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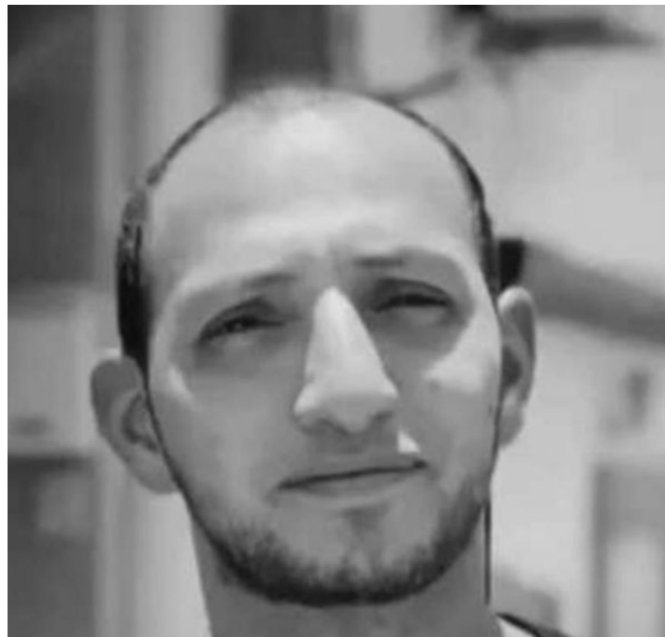
Highlights on the Crackdown on the Human Rights in the Gulf

SAUDI ARABIA

BAHRAIN

YEMEN

Medical Negligence Claims the Life of Another Prisoner



**UN Appoints Saudi
Arabia to Lead
Women's Rights Forum
Despite Criticism**

**Nine Years of War on
Yemen Loaded with
Violations**



Medical Negligence Claims the Life of Another Prisoner

On Monday, 25 March, 2024, as a group of prisoners were playing football, one of their fellow inmates collapsed. They gathered and called the prison's guards, who called for an ambulance and a first aider. The shock was that the first aider had no first aid kit and had no other colleagues to help. The prisoners helped put their fellow on the ambulance stretcher. After a while, the Ministry of Interior announced the death of the political prisoner Hussien Khalil Al-Ramram. Al-Ramram was arrested in May 2017 and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment over a politically-motivated case. Hussien had complained in early March- few weeks prior to his death, about medical negligence and asked to be granted access to a medical appointment. Hussien's complaint was neglected until he died.

The public prosecutor's office announced that it investigated the circumstances surrounding the death of Hussien Khalil Al-Ramram and concluded there was no foul play. However, it skipped the record of Hussien himself talking about his multiple illnesses and sufferings from medical negligence. Moreover, it ignored the testimonies of his inmates, ensuring that his medication for high blood pressure was recently changed without being referred to a specialist, and after that, he was suffering from unstable blood pressure.



انقذوا السجناء السياسيين في البحرين
SOS.. Political Prisoners in Bahrain (Jaw) are in Danger

Promises of August's Mass Hunger Strike Are Not Met Yet

Prisoners usually resort to hunger strikes as a non-violent weapon against violations they are subjected to. Hunger strikes are an act of very last resort for prisoners who feel they are being treated inhumanely, and there is either no other way to challenge it or the grievance system is dysfunctional or biased.

Political prisoners in Bahrain underwent multiple hunger strikes calling for their basic rights, such as access to medical treatment or family visits... Their last strike was in August 2023, which served as a protest against unfair decisions such as isolation, denying access to education, medical negligence, and the system of visits and congregational prayer. Months after the suspension of the hunger strike, promises were not met yet, therefore, they were obliged to protest, calling for the ending of isolation for political reasons.

On 6 March 2024, inmates in Jaw Prison- Building 9, refused iftar meals as a protest against what they described as violations of the agreements of the aforementioned hunger strike. They explained that the officer imposed what they termed new penalties, including reducing the duration of sunlight exposure to just one hour and limiting participation in congregational prayers without justification.

On 7 March 2024, four political prisoners were transferred to isolation building for no reasons. This unfair measure forced dozens of prisoners to perform a sit-in in the prison corridor, refusing to enter their cells. As authorities refused to return those transferred to isolation confinement, the number of protesting prisoners increased to more than 90 by 17 March. The political prisoners demanded that the prison administration provide clear legal regulations for the use of isolation, the types of violations that warrant its implementation, and specify its duration.

