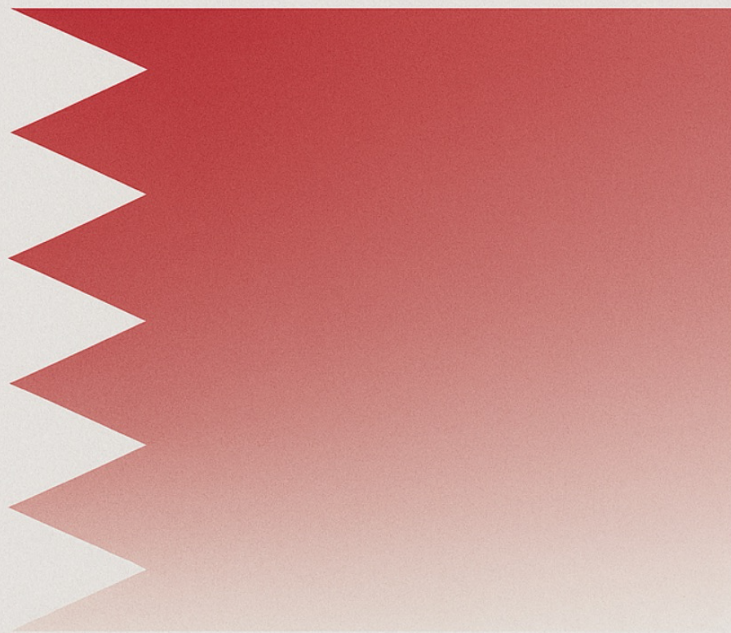


BAHRAIN: SYSTEMATIC REPRESSION AND THE EROSION OF FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS



BAURAIN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

AUGUST 2025

Bahrain: Systematic Repression and the Erosion of Fundamental Freedoms

Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) – August 2025

1. Executive Summary

Over the past decade and a half, Bahrain has undergone a sustained and deliberate rollback of fundamental rights, resulting in a civic space that is fully “Closed” according to the CIVICUS Monitor and “Not Free” in Freedom House’s Freedom in the World 2025 rankings, with a score of 12/100 and Reporters without Borders 2025 Index ranked Bahrain 157/180 . The government has pursued a comprehensive strategy of repression that includes the criminalization of peaceful dissent, systematic targeting of human rights defenders (HRDs), restrictions on media and information flow, and the persecution of political opponents.

Since the popular protests of 2011, state policy has shifted from episodic crackdowns to the creation of a permanent legal and security framework designed to suppress opposition and eliminate independent voices. This includes restrictive laws on expression, association, and assembly; dissolution of opposition political societies; closure of the last independent newspaper; a ban on all demonstrations in the capital; and pervasive surveillance of citizens through both overt and covert means.

MIDDLE EAST - NORTH AFRICA

Bahrain

INDEX 2025		INDEX 2024	
157 / 180	Score : 30.24	173 / 180	Score : 23.21
POLITICAL INDICATOR	151 25.38	POLITICAL INDICATOR	171 17.46
ECONOMIC INDICATOR	167 24.74	ECONOMIC INDICATOR	174 20.92
LEGISLATIVE INDICATOR	163 26.648	LEGISLATIVE INDICATOR	175 19.81
SOCIAL INDICATOR	163 30.34	SOCIAL INDICATOR	175 20.70
SECURITY INDICATOR	131 44.10	SECURITY INDICATOR	150 37.15



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FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2025

Bahrain

12

NOT FREE

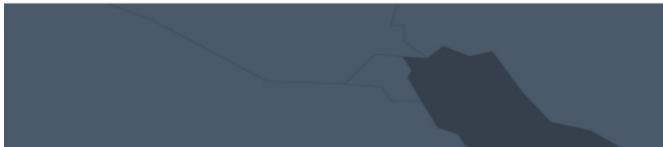
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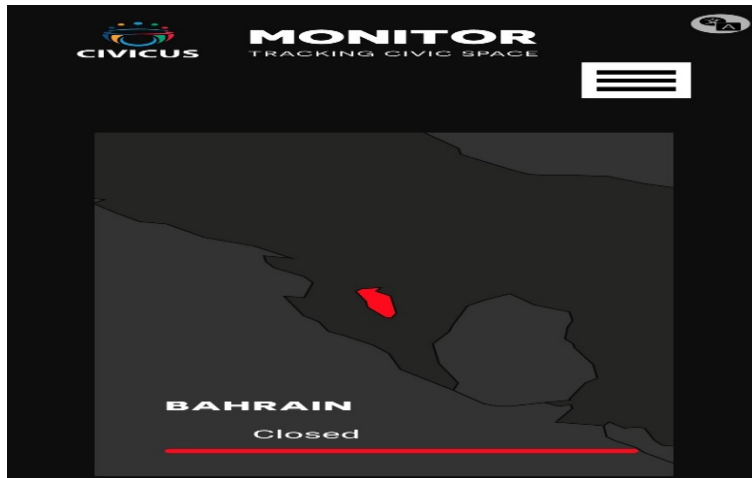
<u>Political Rights</u>	2 / 40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	10 / 60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

