

UPDATES ON THE CRACKDOWN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE GULF

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in pro-Palestine marches**





18 BAHRAINIS WERE ARRESTED FOR PARTICIPATING IN PRO-PALESTINE MARCHES

Dozens of Bahrainis took to the streets to express solidarity with the Palestinian after they were targeted and killed. Bahrainis kept participating in protests calling for the end of war on Gaza on a daily basis, in different regions in the kingdom.

The authorities in Bahrain reacted with this mass solidarity with Palestine by launching a wave of arrests and targeting marches with tear gas. At the same time, the authorities kept rejecting requests to organize marches.

Those waves resulted in the arrest of at least 18 citizens, including minors. Their names are: Abbas Akil Hani, Abdulaziz Shaker, Abdul Rahman Al-Husseini, Adnan Haidar Sandid, Sayed Ayman Al-Sayed Mustafa, Hussein Al-Sayyed Abbas, Hussein Rabie, Mahdi Maytham, Mahmoud Ali Farhan, Mohammad Al-Mahfouth, Mohammad Al-Qallaf, Mohammad Alyan, Mohammad Hashem, Murtaja Ali Fardan, Rida Abbas Al-Janabi, and Yasser Saeed.

The repression was not limited to this point, the Bahraini authorities further threatened students with activating the sanctions list against those who participate in pro-Gaza and Palestinian gatherings on campus. Where the University of Bahrain warned students against “responding to anonymous calls to organize unlicensed student gatherings on campus.” Moreover, it also threatened students with exposing them to what is stipulated in the sanctions list for violating the behavioral regulation if they fall into what it called violations.



BAHRAIN IS ONE OF THE STATES WHERE INDIVIDUALS FACED THREATS AND RETALIATION FOR COOPERATING WITH UN

UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Clement Nyaletsossi Voule, reiterated his call to Bahrain to release human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, being a prisoner of conscience. This call was made after Bahrain was named again as one of the states where individuals faced threats and retaliation for cooperating with the United Nations on human rights. Al-Khawaja is among those individuals facing reprisals in Bahrain, beside Abduljalil Al-Singace, Sayed Ahmed Al-Wadaei, Sayed Nazar Alwadaei, and Hassan Mushaima.

The aforementioned group in addition to all prisoners of conscience has been for years being targeted in Bahraini prisons. As they have been subjected to multiple violations including medical negligence, denying access to family visits, depriving them from education etc...

During October, several violations were recorded, including depriving both prisoners Alawi Al-Wadaei and Hassan Ali Al-Shuwaikh of being released. The two were set to be released, but suddenly they got an additional three years added to their existing sentences. Al-Wadaei was on the verge of completing an eight-year sentence while Al-Shuwaikh served 10 out of a 15-year sentence and was eligible for release under the alternative sentencing law. The additional sentence was over their participation in a peaceful sit-in at the prison that was violently broken up by special police units in April 2021. Alawi Al-Wadaei was then thrown into solitary confinement.



Moreover, the prisoner of conscience Jassim Khalil Al-Saffar confirmed that he's being subjected to medical negligence. Al-Saffar suffers from psoriasis and from stomach disease. He went to the prison clinic where he was given analgesic medicine without conducting tests for him, which caused him complications because the medicine did not suit his condition, stressing that his body is swollen and blood comes out of it. Then he was transferred to the Al-Qalaa hospital where he didn't receive treatment because there is no dermatologist.

The political prisoner Mohammad Al-Raml continues to be denied access to adequate medical treatment despite his multiple hunger strikes in recent months. The prison administration is depriving him of treatment recommended by the prison clinic, and on the rare occasions that he is taken to a hospital.

Another form of violation was the refusal to temporarily release prisoner of conscience Jassim Mohammad Mansour Abdulkarim Nasser, from Sitra, to attend the burial and funeral procession of his father, who died on 23 October.



SAUDI AUTHORITIES ATTEMPTS TO SPORTWASH ITS HR RECORD

Saudi Arabia continues to heavily invest in sport regardless of being accused of using events to sportswash its reputation. The Kingdom seeks to host the 2035 Women's World Cup. This step is just another try to deviate the world's attention from its black rights record.

In Saudi Arabia, women's rights campaigners are still being imprisoned, despite some reforms under crown prince Mohammed bin Salman, such as an end to the ban on women driving.

In another attempt to whitewash its record, a Saudi Arabian spokeswoman claims in a UN meeting that the Kingdom has adopted several reforms which aim to promote women's rights and empowerment. "We have adopted and amended a number of legal frameworks to ensure equality among the sexes," the spokeswoman [Sulafa Hamid Mousa] said. Maybe she meant equality of targeting women as well as men over announcing their views which contradicts that of the kingdom.

Sulafa moreover sees that women in Saudi Arabia are leaders in the world in terms of occupying important positions. However, she forgot to talk about dozens who have been behind bars for years just for participation in marches calling for "real" reforms. Manar Al Gafiri is an example. Manar was just 17 years old while being arrested over tweeting in support of political prisoners in Saudi prisons and human rights defenders, especially women who demand equal rights. In August 2023, she was sentenced to 18 years in prison by the Saudi Specialized Criminal Court, in charge of trying terrorism crimes, followed by a travel ban of the same duration.



