of a first-instance ruling, 16 by the Court of Appeal and 2 by the Court of Cassation. It also deported 20 Bahraini nationals, including a woman, from the country after revoking their nationality earlier.

On 25 January 2018, the court upheld the decision to expel 10 citizens who were stripped of their nationality. They were also fined 100 BD each on the pretext of violating the “Immigration and Residence Law” after their citizenship were arbitrarily dropped on November 6, 2012, upon a decision of the Ministry of the Interior. The Lower Criminal Court ruled, in October 2014, that 10 citizens should be deported after they challenged the Interior Ministry's decision before the court. They are: Mariam Sayed Ibrahim, Ismael Khaleel Darwish, Ibrahim Khalil Darwish, Adnan Ahmed Ali Haji, Habeeb Darwish, Musa Ghuloom, Abdalnabi Abdulraza Al Moussawi, Sayed AbdulAmir AbdulRaza Al Moussawi, Ibrahim Ghuloom, Hussain Kareemi, Sayed Mohammad Ali Abd al-Rida, and Tavmour Kareemi.

According to Human Rights Watch⁹, the authorities in Bahrain deported eight citizens after an appeals court upheld a 2012 lower court ruling that stripped nine people of citizenship and ordered them deported. Human Rights Watch added that that the eight deportees were among 31 Bahraini activists and human rights lawyers whose citizenship was revoked in November 2012, on charges of "harming state security", and that only five of those 31 defendants had dual citizenship, meaning that the majority of them are now stateless. "Bahraini authorities have dropped all pretence of pluralism and tolerance for dissent and are clearly stripping away the citizenships of people whom they find undesirable," HRW Middle East director Sarah Leah Whitson said. She added, "Bahrainis who dare speak out for change now risk not only arbitrary detention and torture but statelessness and deportation to an uncertain future."

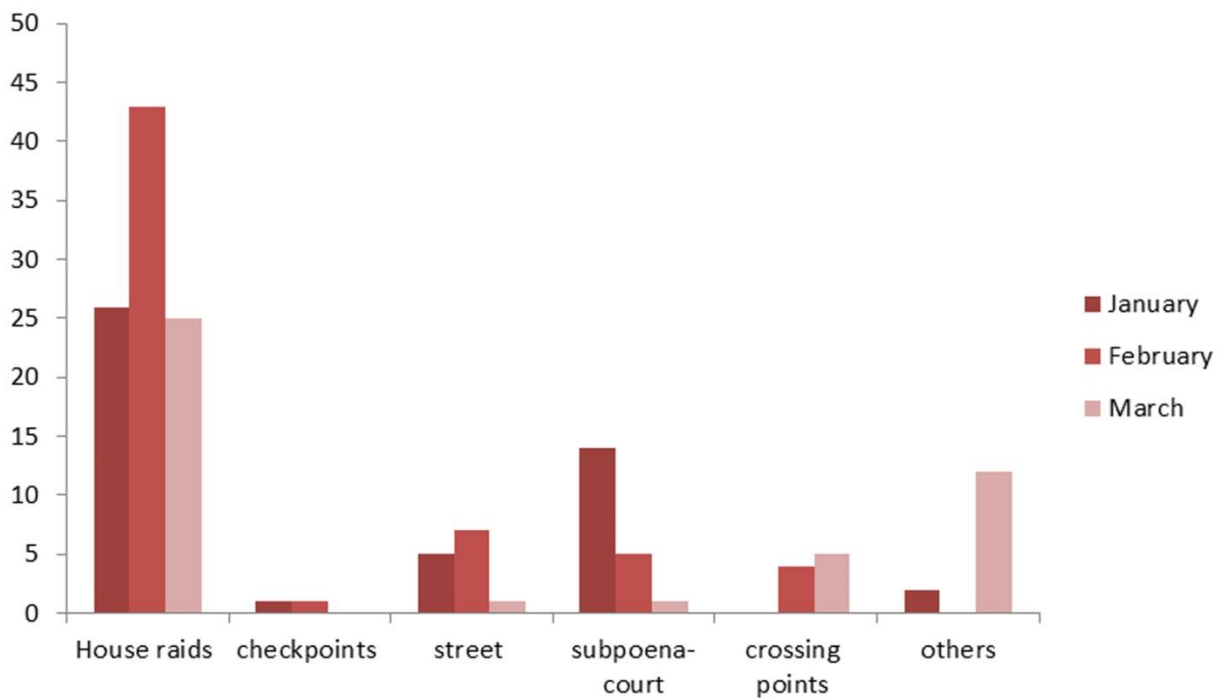
A woman in a black hijab and abaya is seen from behind, holding a white and red flag. She is surrounded by a line of riot police wearing helmets and carrying shields. The scene is outdoors on a paved surface.

The Second Quarter's Milestones

1 April- 30 June

The government arrests 152 citizens, including two women

During the second quarter of 2018 (1 April - 30 June), the authorities in Bahrain arrested 152 citizens, including 14 children under the age of 18 and two women. 87% of these arrests had been arbitrarily carried out; through the illegal dawn raids of houses and the arrest of some people at crossing points (Bahrain International Airport, King Fahd Causeway) or checkpoints. Some others were also arrested from the street, as some protesters were chased during daily marches, and the wanted persons, who preferred to be far away from the eyes of the Ministry of the Interior's affiliates to avoid arrest and torture, were also being prosecuted.



The graph indicates that during the second quarter of 2018, the arbitrary arrests through raiding homes at dawn -without showing an arrest warrant or even holding what proves that there is legal authorization to inspect- represent the prevailing methodology used by police officers in charge of the arrest campaigns, who usually leave behind destruction and chaos after their inspections.