12 / 100 ● Not Free

A country or territory's Freedom in the World status depends on its aggregate Political Rights score, on a scale of 0–40, and its aggregate Civil Liberties score, on a scale of 0–60. [See the methodology.](#)





The human cost is immense:

- Over 10,000 political prisoners arrested since 2011, nearly 500 remain behind bars after the prisoners release in 2023 and 2024, many serving lengthy sentences after unfair trials.
- At least 26 individuals are currently on death row, several convicted based on confessions obtained under torture.
- Children still targeted till this year and as young as 13 have been arrested, interrogated without legal counsel, and subjected to ill-treatment.
- Religious minorities—primarily the Shia majority—face targeted restrictions on worship, including the denial of Friday prayers in Diraz and state interference in Ashoora commemorations.

Despite repeated recommendations from UN treaty bodies and the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), the government has refused to take substantive measures toward reform. International engagement has yielded only cosmetic changes, while structural repression remains intact.

BCHR's documentation for this report draws on its 2025 field monitoring, interviews with victims and families, and prior public statements, including:

- Human Rights Situation Update 2025 [Bahrain: Human Right Situation Updates – BCHR](#)
- Targeting and Arrest of Children in Bahrain [A Report on the Arrest Targeting and Discrimination Against Children in Bahrain – BCHR](#)
- Prison Conditions in Qurain Military Prison [Prison Conditions in Bahrain: The Case of Qurain Military Prison and the Prosecution of Civilians – BCHR](#)
- Religious Freedom Violations During Ashoora 2025 [Denial of Friday Prayers and Ashura Repression in Bahrain: Religious Freedom Under Siege – BCHR](#)
- Arrests and Attacks on Peaceful Protesters [Wave of Arrests and Suppression of Peaceful Protests in Bahrain \(January–June 2025\) – BCHR](#) [Bahrain: Four Underage Political Prisoners on Hunger Strike in Dry Dock Prison – BCHR](#)
- HRDs Under Attack – Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja Case [Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja: The Mandela of Bahrain and the Voice of a Silenced Nation – BCHR](#)

The report concludes with targeted recommendations for the Government of Bahrain, UN bodies, EU member states, and regional partners, aimed at reversing the current trajectory and re-establishing Bahrain’s compliance with its international human rights obligations.

2. Introduction: Bahrain’s Shrinking Civic Space

Bahrain’s human rights crisis cannot be understood without reference to the events of February–March 2011, when tens of thousands of citizens—across sectarian and political lines—joined peaceful demonstrations calling for democratic reform, equality, and accountability. The government’s response was swift and severe: protesters were violently dispersed, opposition leaders were arrested, and military courts were used to prosecute civilians.

Recognizing the international backlash, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa established the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) in June 2011, chaired by international jurist Cherif Bassiouni. The BICI's November 2011 report documented systematic torture, arbitrary detention, excessive use of force, and denial of fair trial rights. It issued 26 key recommendations aimed at preventing recurrence.

Nearly 14 years later, most of the BICI's core recommendations remain unimplemented, BCHR previously published a report on the BICI [Cosmetic Reforms: Assessing Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI Recommendations Ten Years Later – BCHR](#) still security forces continue to operate with impunity, political societies remain banned, and laws enabling repression have been expanded rather than repealed.

The Law on Associations (Law 21 of 1989) and amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Law now give authorities sweeping powers to dissolve organizations, freeze assets, and prosecute activists under broad definitions of "terrorism" and "threats to national security." In parallel, Decree 32 of 2013 prohibits public demonstrations in Manama, effectively criminalizing gatherings in the political heart of the country.

International scrutiny has been limited by the government's refusal to allow UN Special Rapporteurs to visit since 2006. Requests from the Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Assembly and Association, and the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders remain unanswered.

Civil society today is characterized by:

- The absence of independent NGOs able to legally register and operate inside Bahrain.
- Criminal penalties for unregistered association activities.
- Exile of key activists, forcing advocacy to be conducted from abroad under threat of reprisals against family members at home.