THE KINGDOM OF REPRESSION IS AMONG CANDIDATES TO HOST STATUS FOR THE 2024 INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

Dozens of human rights organizations are calling on the UN Secretary-General and other decision-makers to reverse their recent decision to grant Saudi Arabia host status for the 2024 Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and to conduct a review of the process that led to it.

Their letter highlighted multiple cases in which Saudi Arabia, the country which has chosen to serve as the next host, spies on its own citizens on social media. They mentioned the case of the Wikipedia's volunteer who was imprisoned after the government used spyware to get access to information he contributed on the platform. Moreover the letter spotted the light on the case of Salma Al-Shehab who was sentenced to 34 years in prison and a subsequent travel ban of the same length for her activism. Furthermore, they talked about Mohammad Al Ghamdi's case who was sentenced to death for his posts on social media.

“These cases mark an alarming, unprecedented assault on freedom of expression and raise serious questions about the extent to which civil society can participate freely and safely in conversations around these issues at the next iteration of IGF without the threat of government reprisal, harassment, or intimidation”, the organizations added.



SAUDI ARABIA HAS SPENT AT LEAST \$6.3BN TO SPORTWASH ITS HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

According to The Guardian's data, Saudi Arabia has spent from January 2021 to July 2023, at least \$6.3bn on sports. This investigation prompted the Kingdom to announce its ambitions to host the 2034 World Cup.

Commenting on the news, Minky Worden, director of global initiatives at Human Rights Watch said: “Barely a year after the human rights catastrophes of the 2022 Qatar World Cup, FIFA has failed to learn the lesson that awarding multi-billion dollar events without due diligence and transparency can risk corruption and major human rights abuses. The possibility that FIFA could award Saudi Arabia the 2034 World Cup despite its appalling human rights record and closed door to any monitoring exposes FIFA’s commitments to human rights as a sham.”

The organization further explained that FIFA’s Human Rights Policy, adopted in 2017, outlines its responsibility to identify and address adverse human rights impacts of its operations, including taking adequate measures to prevent and mitigate human rights abuses.

Moreover, under FIFA’s human rights policies, countries bidding to host games must commit to strict human rights and labor standards. Therefore, the organization concluded that FIFA has so far failed to apply these principles in the award of the 2030 and 2034 World Cups.



ANOTHER TWO CITIZENS FACES DEATH PENALTY FOR PARTICIPATION IN PEACEFUL PROTESTS WHEN THEY WERE MINORS

On 28 April 2020, the Saudi authorities announced that anyone convicted of a crime that took place while they were under the age of 18 will face a maximum punishment of ten years in juvenile detention and not the death penalty. However, on 25 October 2023, the United Nations confirmed that the Supreme Court secretly upheld the death sentences of two young men who were under the age of 18 at the time of their alleged crimes without notifying their families or lawyers.

Abdullah Al-Derazi and Jalal Labbad were convicted of terrorism-related charges over their participation in anti-government protests in grossly unfair trials that primarily relied on torture-tainted confessions, and were recently sentenced to death.

“There were seven charges listed on Al-Derazi's chargesheet, none of which were dated. The prosecution's only evidence was his allegedly coerced confession,” said Morris Tidball-Binz the UN Special Rapporteur on summary, extrajudicial or arbitrary executions.



EYE OF HUMANITY CENTER FOR RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT: 49 186 CIVILIANS WERE KILLED AND INJURED IN 3 130 DAYS

The Eye of Humanity Center for Rights and Development has released a report detailing the statistics of the 3130 days of war on Yemen. The total number of casualties is 49186 civilians, including 18273 killed and 30913 injured. Among the victims, 4106 children and 2474 women were killed, and 4876 children and 3019 women were injured.

The center also shed light on the civilian structures that were targeted. The statistics showed that 611399 homes, 185 university facilities, 1305 schools and educational facilities, 1802 mosques, 388 tourist facilities, and 423 hospitals and health facilities were targeted.

It further added that 12368 agricultural fields, 145 sports facilities, 266 archaeological sites, and 63 media facilities were bombed due to the war. In addition, the economic sector's facilities were also targeted, including 412 factories, 394 fuel tankers, 12,368 commercial facilities, 473 chicken and livestock farms, 10653 means of transportation, and 485 fishing boats.



RESTRICTIONS ON SANAA AIRPORT ARE NO LONGER ACCEPTABLE

A group of seven Yemeni fishermen were released from Saudi prisons on 6 October 2023, talked about the violations they were subjected to. They explained that they suffered for months of torture and starvation.

The fishermen added that they were, firstly, taken to Farasan Island in Saudi Arabia, where they were detained for 13 days, and subjected to various types of torture. Then they were transferred to Jizan prison for four months, during which they were also subjected to various types of torture and ill-treatment.

They are not the only group of released fishermen which confirms the ill-treatment they were subjected to. During September, another group of eight Yemeni fishermen arrived in Hodeidah Governorate after months of detention in Eritrean prisons. They reported that the Eritrean navy kidnapped them while they were fishing in the Yemeni territorial waters, and took them to prisons. The fishermen added that they were subjected in the prison to torture, hard labor, and starvation.