Among those arrested were the well-known Shiite cleric Abd al-Amir al-Karrani on a charge related to the right to freedom of opinion and expression. On 17 May 2018, Zakia al-Barbourri (28 years) and Fatima Daoud Hassan (19 years) were arbitrarily arrested.

in addition to supporting entities convicted of incitement and the practice of violence and promoting violent and forceful overthrow of the country's political system.

* Political Isolation Law put into effect, citizens deprived of their political rights

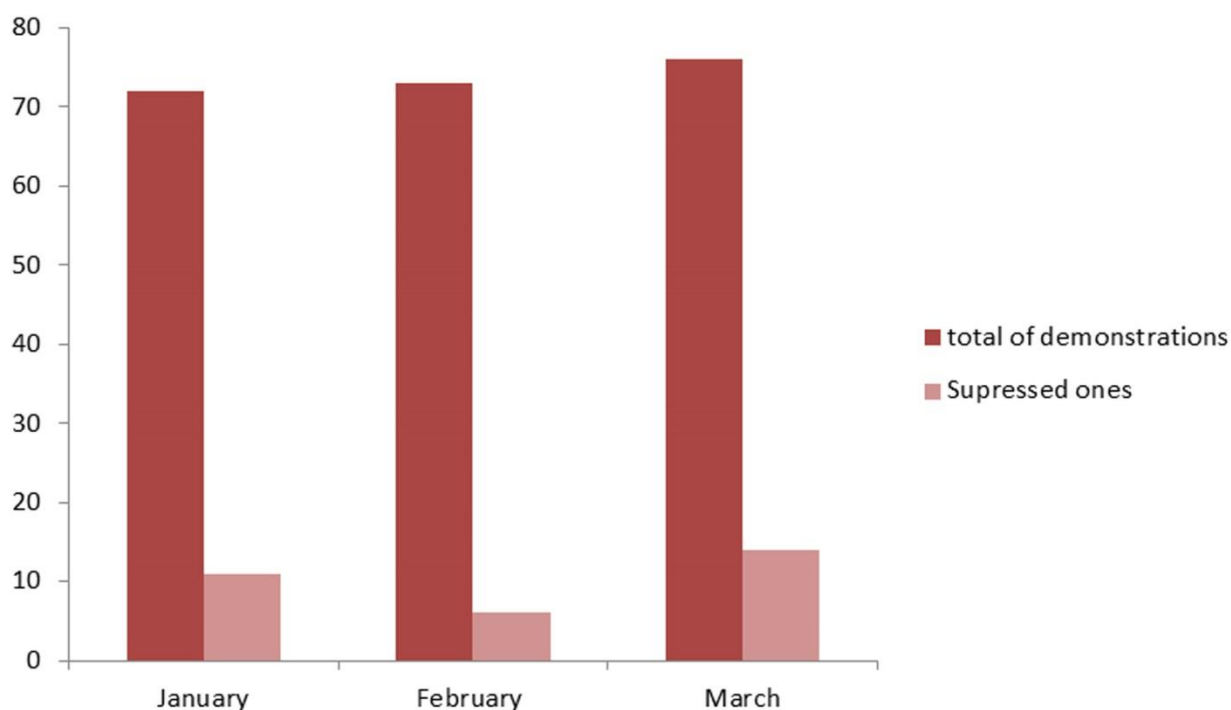
The Parliament had passed, during the February 20 session, a motion forbidding the leaders and members of dissolved political societies (upon final verdicts) to run in the municipal and parliamentary elections; because they violated the provisions of the Kingdom's Constitution and its laws. The proposed bill also prohibits anyone who intentionally harms or disrupts constitutional life by ending or leaving parliamentary service or by having his membership be revoked for the same reasons. This means that more than 70,000 Bahraini citizens would be deprived of their political rights, in a flagrant violation of the provisions and conventions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Their houses in the village of Al-Nuwaitrat were illegally raided at dawn, and during the raid, the two houses were thoroughly searched and some properties and personal belongings were confiscated.

221 peaceful protests launched, 14% of which suppressed by the regime

Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) team monitored 221 peaceful marches during the period from 1 April to 30 June 2018, 31 of them were suppressed by the security bodies using tear gas.

The chart below illustrates how protest marches went by during the second quarter of the year:



441 citizens hands down harsh sentences totaling 6,383 years

During the second quarter of 2018 (1 April - 30 June), Bahrain's courts (lower courts, appeal, and cassation) sentenced 441 citizens with a total of 6383 years in 35 cases relating to the deteriorating human rights and political situation in the country. The total fines exceed BD 440 thousand. The court sentenced 75 citizens to life imprisonment, executed 9 detainees and stripped 249 citizens of their nationality. According to the monitoring, all death sentences were issued by the Court of Cassation.

*** Bahrain's court of appeal upholds sentence against Nabeel Rajab¹⁰**

The Supreme Court of Appeal rejected the appeal filed by Nabeel Rajab, head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, against a five-year prison sentence handed to him on charges of; spreading false news and rumors in time of war, insulting foreign countries and insulting the Interior Ministry. This was against the backdrop of some tweets he wrote on his account on the social networking website "Twitter" criticizing Bahrain's participation in the war on

Yemen. Other tweets were about his documentation of mistreatment and torture against some detainees in Bahrain's Jaw Prison.

*** Death sentences against 9 citizens, including 7 detainees, upheld**

On 25 April 2018, the Military Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence against six Bahrainis, including one military officer, after being accused of attempting to kill the commander-in-chief. Two of the defendants in the case were sentenced in absentia.

The next day, the Chief Military Justice stated that the King had ratified the Military Court of Cassation's ruling issued against those detained pending the case of "the Commander-in-Chief attempted murder", while he ordered the commutation of the death sentence against four of them to life imprisonment.