The context is one of permanent, institutionalized repression, where laws, courts, and security forces work in concert to maintain political control and silence descend

3. Freedom of Expression

Bahrain's legal and political environment leaves virtually no room for free expression. While Article 23 of the Bahraini Constitution nominally guarantees the right to express opinions, it also allows for "limitations by law," a loophole that has been systematically exploited through overly broad and vague legal provisions.

3.1 Legal Framework Enabling Repression

Several laws form the backbone of Bahrain's censorship and criminalization of speech:

- Penal Code:
 - Article 133 criminalizes "spreading false or malicious news" that could harm the public interest.
 - Article 134 prohibits criticism that might "damage the prestige of the state" or its allies, punishable by up to ten years in prison.
 - Article 165 penalizes any call for change to the political system.
- Cybercrime Law (Law No. 60 of 2014): This law has been used extensively to prosecute individuals for online posts, including tweets, Facebook comments, and WhatsApp messages. Provisions criminalize "spreading rumors" and "misusing telecommunications," with penalties of up to five years in prison.
- Anti-Terrorism Law (Amended 2017): Redefines terrorism to include non-violent activities such as "disturbing public order," creating a legal pathway to try peaceful activists under terrorism-related charges.

These provisions violate Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bahrain is a state party, as they impose restrictions beyond the permissible limits set by international law.

3.2 Patterns of Arrest and Prosecution

The Bahraini government employs a zero-tolerance approach toward criticism, particularly when it concerns the royal family, the judiciary, or foreign allies. Arrests for expression-related offenses follow a predictable pattern: monitoring, summons, interrogation without legal representation, and either detention pending trial or coerced “apology” videos broadcast on state media.

3.3 Surveillance and Self-Censorship

The climate of fear surrounding expression is intensified by the confirmed use of Pegasus spyware to target activists and journalists. In 2021, Citizen Lab confirmed that Bahrain had used Pegasus to monitor devices belonging to at least nine HRDs, including BCHR Director Nedal Al-Salman. Such surveillance not only violates privacy but also enables the state to gather material for coercion and criminal prosecution.

Self-censorship has become pervasive. Many Bahrainis, especially those with public sector jobs, refrain from engaging in any online political discussion, limiting their digital activity to non-political topics or avoiding social media entirely. Private WhatsApp groups are avoided for sensitive discussions, with some citizens preferring face-to-face meetings to minimize digital traces.

3.4 International and Domestic Criticism

International bodies—including the UN Human Rights Committee and the European Parliament—have repeatedly called on Bahrain to amend or repeal laws that criminalize peaceful expression. Domestically, however, there is no independent mechanism to challenge censorship, as the judiciary lacks autonomy and consistently rules in favor of the state.

3.5 BCHR Documentation

BCHR's 2025 Human Rights Situation Update provides detailed accounts of arrests linked to expression, including cases where individuals were prosecuted solely for retweeting posts from dissolved political societies. The report notes that between January and June 2025, at least 57 individuals were arrested or interrogated for expression-related charges, underscoring the continuing trend of criminalizing dissent [Bahrain: Human Right Situation Updates – BCHR](#)

4. Freedom of Association

Freedom of association in Bahrain is severely restricted through a combination of onerous legal requirements, broad administrative discretion, and politically motivated enforcement. While Article 27 of the Bahraini Constitution recognizes the right to form associations and unions, it qualifies that this must be “in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed by law.” In practice, the state has used this clause to enact legislation that effectively neutralizes the ability of independent organizations to exist. [Report on Freedom of Assembly and of Association – BCHR](#)

4.1 Legal Restrictions

The primary legal instrument governing associations is Law No. 21 of 1989 on Associations, Cultural and Social Clubs, and Private Bodies Working in the Field of Youth, Sports, and Private Institutions. Key restrictive features include:

- **Pre-Approval Requirement:** No association may be established without prior approval from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, which has broad discretion to reject applications for vague reasons such as “opposing the system of government” or “harm to national unity.”
- **Government Oversight:** The Ministry has the power to attend association meetings, request internal records, and intervene in elections for board positions.
- **Dissolution Powers:** The government can dissolve associations by ministerial decree without judicial oversight, citing violations as subjective as “political activity” by non-political organizations.
- **Funding Restrictions:** Associations must obtain government approval before accepting foreign funding, a provision often used to starve independent NGOs of resources.

This legal framework is incompatible with Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects the right to freedom of association, permitting restrictions only when they are “necessary in a democratic society” for specific, narrowly defined purposes.

