



# INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

## Bahrain's Lip Service Report to Human Rights



ICSFT stands for human rights and freedom of speech, and we review and analyse reports, briefs, and news related to human rights across the Gulf and any other relevant areas, including a focus on Bahrain. **The gap between the Bahraini government's public stance and lip service towards human rights to the public and the international community, and its day to day treatment of people on the ground is concerning, and in flagrant violation of human rights.**

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In spite of lobbying by the organization, and other stakeholders, partners, and the international community, the state of free speech in the country, and especially speech against the government continues to be dire.

**The government has published a report, *Fifth Annual Report of the National Institution for Human Rights on the Progress Achieved in the Human Right Situation in the Kingdom of Bahrain*, purportedly delineating the human rights achievement in the country.**

The report lists issues related to human rights, including the role of human rights advocates in the field of promoting, protecting human rights, women's rights, rights of expatriate workers, the right to health care, the right to education and more.

The report reviews advisory opinions submitted by the National Institution For Human Rights to the Constitutional Authorities and cites the 'progress achieved in the human rights condition, and the efforts and activities of the national institution for human rights in the field of promoting and protecting human rights'.

It overviews areas of high concern to the international activist community monitoring the situation on the ground, including freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. The report offers succinct lip service to the values at hand. For example, concerning freedom of assembly, the report offers a definition of the issue, purportedly in a form of confirmation or ownership of the country's upholding of the right. The report then cites the constitution of the country which clearly states that the right to assembly is enshrined therein.

"The right to peaceful gathering is represented in the freedom of individuals or groups or legal entities to gather at a specific public place for a specific period of time, such to express public or private opinions towards a particular position or to

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defend common interests for purposes of persuading others thereof and to endeavour to achieve those interests. This right is linked to other rights and freedoms, such as the right to organize and establish and join societies, associations and unions, and the freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to participate in public affairs, where these rights in their totality constitute a single agglomeration which signifies a confluence between all human rights.

In reality, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain guarantees the right to peaceful gathering, where Article (28) thereof Paragraph (b) provides that: “Public meetings, parades and assemblies are permitted under the rules and conditions laid down by law, but the purposes and means of the meeting must be peaceful and must not be prejudicial to public decency.” ***Fifth Annual Report of the National Institution for Human Rights on the Progress Achieved in the Human Right Situation in the Kingdom of Bahrain, pg 34***

**Rather than proof of upholding of rights, the report serves as proof of the country’s hypocrisy**, as human rights violations have continued and increased, through a variety of pervasive, crushing, and unjust means.

**These human rights, political, social and economic rights abuses are extensive:**

- The country is ranked 50 out of 168 countries Transparency International’s 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index for corruption.
- Key opposition leaders routinely are imprisoned and subject to inhumane conditions, in spite of government claims of free political systems.

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- **In contrast to the constitutionally protected right to assembly, the government has in the past, and continues to, respond to activist protests with a prolonged and violent crackdown, as well as the declaration of martial law.**
- Racism and classism is institutionally protected within the country: a 2005 law makes it illegal to form political associations based on class, profession, or religion, yet the make up of the government remains to maintain the majority Shiite in an underrepresented position in the country.
- In spite of purported academic freedom, academics and scholars who speak against the government at all are vulnerable to arrest
- There is a likelihood that the government unlawfully surveilles its citizens by monitoring telephone and internet use, and especially of activist, opposition and other politically critical people.
- **Overall, human rights defenders continue to be unjustly detained, mistreated and severely oppressed in response to speaking out for their rights and the rights of their fellow citizens.**

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Penalties by the Bahraini government for activist fighting to right these human rights abuses have been unpredictable, unjust, and indefinite detainment in jail or prison, restriction of travel, physical, psychological, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse, torture, surveillance, and death.

**The International Council Support Fair Trial and Human Rights condemns the lip service and hypocrisy of the Bahraini government against the ongoing oppression, violation and murder of human rights defenders in Bahrain.**

Not only is the government of Bahrain oppressing its people, it is attempting to oppress or control the international community through falsified narratives of a peaceful, open, rights-affirming country. This report, and others like it that are sure to follow, must be analysed and understood as what it is: a regime attempting to cover up bloodshed behind the values and words of the human rights agenda, but without any implementation of the values it is referring to.

ICSFT urges countries like the UK, USA and other countries that have leverage over Bahrain to speak out in the face of the disastrous decline in human rights in the country over the past seven years, and even before. The allowance for blatant hypocrisy in the international community must end. The silence and inaction has effectively encouraged the government to intensify its repressive measures to silence the few remaining voices of dissent.

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**Most importantly ICSFT urges the government of Bahrain to respect the right to freedom of expression and opinion for all people in Bahrain, as guaranteed by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Constitution.**



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