



UPR Statement on Bahrain

2022

Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR)

- Promotes human rights and representative democracy in Bahrain and greater Gulf region.
- Protect, and amplify the voices of, human rights defenders and pro-democracy advocates in Bahrain.
- This statement focusses on civil, economic, social and cultural rights, the rights of migrant workers and the impact of COVID-19 on prisoners.

National Consultations

- No NGO in Bahrain can exist legally without state approval.
- The government does not consult with independent NGOs.
- Independent NGOs are regularly dissolved.

Economic Rights

- **2017 UPR:** create effective legal protection for domestic workers and increase Shi'a citizen representation.
- Shi'a citizens remain underrepresented in the public sector, have higher rates unemployment and lower socioeconomic status.
- Domestic workers still not protected under labour laws.
- For female domestic workers, physical, psychological, and sexual abuse are still prominent.

Recommendations

- ✓ Remove restrictions on marginalised groups working in the public sector
- ✓ Amends labour laws to include domestic workers
- ✓ Establish transparent complaint mechanisms for domestic workers
- ✓ Recruitment in the public sector should be based on competence and equal citizenship

Social Rights

- **2017 UPR:** end citizenship stripping and allow citizenship transmission via women.
- Since then, Bahrain revoked citizenship of 635 people, 96% of were Shi'a.
- Bahraini women can still not pass citizenship to their children.
- Increased risk of stateless children.
- Members of banned political societies cannot run for public office, boards of directors of charitable societies, civil organizations, and sports clubs.

Recommendations

- ✓ End practice of citizenship revocation and restore all revoked nationalities
- ✓ Amend laws to enable women to their pass their citizenship on to their children
- ✓ End routine violation of the political and civil rights of members of dissolved NGOs and political societies

Cultural Rights

- **2017 UPR:** adopt laws to combat sectarianism and discrimination.
- No progress has been made.
- No law that categorically criminalise discrimination.
- 32 recorded repressive activities targeting Shi'a religious events in 2021 alone. This practice continues today.

Recommendations

- ✓ End the harassment of the Shi'a community, and the repressive acts during religious events, such as Ashura
- ✓ Pass laws criminalizing discrimination; and adopting equal citizenship rights
- ✓ Amend legislation to meet the standards of international conventions signed by Bahrain

COVID-19 & Prisons Reform

- **2017 UPR:** comply with international standards for prisoner treatment and provide medical care to prisoners. Allow human rights groups to visit prisons.
- Systematic failure to implement infectious disease control.
- Prisoners not adequately treated once infected.
- No visits from UN Special Rapporteurs of human rights groups permitted since 2006.

Recommendations

- ✓ Establish independent inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 in Bahrain's prisons
- ✓ Allow official visits from UN Special Rapporteurs, and visits and inquiries from human rights groups
- ✓ Abide by the 'Nelson Mandela Rules' for prisoners' treatment

Migrant Rights

- **2017 UPR:** ensure effective protection of migrant workers through legislation.
- Partial reform: migrants can now change jobs without employer's consent. But major gaps remain.
- Employers still regularly withhold passports and payments of migrant workers.
- Unsafe and unhealthy work conditions remain frequent.
- Failure to effectively prosecute human trafficking.

Recommendations

- ✓ Produce plans to implement effective complaint and accountability mechanisms for migrant workers
- ✓ Prosecute the confiscation of passports by employers, under the Kafala system
- ✓ Enforce human trafficking laws and recognize those trafficked as victims, not criminals

Conclusion

- These factors must be considered alongside Bahrain's coming general elections at the end of this year, as well as the recently-published National Human Rights Plan. There is a clear opportunity here to facilitate reform in Bahrain if the Bahraini authorities demonstrate a willingness to implement concrete human rights and political reforms.