On 21 May 2018, the Court of Cassation upheld the death sentence against two detainees in the case of the killing of Captain Mohamed Naveed in Karababad region. On June 4, 2018, the same court upheld the death sentence against a citizen involved in the "Al-Eker bombing and the killing of civilians" case.

* Al Wefaq's leader Sheikh Ali Salman and his two co-defendants acquitted of spying for Qatar

On 21 June 2018, the Supreme Court acquitted Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society's Secretary-General, Sheikh Ali Salman, and his two aids and former deputies of Al-Wefaq block; Ali Al-Aswad and Sheikh Hassan Sultan, of the charge of conspiring with Qatar.

The verdict came after trial sessions in which the Public Prosecution charged Salman and his two aids with; collaborating and communicating with a foreign state (Qatar) and with those serving its interests to carry out hostile acts against Bahrain, delivering and divulging defense secrets to a foreign country, and disseminating tendentious news and statements about the internal situation in Bahrain for the sake of undermining its prestige and status.

The court revokes citizenship of 249 people over charges pertaining to the country's human rights and political situation

During the second quarter of 2018, courts in Bahrain had issued 14

verdicts revoking the citizenship of a total of 249 citizens: seven verdicts were issued against 135 citizens by the primary courts, two verdicts against 9 citizens by appeal courts and five verdicts against 105 citizens by court of cassation.

On 16 May 2018, the Fourth High Criminal Court issued verdicts against 115 citizens with sentences ranging from 3 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment after being convicted of; collaborating with two external bodies, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the Iraqi Hizballah Brigades, training with and using illegal weapons and explosives, and forming a militant terrorist group called the "Zulfiqar Brigades ".The court, on the other hand, ordered the acquittal of the 23 remaining defendants, acquitted four of the convicts of some of the charges leveled against them, and stripped 115 of those convicted of certain charges of their Bahraini nationality while ordering the confiscation of seizures.

Lynn Maalouf, Middle East Research Director at Amnesty International's regional office in Beirut, said that Bahraini courts' revocation of citizenship of 115 citizens is "one of the most severe rulings yet, and is further proof that the Bahrain authorities have no

regard whatsoever for international fair trial standards.” She called on the Bahraini government to stop the arbitrary displacement of its citizens by arbitrarily depriving them of their nationality, stressing that turning citizens into "stateless" people and banishing them by forcing them to leave the country is a violation of international law. Amnesty International has documented cases of torture and ill-treatment that resulted in ‘confessions’ over which those citizens were convicted. Since 2012, a total of 718 individuals have been stripped of their Bahraini nationality, including 231 since the beginning of 2018. Some of them have subsequently been forcibly expelled from Bahrain.

US State Department reports highlight Bahraini government's human rights violations against citizens

* Bahrain’s National Security Agency (NSA) and MOI Ombudsman have not prevented the violations nor meaningfully investigated them

The United States (US) Department of State¹¹ released its annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017. The report addressed a range of issues including arbitrary deprivation of life and other unlawful or politically motivated killings. It also includes reports and testimonies of arbitrary or unlawful killings by Bahraini security forces. In the same context, the report drew attention to many incidents, including the raid on the Diraz sit-in. The report also shed the light on deaths in prisons recording 8 cases of death between 2016 and 2017. The report quoted the Bahraini government's allegations of prison deaths but did not provide any updates.

With regard to torture and ill-treatment in prisons, the report stated that there were testimonies from human rights organizations and former detainees that prove cases of torture and ill-treatment. Activists claimed that there was an increase in torture cases after Bahrain had restored arrest powers to National Security Agency (NSA). The report mentioned several cases of torture, including that of human rights activist Ebtisam al-Sayegh, who was summoned for interrogation, subjected to physical and psychological torture and

Ombudsman's to investigate sexual assault, and threatened to rape her daughter and torture her husband.

Human rights groups reported authorities subjected children, sometimes under age 15, to various forms of mistreatment, including beating, slapping, kicking, and verbal abuse. The Ministry of Interior reported 35 arrests of children under age 15 from January to September. As of September there were 26 children at the Juvenile Care Center awaiting trial and 19 more serving sentences, as mentioned in the report.

The report also addressed the harsh conditions in prisons and detention centers; due to overcrowding in detention facilities, lack of access to water for drinking and washing, lack of shower facilities and unhygienic toilet facilities. Inmates at Jaw Prison staged several hunger strikes throughout the year in protest against detention conditions, lack of religious freedom, and poor access to health services.

The report pointed out that the Bahraini government allowed the quasi-governmental National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI) Ombudsman's to investigate

prison conditions, but human rights organizations questioned the independence of these government oversight institutions and stated they did not meaningfully investigate or prevent abuses.

* US State Department¹² report on religious freedom: Bahrain's Shia citizens are still subjects to discrimination

The US State Department's May 31 report confirmed that the government in Bahrain continues to persecute the majority of Shia citizens in Bahrain on religious grounds. It highlighted the government's continued crackdown on religious freedoms through the summoning and detention of clerics, civil society activists and opposition politicians from the Shiite community.

The report specifically detailed the security restrictions imposed on Sheikh Isa Qassim, one of the most prominent Shiite leaders in the Bahraini opposition; as the police restricted entry into Qassim's home village (Diraz), following a sit-in around his house by his supporters who protested the revocation of his citizenship.

On May 23, security forces conducted an operation to disperse the sit-in by force resulting in 286 arrests and five deaths.

According to the report, international human rights organizations

published reports stating Shia prisoners were vulnerable to intimidation, harassment, and mistreatment by prison guards because of their religious affiliation. Shia community representatives complained about what they said was discrimination in government employment, education, and the justice system. The government-run television station continued to air Friday sermons from large Sunni mosques, but not sermons from Shia mosques.

