



GULF INSTITUTE  
for Democracy and Human Rights

# UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

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## Absence of Religious Tolerance in Bahrain





## CRUEL PUNISHMENTS FOR RIDICULOUS REASONS

June had witnessed several violations in Bahraini detention facilities. On the first of June, a group of prisoners housed at Jaw Prison were punished over their gathering to mourn Jaafar Sultan and Sadeq Thamer, the two Bahrainis who were executed in Saudi Arabia.

On 19 June, Bahraini security forces confiscated items used for Ashura commemorations during a raid on building 6 in Jaw Prison. Confiscation of those items serve as another violation of religious freedom in the kingdom's detention facilities.

Moreover, on 11 June, a group of six detained minors re-launched a hunger strike demanding the transfer of their files to the Children's Court to consider the harsh sentences issued against them. Mohammad Ali Adel, Habib Ali Habib, Fadel Mohammad Amin, Ahmed Majeed Mahdi, Ali Mahmoud Mohammad Ali, and Hussein Saeed, were tried as adults even though they were minors at the time of their arrest. They are now demanding retrials in special courts for children that Manama set up in 2021.

Another form of violating prisoners' rights is medical negligence. On 17 June, the political prisoner Mohammad Hassan Al-Raml went on hunger strike for another time as a protest against the ongoing denial of medical treatment. His family said his health is deteriorating.

Moreover, six detained minors started a hunger strike over medical negligence. Sadiq Muhammad Issa, Hussein Juma, Khalil Ibrahim, Hussein Hisham, Jassim Muhammad, and Fares Ali contracted scabies three months ago. They were given ineffective treatment, and the prison's administration refused to provide alternatives. However, they were transferred to isolation.



The detainee Hussein Al-Saadi is also suffering from medical negligence as he is being denied dental surgery for a severe toothache. He was not transferred to his appointments at Salmaniya Hospital since 31 May.

On 10 June, the detainee Ahmad Al-Hadi was transferred to Salmaniya Hospital as he suffered from pain, swelling and redness in different parts of his body. However, 5 days later, he was returned to the prison and was denied access to the medicine prescribed.

## **SUMMONS OVER PARTICIPATING IN RELIGIOUS RITES**

During June, harassment for citizens who share in peaceful protests continued. On 5 June, the photojournalist Sayed Baqer Al-Kamel was ordered for investigation. Two young men, Jaafar Mohammad and Mohammad Radhi, were taken to the Criminal Investigation Department on 8 and 9 June respectively. Noting that Mohammad Radhi, the son of the Shiite cleric Sheikh Hassan Ali Radhi was taken from his home in Shakhura after midnight. And on 10 June, another two young men were arrested. Youssef Ghaleb was arrested in Karzakan and Hassan Abd Ali in Samaheej.

On 19 June, the Bahrain Forum for Human Rights monitored that at least nine people have been questioned by police about their participation in Friday prayers at the Imam Al-Sadiq mosque in Diraz.

In late June, the religious singer Reda Ali Al-Sheikh, in addition to 2 citizens: Sayed Reda Jalal Alawi and Sajjad Jaafar Juma were summoned for investigation. The three were then detained for a week pending investigation.



## ABSENCE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE IN BAHRAIN

Over the past years, institutional discrimination against Shiite citizens in Bahrain, including restrictions on religious practices, has been monitored and documented. June also has witnessed a wide range of violations against Shiite citizens in practicing religious rites.

In early June, the heads of obsequies were forced to cancel all memorial services marking the anniversary of the death of the leader of Islamic Revolution, Imam Ruhollah Khomeini. They received a phone call from the Interior Ministry in which they vowed to use force in case those ceremonies were not canceled.

Two Fridays during June revealed an escalation of sectarian persecution against Shiite citizens. On Friday, 9 June 2023, Bahraini citizens were surprised by police checkpoints seated up along all roads leading into Diraz, where the biggest Friday prayer in Bahrain is hosted.

The policemen prevented citizens including worshipers from reaching the Imam Al-Sadiq mosque in Diraz for Friday prayers. Only locals in the Diraz region were able to reach the aforementioned mosque. And on Friday, 16 June 2023, Bahraini security forces harassed citizens who were trying to reach Diraz's Imam Al-Sadiq mosque for Friday prayers for the second week in row.

In another form of violating freedom of beliefs and religion, Bahraini security forces attacked, on 11 June, the shrine of the great companion Saasaa bin Souhan which includes a shrine and a mosque in the village of Askar. They then constructed a concrete-block wall in the doorway of the shrine. This attack took place after a campaign was launched calling for the shrine reopening and rehabilitation.