4.2 Targeting Political Societies

Bahrain requires political groups to register as “political societies” under the Law on Political Societies (Law No. 26 of 2005). This law allows for extensive state control, including the power to ban societies deemed to have violated the constitution or laws—determinations made without independent judicial review.

Since 2016, this law has been weaponized to eliminate all major opposition groups:

- **Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society** – Dissolved by court order in July 2016; its Secretary-General, Sheikh Ali Salman, sentenced to life imprisonment in 2018 after a trial criticized by the UN as politically motivated. [Bahrain’s High Court of](#)

[Appeals Upholds Dissolution of Al-Wefaq – BCHR](#) [The Fifth Anniversary of Al-Wefaq's Closure – BCHR](#)

- Wa'ad (National Democratic Action Society) – Dissolved in May 2017; accused of “supporting terrorism” for commemorating victims of state violence and calling for democratic reform. [Bahraini Human Rights Organizations: The Political Space in Bahrain is turning Dark Black amid the Dissolution of “Waad” Political Party Revealing Lack of Judicial Independency – BCHR](#)
- Amal (Islamic Action Society) – Dissolved in 2012 under similar accusations.

The dissolution of these societies has left Bahrain without any legally operating opposition party, consolidating the ruling family's monopoly on political participation.

4.3 Impact on Civil Society Organizations

Independent civil society organizations face near-total exclusion from legal operation:

- Licensing Denials: Groups that monitor human rights violations—such as the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR)—have been denied registration entirely, forcing them to operate from exile or underground.
- Criminalization of Unregistered Activity: Under the Penal Code and Law 21, engaging in activities on behalf of an unregistered association is punishable by fines and imprisonment.
- Surveillance and Harassment: Members of civil society groups face frequent summons, home raids, and confiscation of equipment.

The result is a civil society vacuum, where only pro-government organizations can operate openly. This erodes public trust in the NGO sector, as independent voices are replaced by state-aligned entities.

4.4 International Criticism and Obligations

UN Special Procedures have repeatedly raised concerns about Bahrain's restrictions on association. The Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has noted that the combination of burdensome registration requirements, arbitrary dissolution, and criminal penalties for unregistered activities constitutes a violation of Bahrain's international obligations.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process has seen repeated recommendations for Bahrain to amend Law 21 of 1989 and the Law on Political Societies to bring them in line with the ICCPR. These recommendations have consistently been noted but not accepted by the Bahraini government.

4.5 BCHR Documentation

BCHR has repeatedly documented the political targeting of associations. Its reports highlight how the dissolution of opposition societies has been accompanied by broader repression of independent unions, youth groups, and cultural associations, creating a public sphere devoid of meaningful political pluralism [[Bahrain: Human Right Situation Updates – BCHR](#)]

5. Freedom of Assembly

While Bahrain's Constitution, under Article 28, nominally guarantees the right to hold public meetings and processions, this right is heavily curtailed in law and almost entirely absent in practice. Since 2013, the government has maintained an effective ban on all demonstrations in the capital, Manama, enforced through Ministry of Interior decrees. This prohibition undermines the very purpose of peaceful assembly, as it bars protest in the political and economic center of the country.

5.1 Legal Restrictions

The framework regulating public assembly is primarily governed by:

- Law No. 18 of 1973 on Public Meetings, Processions, and Gatherings – Requires advance notification to the Ministry of Interior and allows authorities to prohibit or forcibly disperse assemblies deemed a “threat to public security or morals.”
- Decree No. 32 of 2013 – Explicitly bans protests, rallies, or sit-ins in Manama “to maintain public order and avoid traffic congestion,” effectively criminalizing demonstrations in the capital.
- Penal Code Articles 178 and 179 – Criminalize participation in unlicensed gatherings of more than five people, with penalties of up to two years’ imprisonment.

These provisions contravene Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects the right to peaceful assembly, allowing restrictions only when they are necessary and proportionate.

5.2 Patterns of Protest Suppression in 2025

BCHR’s field monitoring shows that from January to June 2025, security forces carried out a systematic campaign to suppress any public expression of dissent:

- January 2025 – Arrest of at least 11 protesters in Sitra and Sanabis for participating in solidarity marches marking the anniversary of the 2011 uprising.
- February 2025 – Multiple dispersals of vigils in solidarity with political prisoners; tear gas used in residential areas, affecting elderly residents and children.

- March 2025 – Arrest of 18 individuals in Diraz after security forces blocked access to the village and fired tear gas at mourners attending a funeral, citing “illegal gathering.”
- April 2025 – Pre-emptive arrests in Bilad al-Qadeem ahead of planned International Workers’ Day demonstrations.
- May 2025 – At least 22 people detained during protests in Sanabis calling for the release of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja.
- June 2025 – Violent dispersal of a peaceful march in Bilad al-Qadeem demanding political reforms; rubber bullets and birdshot reportedly used, resulting in several injuries.