The report also discussed the process of naturalization as seen by human rights activists who say that the government's naturalization and citizenship process favor Sunni applicants over Shia applicants. They asserted the government continued to recruit Sunnis from other countries to join the security forces, granted them expedited naturalization, and provided them with public housing. The report also cited statements by human rights activists confirming discrimination against Shiites even in education. Interview panels for university scholarships included questions related to the political situation in the country to explore students' political views and family background.

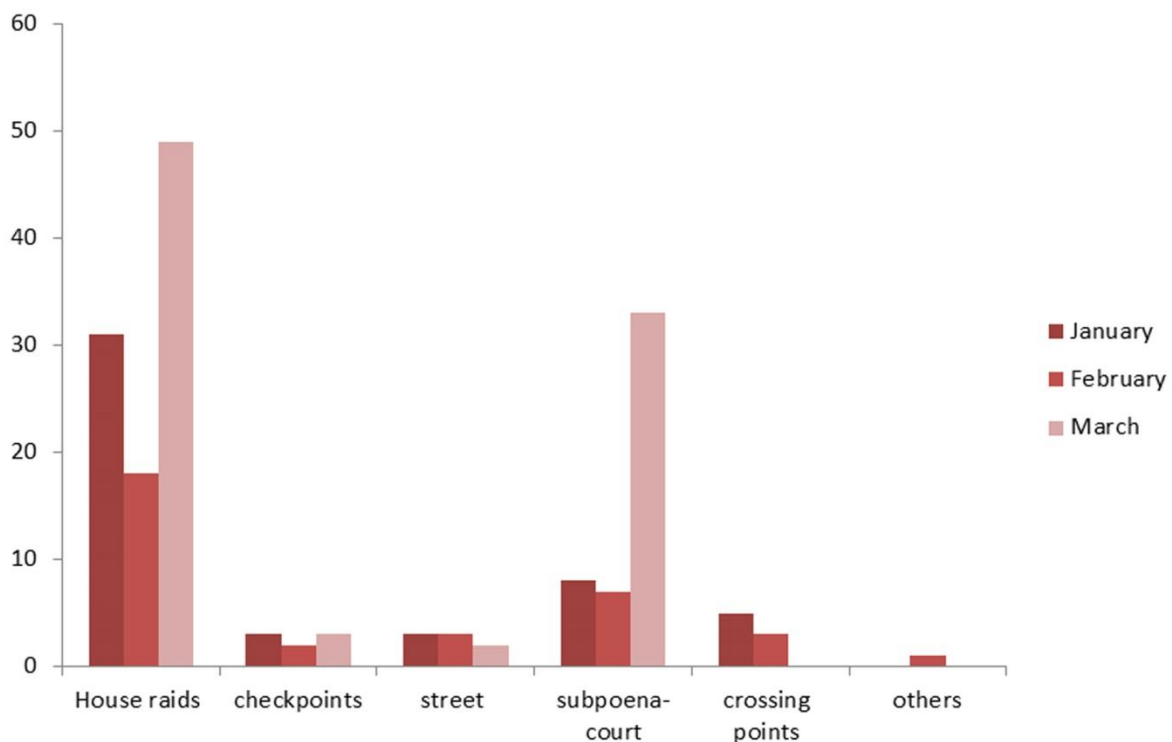


The First Quarter's Milestones

1 January–31 March

The government continues to carry out arbitrary arrests

During the third quarter of 2018 (1 July – 30 September), authorities in Bahrain arrested 171 citizens, including 12 children under the age of 18. Seventy-two percent of these arrests had been arbitrarily carried out; through the illegal dawn raids of houses and the arrest of some people at crossing points (Bahrain International Airport, King Fahd Causeway) or checkpoints. Some others were arrested from the street as protesters were targeted during daily marches. Wanted persons, who preferred to be far away from the eyes of the Ministry of the Interior's affiliates to avoid arrest, were also being prosecuted.



It is clear from the above graph that throughout the third quarter of 2018, arbitrary arrests and dawn raids, without showing an arrest warrant or even holding what proves that there is legal authorization to inspect, represent the prevailing methodology used by police officers in charge of the arrest campaigns, who usually leave behind destruction and chaos after their raids.

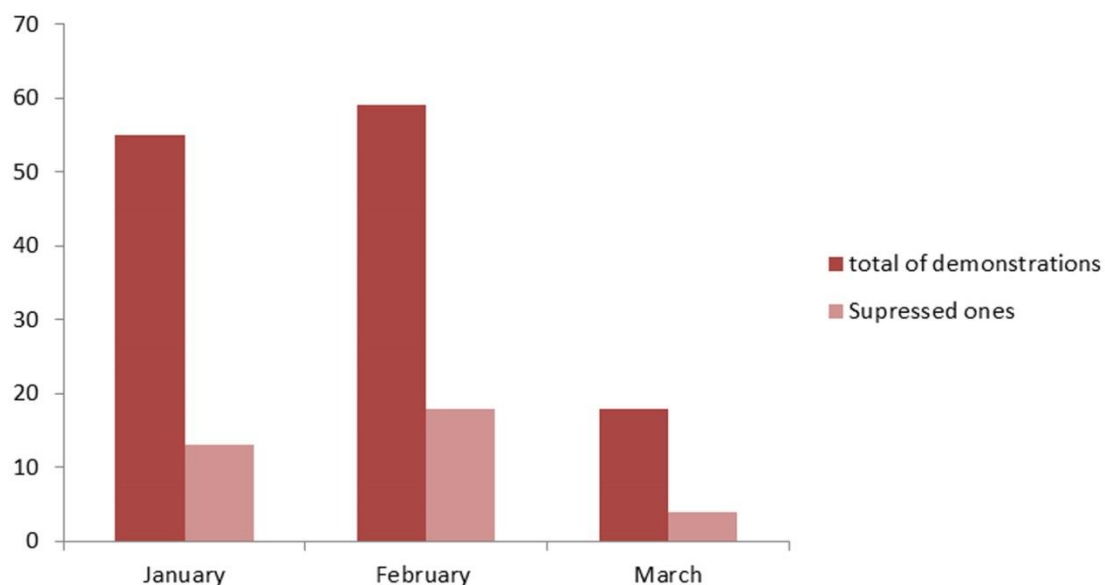
Among those arrested were four Shi'a preachers; Sheikh Yassin al-Jamri, Hani al-Bina, Majid al-Sahlawi, and Kamal al-Hashemi, following the sermons they gave during Ashura, which the authorities considered to be an incitement to hatred. Eight others were summoned and interrogated into the sermons gave addressing

