



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

BAHRAIN WHITEWASHING SYSTEMIC TORTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES



Bahrain, much like its GCC allies, has been busy promoting a fake human rights reform to side-track the attention from ongoing human rights violations and legitimize the regimes discriminatory laws and policies. Although in Bahrain torture is "endemic", especially in the kingdom's death row and security prisons. White washing systemic torture and widespread human rights abuses is on top of the PR campaign agenda. As such, the regime has set up organizations to push the human rights reform narrative including, the National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR), an independent organ established to investigate human rights abuses and promote human rights in Bahrain.

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The NIHR did not fail the regime as it constantly reports on the fictional human rights progress in Bahrain - NIHR's 2017 annual report. The NIHR is biased because of its attachment to the government and has failed to fully comply with the international standards governing national human rights institutions, known as the Paris Principles. Their report omits the ongoing human rights violations, and in doing so, it relieves the government of any responsibility to uphold international human rights standards by. To illustrate, Saeed al-Faihani, the chairman of the NIHR, said there is "no systematic maltreatment of any kind in Bahrain's prisons. And he added that a string of unannounced visits to prisons in the country had found no evidence of torture."

However, recently the United Nations Committee against Torture (CAT) echoed the sentiment shared by many rights groups by stating Bahrain's NIHR is "not independent" and "not effective given that complaints ultimately pass through the Ministry of the Interior."

"Human rights activists say Bahraini regime forces have stormed dozens of houses and arrested tens of activists across the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom as the ruling Al Khalifah dynasty does not shy away from its heavy-handed clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy campaigners.

The activists, requesting not to be named, said the raids were carried out in the villages of al-Musalla, al-Sahla and Karzakan in addition to Jidhafs city and Juffair suburban neighborhood of the capital Manama, Arabic-language and independent Manama Post online newspaper reported.

Some of the detainees were later identified as Abdullah al-Sharaqi, Ali al-Awani, Musa Jaafar al-Madani and Ali al-Qamish.



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Meanwhile, the opposition al-Wafa Islamic Movement condemned the new wave of arrests in Bahrain, describing it as in line with the Manama regime's repressive measures against Shia Muslims during the mourning month of Muharram."¹

What is more troubling is the NIHR is backed by the government of UK that provides training and consultation to the NIHR and its personnel. UK's ongoing support to the Bahraini regime is emboldening its repressive measures against civil society and human rights defenders with complete impunity.

The reality on the ground is, since 2011 there has been a sharp deterioration of the human rights situation in the country. This has included unacceptable restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly, aimed at silencing any discordant voice and suppressing dissent. It is tragic that while security forces are meant to protect life, their actions have shown otherwise.

The authorities have resorted to drastic measures to curb dissenting opinions such as torture, arbitrary detention, unfounded convictions, the stripping of citizenship, the use of travel bans, intimidation, including death threats, and reprisals for cooperating with international organizations, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Journalists and human rights defenders have faced military trials, life imprisonment, torture, harassment, and in some cases even death whilst in the custody of the Bahraini authorities.

So the question remains, what reform are they talking about?

For ordinary Bahraini citizens, Bahrain is not the glamorous haven as painted in NIHR's reports.

¹ <https://www.presstv.com/Detail/2018/10/01/575767/Bahraini-regime-forces-raid-houses-across-kingdom-detain-many-activists>



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Whitewashing a legacy of torture and human rights abuse through biased institutions and PR campaigns will not bring lasting peace and stability to Bahrain. Start a real human rights reform by adhering to international human rights standards and embracing dissenting opinions.

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