[Wave of Arrests and Suppression of Peaceful Protests in Bahrain \(January–June 2025\) – BCHR](#)

5.3 Case Study: Bilad al-Qadeem, June 2025

On 14 June 2025, dozens of residents in Bilad al-Qadeem gathered for a peaceful march calling for democratic reforms and the release of political prisoners. The protest, which began without incident, was quickly surrounded by riot police. Eyewitnesses reported that security forces fired tear gas canisters at close range, in some cases directly at protesters, causing injuries to at least seven individuals.

A 17-year-old participant suffered a fractured leg after being struck by a tear gas canister. Fifteen protesters were arrested, including three minors, and taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID), where they were reportedly interrogated without legal counsel and subjected to verbal abuse.

5.4 Methods of Suppression

Security forces employ a range of tactics designed to deter participation in protests:

- Pre-emptive Arrests – Detaining organizers and known activists before scheduled events.
- Village Lockdowns – Using police checkpoints and roadblocks to prevent protesters from gathering.
- Excessive Force – Deploying tear gas, birdshot, and rubber bullets, often in densely populated residential areas.
- Mass Trials – Charging large groups of protesters under collective security-related offenses, without individualized evidence.

The indiscriminate use of force not only violates international standards but also endangers bystanders, including children and the elderly.

5.5 International Standards and Bahrain's Non-Compliance

Under the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials, force should be used only when strictly necessary and in proportion to the threat. Bahrain's protest policing routinely violates these principles by using force against unarmed, peaceful demonstrators and failing to exhaust non-violent means of dispersal.

5.6 BCHR Documentation

BCHR's July 2025 statement, "Bahrain: Arrests and Attacks on Peaceful Protesters", documented over 90 arrests related to peaceful assembly in the first half of the year, including at least 16 minors. The report highlighted multiple incidents of excessive force, noting that such crackdowns have become "an institutionalized tool for silencing dissent rather than isolated acts of misconduct" [BCHR, Arrests and Attacks on Peaceful Protesters, [Wave of Arrests and Suppression of Peaceful Protests in Bahrain \(January–June 2025\) – BCHR](#)].

6. Freedom of the Press

Bahrain's press freedom environment is among the most restrictive in the Middle East. While the government claims to uphold freedom of opinion under Article 23 of the Constitution, this right is curtailed by vague legal caveats and an array of restrictive laws that place journalists, editors, and even ordinary citizens under constant threat of prosecution and was ranked as not safe for journalist by Reporters without Borders [Bahrain | RSF](#)

6.1 Legal Restrictions on Media

The media sector is primarily governed by Decree-Law No. 47 of 2002 on the Organization of the Press, Printing, and Publishing, which:

- Requires all publications to obtain government licenses, which can be revoked without judicial review.
- Bans material deemed to “incite discord,” “harm national unity,” or “offend the monarchy,” without providing clear definitions.
- Holds editors-in-chief criminally liable for all content published, even if written by third parties.

The Cybercrime Law (Law No. 60 of 2014) extends these restrictions to online publications, blogs, and social media platforms. Authorities have also proposed a new Media Law, which, if enacted, would increase penalties for “false news” and strengthen government control over online journalism.

6.2 Closure of Al-Wasat

The closure of Al-Wasat in June 2017 marked the end of independent print journalism in Bahrain. Founded in 2002, Al-Wasat was widely regarded as the only newspaper providing balanced coverage, including reporting on opposition perspectives. [The Closure of Alwasat and the Decline of Human Rights in Bahrain – BCHR](#)

The Information Affairs Authority accused Al-Wasat of “spreading divisions” and “harming national unity” after it published a report on protests in Morocco. The paper’s closure left Bahrain’s media landscape entirely in the hands of state-owned or state-aligned outlets, eliminating a critical platform for diverse political discourse. [Bahrain: A Nation Without Press Freedom – BCHR](#)

6.3 Arrests and Harassment of Journalists

Journalists continue to face intimidation, interrogation, and prosecution:

The government also uses family harassment as a pressure tactic against Bahraini journalists working abroad, summoning relatives for questioning or imposing travel bans. [Writing in Chains: The Deteriorating State of Press Freedom in Bahrain – BCHR](#)

6.4 Censorship and Website Blocking

Bahrain maintains a robust online censorship regime:

- As of mid-2025, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has blocked over 120 websites, including those of human rights organizations, opposition groups, and independent news portals.
- The BCHR website has been blocked since 2007, forcing it to operate from outside Bahrain.