historical issues that took place more than 1,000 years ago. The authorities also arrested 27 citizens who held an assembly prayer in the capital, Manama, after they deemed it to be an unlicensed gathering, especially since a decree had been previously issued prohibiting public gatherings without an official license and in the capital Manama in particular.

221 peaceful protests launched, 14% of which suppressed by the regime

As monitored by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 132 peaceful protests and marches in the period from 1 July to 30 September 2018 had been launched, but the security forces suppressed 35 of them using tear gas.

The following graph provides statistical details on the protest marches staged during the three months:



Despite judicial recess, 39 citizens were sentenced over 15 cases

During the second quarter of 2018 (July 1- September 30), Bahraini courts (primary, appeal, cassation) sentenced 39 citizens to 254 years in prison in 15 cases related to the deteriorating human rights and political situation in the country and a total of BD 200,000 fines. The court had sentenced one citizen to life imprisonment in the case of 'joining the 14 February Coalition', and revoked the nationality of

BD 200,000 fines. The court had sentenced one citizen to life imprisonment in the case of 'joining the 14 February Coalition', and revoked the nationality of 3 citizens in the same case. Note that the Bahraini courts are on judicial recess during the aforementioned period when judicial decisions are usually limited.

Restrictions on the Shiite community continue

*** Al-Alwiyyat mosque demolished for second time**

On Tuesday, 7 August 2018, the security forces bulldozed the Al-Alwiyyat mosque in Al-Zanj town for the second time after it was demolished during the state of emergency of March 2011, as part of a fierce campaign launched by the security forces against several mosques belonging to the Shiite community.

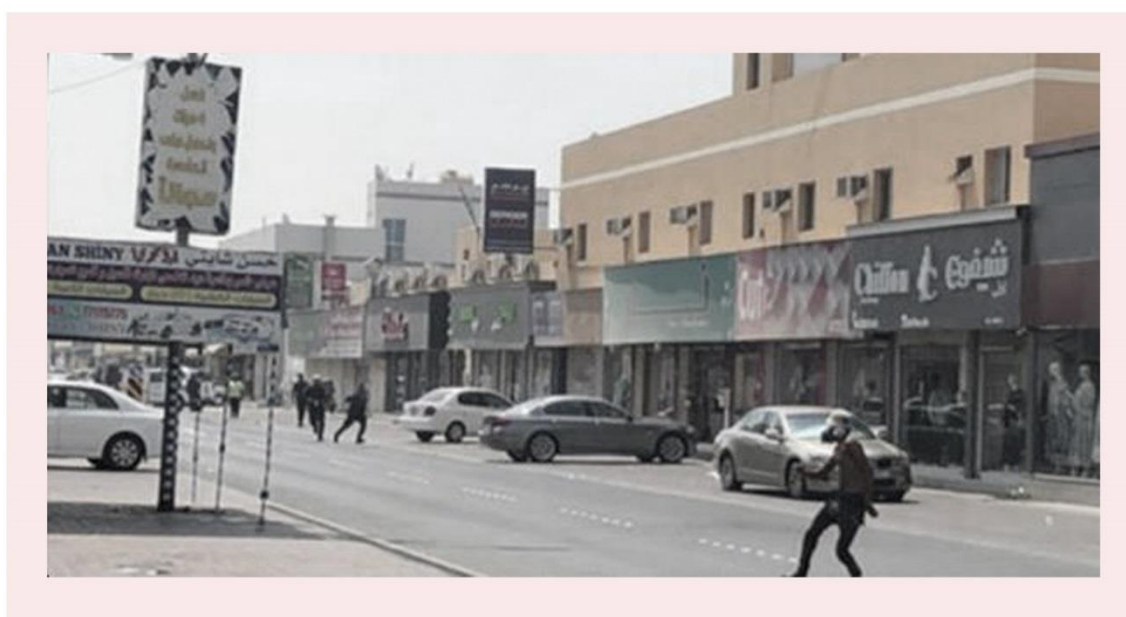
Activists posted on social media pictures of a bulldozer affiliated with the Ministry of Interior demolishing a base and fence temporarily established by the residents for Al-Alawiyat mosque in Al-Zinj within efforts to rebuild it.