The authorities ignored prisoners' demands, they also practiced further violations, including cutting off electricity and water to certain sections of the detention facility, in an effort to quell a protest against the isolation of inmates.

Arrest Over Freedom of Expression

Once again, the political activist Ibrahim Sharif is behind bars over opinions he shared on social media. On 25 March, the public prosecution summoned Sharif for an investigation and then decided to arrest him for a week pending investigation.

Prior to his detention, Ibrahim Sharif blasted, through a post on X platform, investments of more than a billion dollars by Bahrain's sovereign wealth fund, McLaren Company, into the British company, which has been plagued by years of financial troubles. The activist Farida Ghulam, explained that "the charges against Sharif by the Public Prosecution were based on his recent tweets about the McLaren company and the budgets injected into it without accountability, in contrast to the budget for housing projects and the needs of citizens, as well as the tweet about the fire in a crowded house in Sitra inhabited by 17 individuals from 4 Bahraini families."

After 3 days of his arrest, Sharif was released. In December of last year, he was also briefly detained for his public criticism of Bahrain's authorities decision to join the maritime coalition against Yemen.



UN Appoints Saudi Arabia to Lead Women's Rights Forum Despite Criticism

The UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) unanimously appointed Saudi Arabia to chair its 69th session in 2025, where the Saudi ambassador to the UN, Abdulaziz Alwasil, was elected as chair on 27 March. This occurs while dozens of women activists are behind bars in the Kingdom for their activism, violating the right of freedom of opinion .

“The Commission on the Status of Women has a clear mandate to promote women’s rights and gender equality and it is vital for the chair of the commission to uphold this. Saudi Arabia’s abysmal record when it comes to protecting and promoting the rights of women puts a spotlight on the vast gulf between the lived reality for women and girls in Saudi Arabia, and the aspirations of the Commission. The UN Charter clearly states respect for human rights as a primary purpose of the UN. Membership of its human rights bodies means an added responsibility to strengthen this respect, globally and domestically. This is compounded for leadership roles in these bodies,” Sherine Tadros of Amnesty commented.

Moreover, the draft of Saudi Arabia's first written penal code shows that violations of human rights, especially women's rights, are being legitimized. The leaked draft code shows that Saudi authorities are planning to codify existing repressive practices into written law, instead of improving their human rights record. How for this Kingdom to be chaired the UN's Commission on the Status of Women?

Football Fans Are Being Targeted Over Religious Reasons

During a football match between Al Safa FC and Al Bukiryah FC held in the Eastern Province on 24 January 2024, a group of fans chants a religious song. After the video was spread on social media, Qatif police summoned and released more than 150 fans for questioning in the first week of February.

However, 12 of the fans were arrested. They were then charged under the Anti-Cybercrime Law that prohibits the “production, preparation, transmission, or storage of material impinging on public order, religious values, public morals and privacy, through the information network or computers”. And, on 27 March 2024, the Saudi Criminal Court in Dammam handed down a sentence of one year in prison along with a fine of 10,000 Saudi Riyals (about US\$2,666) to two fans, while others received a one-year prison term with six months suspended and fines of 5,000 Saudi Riyals (around \$1,333).

The news of their arrest and imprisonment has sparked fresh concerns over the Kingdom's human rights record. The biggest concern was about hosting the 2034 World Cup in the Kingdom which doesn't respect human rights.



Nine Years of War on Yemen Loaded with Violations

26 March marks the 9th anniversary of the war on Yemen, where, during 2015, the Saudi and Emarati led coalition started its attacks. During those nine years, more than 50,000 civilians were recorded as victims. 18,381 civilians were killed, including 4,123 children and 2,486 women, while 31,644 were injured, including 4,992 children and 3,057 women, due to bombarants in multiple governorates of Yemen.

Through the last nine years, the coalition targeted a range of civilian infrastructure, including 613,992 homes, 1,843 mosques, and 7,940 roads and bridges. Furthermore, the health sector suffered significantly as a result of the bombing of 427 hospitals and health facilities on the one hand, and the impossibility of importing medicines and medical equipment due to the siege on the other.

Educational institutions were also targets of the coalition, as it attacked 1,331 schools and 186 university facilities. Economic targets suffered immense losses, with 417 factories, 397 fuel tankers, 12,534 commercial facilities, 12,775 agricultural fields, 484 poultry and livestock farms, 10,801 means of transportation, and 493 fishing boats destroyed.