- Social media posts and even private WhatsApp messages have been used as evidence in criminal prosecutions.

[Press-Report-2020-en.pdf](#)

6.5 Freedom House Ranking

In the Freedom in the World 2024 report by Freedom House, Bahrain scored 12 out of 100, earning a classification of “Not Free.” The report cited complete government control over media, the criminalization of online dissent, and the absence of independent print or broadcast journalism. This low score underscores the depth of Bahrain’s information blackout, where citizens are deprived of balanced news sources and critical perspectives. [Bahrain: Country Profile | Freedom House](#)

6.6 International Standards and Violations

Under Article 19 of the ICCPR, restrictions on expression must be necessary, proportionate, and clearly defined. Bahrain’s media laws fail to meet these criteria, as they rely on broad and subjective terms like “national unity” to silence dissenting voices. The UN Human Rights Committee has repeatedly recommended the repeal or amendment of these provisions, but Bahrain has taken no steps toward compliance.

6.7 BCHR Documentation

BCHR’s ongoing monitoring confirms that the media in Bahrain functions primarily as an extension of state power. Independent investigative journalism has been replaced by pro-government narratives, and critical reporting is confined to exiled media outlets. The absence of domestic press freedom has also weakened public accountability mechanisms, enabling corruption and human rights abuses to continue unchecked.

7. Prisoners in Bahrain: Situation and Conditions

Bahrain's prison system, particularly its treatment of political prisoners, remains one of the most serious human rights concerns in the country. Despite repeated assurances to international bodies that conditions meet "international standards," credible evidence from detainees, families, and human rights organizations paints a very different picture. Overcrowding, medical neglect, denial of family visits, and punitive isolation remain routine, and there is no effective independent oversight. [The continued deterioration of the situation of prisoners and an invitation to improve prison conditions in Bahrain – BCHR](#)

7.1 Number and Profile of Political Prisoners

As of July 2025, BCHR estimates at least 500 prisoners in Bahrain. This figure includes:

- Prominent opposition leaders such as Sheikh Ali Salman (life sentence) and Hassan Mushaima (life sentence). [Bahrain Court of Appeal Increases the Sentence of Al-Wefaq's Sheikh Ali Salman to Nine Years in Prison – BCHR](#)
[Hasan Mushaima: Endless Suffering – BCHR](#)
- Human rights defenders such as Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, co-founder of BCHR, sentenced to life imprisonment. [Release Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja: A Call for Justice on Bahrain's National Day – BCHR](#)
- Academics, journalists, medics, teachers, and ordinary citizens convicted for peaceful expression or assembly.

Most political prisoners were convicted following mass trials that violated fair trial guarantees, including the right to be presumed innocent, the right to adequate legal counsel, and the exclusion of evidence obtained under torture.

7.2 Qurain Military Prison

The Qurain Military Prison is particularly notorious because it holds civilians convicted in military courts under the 2017 constitutional amendments that expanded the jurisdiction of military courts over civilians in cases deemed related to “national security.”

Conditions reported in Qurain include:

- Extended periods of solitary confinement without judicial review.
- Incommunicado detention, with some prisoners denied contact with families for months.
- Inadequate access to legal counsel, particularly for appeals.
- Use of military disciplinary measures against civilian detainees, including denial of medical care as a punishment.

BCHR’s April 2025 report documented multiple cases where prisoners in Qurain were transferred to isolation units after submitting complaints about conditions [Prison Conditions in Bahrain: The Case of Qurain Military Prison and the Prosecution of Civilians – BCHR](#)

7.3 Overcrowding and Sanitation

Prisons across Bahrain operate far beyond their intended capacity. Cells designed for six inmates often hold 12 or more, forcing prisoners to sleep in shifts or on the floor. Sanitation is inadequate, with broken toilets, poor ventilation, and insufficient access to

clean water. [“Urgent Call for Action: Deteriorating Conditions at Jau Prison – Denial of Medical Care, Electricity Cuts, and Restricted Communication” – BCHR](#)

Overcrowding increases the risk of communicable diseases; during the COVID-19 pandemic, BCHR documented widespread infection within Jaw Prison due to the government’s failure to isolate cases and provide timely medical care.