* Bahraini authorities are fighting Ashura rituals

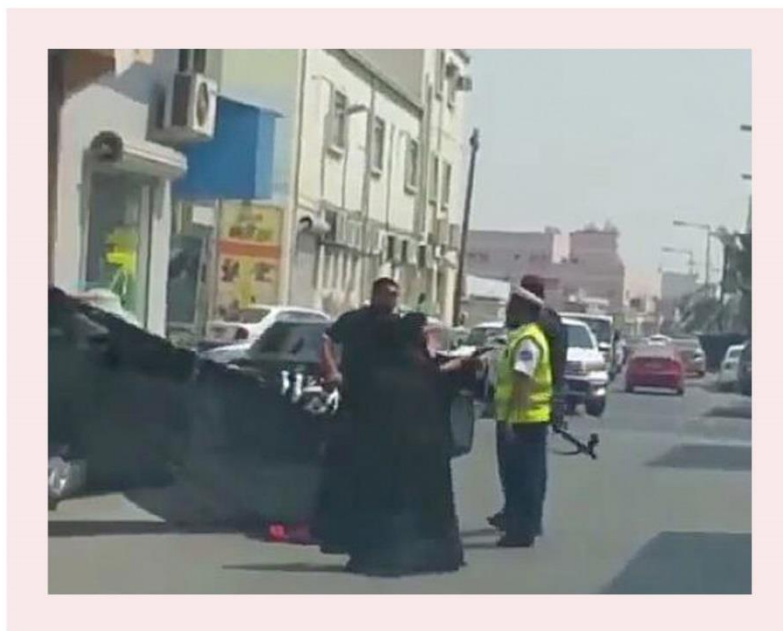
In September 2018, Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) issued a report -as documented by its team-on the violations committed against Shiite sect commemorating Ashura rituals¹³, which targets freedom of religion and belief. BCHR stated that the security authorities removed Ashura banners from 9 villages around the country, which led to confrontations with the residents. A number of youths who stood against the authorities were injured as a result. The authorities then interrogated 9 preachers and 2 eulogy citers

and arrested two preachers. The authorities also imposed restrictions on the place where the central mourning procession is annually held in Hamad Town on the fourth day of Muharram month.



Bahrain Shi'as community used to commemorate each year the death of Imam Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib, the third of the Shia Imams, by raising banners and spreading the manifestations of sadness. However, since 2011, the government has deliberately targeted and restricted these rituals. Security authorities began taking down Ashura banners and flags since September 11, and the

Northern District Municipality said it would deal with what it considered to be 'illegal banner advertisement'. On Saturday, 15 September, the security authorities removed Ashura banners from the village of Maalikiya,



which led to verbal clashes and confrontations between the residents and police forces. Police used shotguns to disperse protesters, which resulted in the injury of several young people by shrapnel all over their bodies.

On Wednesday, September 12, the Ministry of the Interior summoned Sayed Mohieldin al-Mishaal to Hamad town police station, where he was interrogated about the topic of one of his sermons before he was released later. On September 14, Ali

Al-Jufairi and Muhammad Al-Shaikh, known as Al- Karrani, were summoned and interrogated before being released later. On September 15, Munir al-Ma'touq was summoned for investigation. The police also summoned two preachers, Hani al-Banna and Yasin al-Jamiri, before issuing an arrest warrant to transfer them to the public prosecution. On Monday, September 17, the police summoned Khatib Mehdi Al-Kerzakani, Sayyad Sadiq Al-Ghuraifi, and the preachers Sayyed Hussein al-Maliki and Mahdi Sahwan, in an expeditious move deemed by rights observers to be systematically restricting the freedom of expression and belief. On Friday, September 14, the security authorities went to the organizers of the central Aaza'a (funeral) in Hamad Town, and asked them to remove the pictures of Sheikh Issa Ahmed Qassem, whose nationality was revoked two years ago by the government. BCHR considered such systematic practices as a crackdown on the Shiite community's rights, which are guaranteed by international covenants and treaties, particularly those that affirm the necessity of ensuring freedom of religion and belief as stipulated in Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

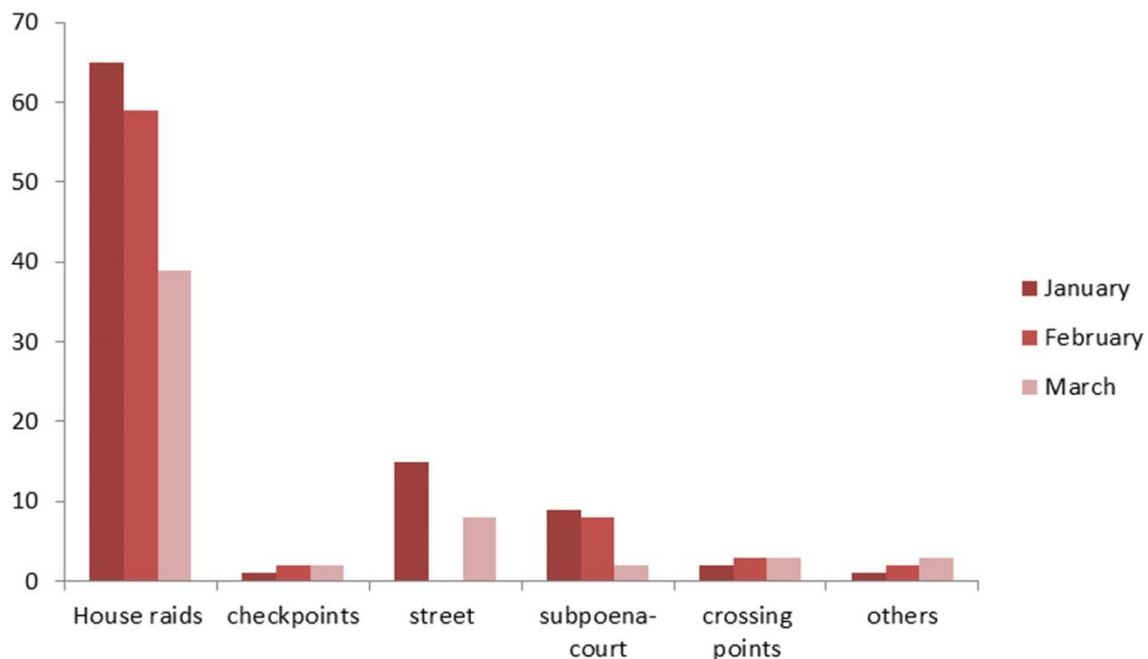
A person in a red jacket stands in a desolate, grey, industrial or post-apocalyptic environment, holding a large, tattered red flag. The scene is overlaid with horizontal red stripes. The text is centered on the image.