## 61 EXECUTIONS DURING THE FIRST HALF OF 2023

The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights monitored 61 executions that took place in Saudi Arabia in the first half of 2023 (from January till end of June). During June only 19 executions were done, including at least 7 over political reasons.

On 4 June, Saudi authorities announced the execution of three men from the eastern region of the country. Hussein bin Ali al-Muhaishi, Zakaria bin Hassan al-Muhaishi, and Fadel bin Zaki Anseef were accused of “joining a terrorist cell, possessing and being trained in the use of weapons, attacking security centers and security men with the intent of killing them”. However, no evidence for those charges was revealed, and no details of the terrorist cell or centers attacked was mentioned.

On 11 June, another three Saudi mens were executed over “terrosim” charges. Abed Malk Al-Baadi, Mohammad Al-Osaimi, and Mohammad Al-Twairish were accused of several charges, including joining a terrorist cell, however, no further details were mentioned.

On 19 June, Saudi authorities executed Muslim Al-Milad and mentioned a series of loose accusations to justify its crime, including joining a terrorist cell. Moreover, the bodies of those executed were not given to their families in a violation to their right of burying them.

Human Rights Watch commented on recent executions by saying that “counterterrorism laws in the GCC typically include broad, vague charges and definitions of terrorism used as catch-all provisions to punish peaceful dissidents, political activists, and human rights defenders. Saudi Arabia’s Shi’a Muslim minority has long suffered systemic discrimination and been targeted by state-funded hate speech.”



## SPORTWASHING IN SAUDI ARABIA

“After the Qatar World Cup raised misgivings about sportswashing, that charge is now being levelled at Saudi Arabia. The Saudi sovereign wealth fund PIF has essentially bought professional golf, taking over the PGA Tour by merging it with LIV, a new, smaller competition golf series that Saudi Arabia launched in 2021. Last year’s World Cup taught the Saudis a very important lesson. Oil is temporary; sport is forever,” the Guardian said.

Saudi authorities have been widely accused of using sports to whitewash its human rights record after the PIF recently announced it's taking over four clubs in the Saudi League. Legendary striker Cristiano Ronaldo already plays there and Karim Benzema has also just moved. The Saudi league doesn't have the financial fair play rules that govern European football so they can spend as much as they want on players and wages.

It is hard to capture just how much Saudi Arabia has changed over the past 10 years, and how well that has served its attempts to pitch itself as a nation that is trying its best to move on from its fundamentalist past. Prince Mohammed has pushed through a slate of social liberalization policies, overturning public order laws and bans on women driving, and purging the country’s powerful religious establishment. A country that outlawed cinemas is today hosting open-air concerts and fashion weeks, and inviting the New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman for long audiences with Prince Mohammed. After his visit, Friedman heralded the arrival of “Saudi Arabia’s Arab spring, at last”, under Prince Mohammed and his reform project. “Only a fool would predict its success – but only a fool would not root for it.”



## CLOSURE OF SANAA AIRPORT DOUBLES YEMENIS' SUFFERINGS

The Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia and UAE had targeted Yemenis in several forms, imposing a siege is one form. The continuation of restrictions on air traffic of Sanaa Airport is doubling the suffering of Yemenis.

A large group of citizens needs to travel urgently for medication, and as restrictions on flights continue, they use other ways of traveling which are full of danger. Travelers are being exposed to looting, killing and interruption due to security chaos, such as the case of kidnapping of an academic doctor.

Only 6 flights leave Sana'a airport per week, which is insufficient, according to the general director of air transport, Dr Mazen Ghanem Al-Soufi. He added that the coalition continues to impose a siege on Sanaa airport, and refuses to allow it to operate in a manner that meets the actual need.

## 3000 DAYS OF WAR ON YEMEN

12 June marked 3000 days since the start of the war on Yemen. Therefore, multiple human rights organizations shed light on violations that took place during the war. Statistics of Entesaf Organization for Women and Children's Rights showed that during 3000 days, 2,454 women and 3,903 children were killed, while over 2,979 women and 4,305 children were injured.



The organization pointed out that the phenomenon of child labor has expanded during the war by more than four times what it was previously, noting that 1.4 million working children are deprived of their most basic rights, and about 34.3% of working children are between the ages of 5 and 17 years.

The Eye of Humanity Center for Rights revealed the number of destroyed economic facilities, service facilities, and infrastructure. The center indicated that about 607000 homes, 1750 mosques and 1272 schools were destroyed by the coalition. Moreover, 1500 universities, tourist facilities, hospitals, health centers, sports and media facilities, and archaeological sites were targeted.

In addition, the Minister of Human Rights, Ali Al-Dailami confirmed that nearly 50000 Yemenis are detained at Saudi prisons without any trials. He furthermore added that more than 20000 Yemeni detainees have been subjected to unfair trials on fabricated and malicious charges.