7.4 Denial of Medical Care

Medical neglect is systemic, with political prisoners often singled out for punitive denial of treatment. [Victims of medical negligence in prisons are alive, dead, and “Habib Al-Fardan” as a model – BCHR](#)

Case Examples:

- Hassan Mushaima, an opposition leader and cancer survivor, has been repeatedly denied specialist treatment and necessary scans unless he complies with humiliating procedures, such as wearing a prison uniform and being shackled during transport. [Hasan Mushaima: Endless Suffering – BCHR](#)
- Abduljalil Al-Singace, an academic with post-polio syndrome who relies on crutches, has been denied adequate medical equipment and physical therapy. Since July 2021, he has been on a hunger strike to protest the confiscation of his research materials, with authorities refusing to return them. [Bahrain: Request for support to free imprisoned human rights defender Dr Abduljalil AlSingace, on hunger strike since July 2021 – BCHR](#)
- Husain Barakat died in Jaw Prison in June 2021 after contracting COVID-19, amid allegations that prison authorities failed to provide timely medical care. [The Death Of Husain Barakat - A Question For Belgian’s Minister Of Foreign Affairs - ECDHR](#)

These cases violate the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), which require that prisoners receive health care equivalent to

that available in the community, without discrimination. [Bahrain must restore rights in Jau prison amid prisoner protests, say experts | OHCHR](#)

7.5 Restrictions on Family Contact

Family visits are tightly controlled, often conducted behind glass barriers with communication through a phone line, even for prisoners with no history of disciplinary violations. Authorities have used family visits as leverage, restricting them as a punishment for prisoners who speak out about conditions.

During politically sensitive periods—such as the anniversary of the 2011 uprising—authorities have canceled visits entirely, citing “security concerns.”

7.6 Lack of Oversight and Accountability

While Bahrain has established an Ombudsman’s Office and a National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR), both bodies lack independence and credibility. Complaints lodged with these entities rarely lead to investigations, and findings are not made public. This absence of meaningful oversight allows violations to persist with impunity.

7.7 BCHR Documentation

BCHR's April 2025 Prison Conditions in Qurain Military Prison report provides detailed testimony from prisoners and families, documenting overcrowding, denial of medical care, and retaliatory isolation [Prison Conditions in Bahrain: The Case of Qurain Military Prison and the Prosecution of Civilians – BCHR](#). Additionally, BCHR's Human Rights Situation Update 2025 notes that between January and June 2025, at least 27 prisoners were denied urgent medical treatment, some for chronic and life-threatening conditions [Bahrain: Human Right Situation Updates – BCHR](#) .

8. Death Penalty

Bahrain's use of the death penalty has escalated significantly since the government ended its seven-year de facto moratorium in January 2017. The resumption of executions has drawn international condemnation, particularly due to the prevalence of torture-tainted convictions and the lack of fair trial guarantees. [Bahrain Center for Human Rights: 2018 Is the Year of Death Penalty – BCHR](#)

8.1 Legal Framework

The death penalty in Bahrain is provided for under multiple laws, including the Penal Code and the Anti-Terrorism Law. Capital punishment can be imposed for a wide range of offenses—some of which do not meet the “most serious crimes” threshold under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Notably, amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Law in 2017 expanded the scope of capital punishment to include crimes broadly defined as “threats to national security,” a term so vague it allows for political cases to be tried as capital offenses.

8.2 End of Moratorium and Executions Since 2017

Between 2010 and 2016, Bahrain refrained from carrying out executions, leading some observers to believe the country was moving toward abolition. However, in January 2017, the government executed three men—Abbas al-Samea, Sami Mushaima, and Ali al-Singace—convicted in a mass trial marred by credible allegations of torture. Their executions were carried out by firing squad without prior notification to their families, in violation of international safeguards.

Since then, Bahrain has executed additional prisoners, including in 2019 when Ali al-Arab and Ahmed al-Malali were executed despite UN experts warning that their convictions were based on forced confessions. [Urgent Appeal: Ahmad al Mullali and Ali Hakim Al Arab at Risk of Execution – BCHR](#)

8.3 Death Row Statistics

As of August 2025:

- At least 26 individuals are on death row in Bahrain.
- The vast majority were convicted in cases involving political charges under the Anti-Terrorism Law.
- At least 12 of these individuals have exhausted all avenues of appeal and face imminent execution once the King ratifies their sentences.

[Statement by Bahrain Human Rights Centre on the Occasion of World Day Against the Death Penalty – BCHR](#)

8.4 Torture-Tainted Convictions

Numerous death penalty cases are rooted in confessions obtained under torture. Detainees have reported severe beatings, electric shocks, sexual assault, and threats against family members during interrogations at the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) and the National Security Agency (NSA).