The Fourth Quarter's Milestones

1 October – 31 December

Arbitrary arrests, the regime's methodology to silence mouths

During the fourth quarter of 2018 (1 October – 31 December), the authority in Bahrain arrested 242 citizens, including 27 children under the age of 18 and 6 women. 92% of these arrests had been arbitrarily carried out; through the illegal dawn raids of houses and the arrest of some people at crossing points (Bahrain International Airport, King Fahd Causeway) or checkpoints. Some others were also arrested from the street, as some protesters were chased during daily marches, and the wanted persons, who preferred to be far away from the eyes of the Ministry of the Interior's affiliates to avoid arrest and torture, were also being prosecuted.



It is clear from the above graph that throughout the fourth quarter of 2018, arbitrary arrests and dawn raids, without showing an arrest warrant or even holding what proves that there is legal authorization to inspect, represent the prevailing methodology used by police officers in charge of the arrest campaigns, who usually leave behind destruction and chaos after their raids.

Among those arrested were two Shia clerics; Ahmad Al-Musli and Abdelmohsen al-Jamri, for they had taken up some historical accounts that the authority considered an attack on symbols of a sect. Sheikh Mounir al-Ma'touq was also summoned and interrogated in cases pertaining to the exercise of his right to express

opinions and exchange ideas.

On 13 November, members of the security forces arrested former Al-Wefaq MP Ali Al-Ashiri, after announcing his boycott of the parliamentary elections through a tweet on his account on Twitter. Al-Ashiri had posted a tweet saying: " Some are still asking me whether I will vote in the elections or not? As if they do not witness nor follow up the difficult political situation in Bahrain. I am a Bahraini citizen deprived of my political and civil rights, and hence, my family and I will boycott the parliamentary and municipal elections, and NO to the political isolation law."

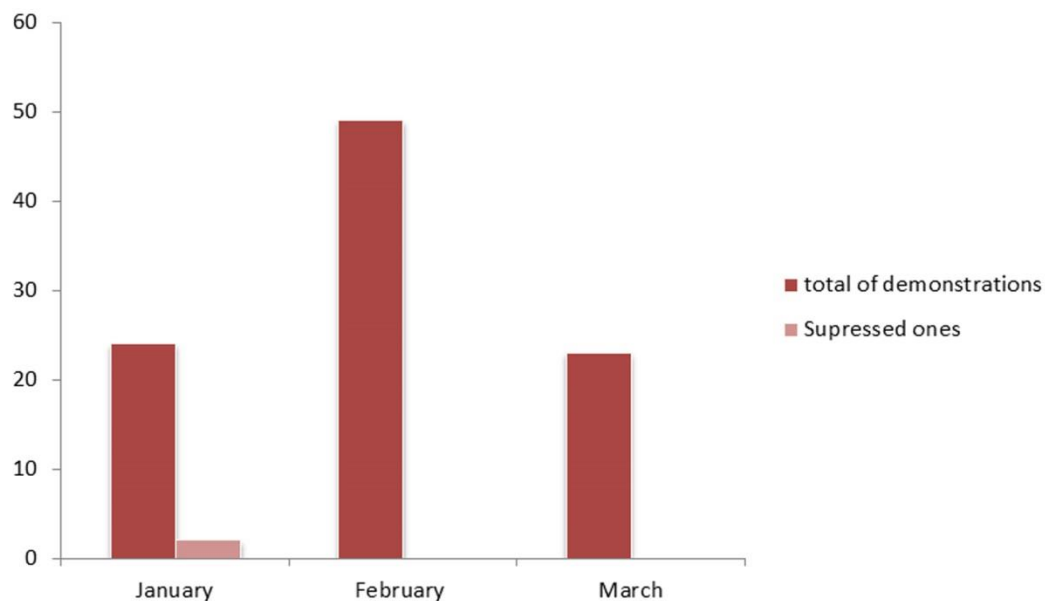
The public prosecution summoned Al-Ashiri for interrogation, interrogated him and ruled to hold him in detention on charges of "breaching the freedom of the referendum and disrupting the electoral process."

96 peaceful protests launched, the government ignores demonstrators

BCHR team monitored the launch of 96 peaceful demonstrations during the period from October 1 to December 31, 2018. The security forces, however, suppressed only two of these protests, as it

was noticed that the government had been turning a blind eye to peaceful marches and demonstrators.

The following graph shows all statistical details of the protest marches took place during the three months:



The judiciary continues its arbitrary judgments against citizens

During the fourth quarter of 2018, Bahrain's courts (Primary, Appeal, and Cassation) sentenced 253 people to prison for a total of 2,732 years in 36 cases related to the deteriorating human rights and

political situation in the country. The total fines exceed BD 4 million. The court sentenced 52 citizens to life imprisonment, while it revoked the nationality of 75 citizens, sentenced 7 citizens to death and upheld the death sentences against others.

*** Sheikh Ali Salman sentenced to life imprisonment in "spying for Qatar" case¹⁴**

Bahrain's Supreme Court of Appeals sentenced former MP Sheikh Ali Salman, secretary-general of Bahrain's largest Shi'ite opposition group Wefaq, to life imprisonment on charges of "spying for Qatar and handing over defense secrets", although being previously acquitted by the court. The judge turned a blind eye to all the evidence proving Salman's innocence and indicating how malicious are the charges leveled against him, a matter deemed by most observers following the human rights situation in Bahrain to be a blatant act of retaliation because of Salman's peaceful political work.

*** Court of Cassation upholds five-year prison sentence against rights activist Nabeel Rajab¹⁵**

Bahrain's Court of Cassation rejected the appeal filed by BCHR President Nabeel Rajab against a five-year jail sentence on charges

pertaining to the exercise of his right to express opinions and to exchange ideas and news. A first-instance court had sentenced Rajab to five years in prison and ordered him to publish the ruling in one of the official newspapers at his own expense. He, consequently, appealed the decision before the Court of Appeal, which decided to accept, in form, the appeal and in substance to reject it and to uphold the ruling. Thereafter, he appealed the sentence before the Court of Cassation, which, in turns, turned his appeal down and upheld the verdict.

The government deprives members of political societies of exercising organized political work

On December 3, the King of Bahrain issued a Royal Decree amending some of the provisions that define the criteria of appointing Shura Council members. He said those to be appointed as members of the Shura Council, which is elected by the government, should not be affiliated to any political society or association.

Activists internally restricted win international awards

* Bahraini media professional and former detainee Ahmed Radhi nominated for UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize

Journalists Support Committee in Bahrain¹⁶ has written a letter to UNESCO nominating Bahraini journalist and former detainee Ahmed Radhi, who was banned from traveling, for Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize. The award aims at honoring a person, organization or institution that has made an outstanding contribution to the defense and, or promotion of press freedom anywhere in the world, and especially when this has been achieved in the face of danger. It should be noted that the Bahraini journalist Ahmad Radhi was arrested on the basis of carrying out his duty in the media field, as well as practicing freedom of opinion and expression and investigative journalism.

* Paris Municipality grants BCHR President Nabeel Rajab the title of "Citizen of Honor"¹⁷

Paris Mayor Ann Hidalgo renewed her support for the president of

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR). "On the eve of the ruling of Bahrain's Court of Cassation, we reaffirm my full support for human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, the honorary citizen of the city of Paris, who has been detained since 2016", Hidalgo tweeted. She confirmed that the municipality will put a picture of Rajab around the city, pointing out that the municipality granted him this title for his struggle in defending human rights.

*** Activist Jalila Al-Salman receives the Mary Hatwood Futrell Human and Trade Union Rights Award¹⁸**

International Education's Executive Board has decided to grant educational activist Jalila al-Salman the Mary Hatwood Futrell Award for her prominent role in promoting education for all. The International Education Organization said, in a report, that the unionist and activist Jalila al-Salman was arrested in 2011 for her activities through the Teachers Association, which was later dissolved by the government. Nevertheless, al-Salman challenged the restrictions and moved on to defend the rights of teachers and students in Bahrain. The organization also referred to Amnesty International's 2012 recognition of al-Salman's struggle for freedom and Justice.

Conclusion

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) aims to document violations of human rights in Bahrain. The year of 2018 has been an eventful year in the incidents and practices that violated all international laws and conventions devoted to fundamental human rights. This was evident through the revocation of nationalities of a large number of citizens and the arbitrary arrests associated with unfair trials, in addition to the crackdown on religious freedoms and the targeting of people based on their religious background or affiliation, as is the case with the Shiite community. The authorities also prohibited any kind of peaceful expression such as demonstrations or joining political or civic associations or groups. On the other hand, a number of human rights activists, journalist and unionists in Bahrain have received international awards in honor of their leading role in defending human rights.

Recommendations

Summing up its recommendations throughout the year, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights calls on the international community and Bahrain's allies to put pressure on the Government of Bahrain to do the following:

*** Signing and acceding to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that aims at the abolition of the death penalty and the suspension of executions, in addition to the annulment of laws that are not in line with this protocol.**

*** Protect the freedom of religion for all citizens in Bahrain.**

Continue to urge the government of Bahrain to comply with international human rights treaties and conventions.

*** Pursue all legal and political means to pressure the government of Bahrain into combating and halting human rights violations, in addition to releasing prisoners of conscience and providing compensation for victims.**

- * Urge the government of Bahrain to repeal and rescind the amendment to the Military Law in order to prohibit the prosecution of civilians before military courts.**
- * Provide basic guarantees for all civilians tried in military courts and to order their re-trials before civil courts with the legal access of lawyers.**
- * Immediate and unconditional release of all media professionals and prisoners of conscience who were detained for expressing their views in the field of journalism and media.**
- * We call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to play a role in urging the government of Bahrain to reform the judicial system.**

References :

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>

² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6276/2017/en/>

³ <http://akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1108041>

⁴ <https://www.alayam.com/online/local/712400/News.html>

⁵ <http://cutt.us/eMLdX>

⁶ <https://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARAKCN11S1QB>

⁷ <https://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARAKBN16D1FA?sp=true>

⁸ <http://www.legalaffairs.gov.bh/LegislationSearchDetails.aspx?id=2138#.XMgATn4whD8>

⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2018/02/04/314608>

¹⁰ <https://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARAKCN1OU09X>

¹¹ <https://www.state.gov/>

¹² <https://www.state.gov/>

¹³ <http://www.bahrainrights.org/ar/node/9053>

¹⁴ <https://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARAKCN1PMOTY>

¹⁵ <https://ara.reuters.com/article/topNews/idARAKCN1OU09X>

¹⁶ <http://journalistsupport.net/article.php?id=375993>

¹⁷ <http://cutt.us/D97Ub>

¹⁸ <http://cutt.us/etTcH>