Case Examples:

- Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa – Convicted of killing a police officer in 2014. Both men alleged they were tortured into confessing; forensic medical evidence supporting their claims was ignored by the court. Despite international campaigns for their release, both remain on death row. [Mohamad Ramadan and Hussain Moosa at Risk of Execution – BCHR](#)
- Ali al-Arab – Executed in 2019 despite credible reports that his toenails were forcibly removed during interrogation. [Tortured & then executed: Ali Al Arab & Ahmed Al Malali – BCHR](#)

The use of such evidence violates Bahrain's obligations under the Convention Against Torture (CAT), which prohibits the use of statements obtained through torture in any proceedings.

8.5 International Criticism

The UN Human Rights Committee, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, and the European Parliament have all called on Bahrain to:

1. Reinstate a moratorium on the death penalty.
2. Commute existing death sentences.
3. Ensure that all trials meet international standards of fairness.

In a 2022 joint statement, 36 countries at the UN Human Rights Council urged Bahrain to end executions and address torture allegations. The government dismissed these concerns, framing the death penalty as a “sovereign right” and necessary for “counter-terrorism.”

8.6 BCHR Documentation

BCHR has consistently documented the increase in politically motivated death sentences since 2017, noting that many are imposed following unfair mass trials. The organization emphasizes that the death penalty in Bahrain is not applied as an exceptional measure for the “most serious crimes,” but as a political tool to deter dissent and punish opposition figures.

9. Women’s Rights

Bahrain presents itself on the international stage as a champion of women's empowerment, citing high female literacy rates, the presence of women in ministerial positions, and initiatives under the Supreme Council for Women. However, systemic legal discrimination and targeted political reprisals continue to undermine the rights of Bahraini women, particularly those engaged in activism, opposition politics, or human rights work.

[Document Viewer](#)

9.1 Legal Discrimination

The most prominent example of legal inequality is found in Bahrain's Nationality Law (Decree Law No. 12 of 1963), which denies Bahraini women the right to pass their nationality to their children if they are married to non-Bahrainis. This results in children facing statelessness or dependency on residency permits, with restricted access to education, healthcare, and employment.

While the government has implemented some administrative measures to ease these hardships—such as temporary residency permits—they are discretionary, revocable, and do not provide the full rights of citizenship. This discrimination violates Article 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which Bahrain has ratified. [Gender & Nationality-Based Wage Discrimination is Common in Bahrain & the Government Should Address It – BCHR](#)

9.2 Political Isolation and Exclusion

The 2018 Political Isolation Law bars individuals who have belonged to dissolved political societies or served prison sentences for political activities from running for elected office. While framed as a measure against “undemocratic actors,” in practice it

disproportionately affects women political activists, many of whom have been associated with groups like Al-Wefaq or Wa'ad.

This exclusion is compounded by the fact that Bahrain's Parliament is already male-dominated, with women holding just 8 of the 40 seats in the Council of Representatives following the 2022 elections.

[Application of Political Isolation Law against Bahrain Society for Human Rights – BCHR](#)

9.3 Reprisals Against Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs)

Women human rights defenders in Bahrain face unique and gendered forms of reprisal, including defamation campaigns questioning their morality, threats of sexual violence, and targeting of family members.

Key Cases:

- Jalila Al-Salman – Former Vice President of the Bahrain Teachers' Society, arrested in 2011 for leading teachers' strikes during the pro-democracy protests. She was tortured in detention, later released, but remains under a travel ban, preventing her from attending international advocacy events. [Jaleela Al Salman, VP Bahrain Teachers Association, re-arrested at 3 AM without a warrant – BCHR](#)
[Jaleela Al-Salman: Democratizing Bahrain - Human Rights First](#) [Fears for Bahraini teacher after pre-dawn arrest - Amnesty International](#)
- Ebtisam Al-Sayegh – In May 2017, detained and tortured for seven hours by National Security Agency officers, including being subjected to sexual assault. Her torture was intended to coerce her into ending her human rights work. Despite international condemnation, she continues to face threats, and no investigation into her abuse has been carried out. [Ebtisam Al-Saegh charged under anti-terrorism law, while UN asks for Bahrain to investigate torture and sexual assault allegations – BCHR](#) [Bahrain: Arrested defender at risk of torture: Ebtisam al-Saegh](#)

- Nedal Al-Salman – BCHR Director, Vice President of FIDH, and former President of IFEX. She has been under a travel ban since 2018 and was confirmed to be targeted by Pegasus spyware. These reprisals are directly linked to her international advocacy for human rights in Bahrain. [Bahrain: Ongoing obstacles to Ms. Nedal Al Salman's freedom of movement](#) [Prisoners inside the state: Bahrain grounds Nedal Al-Salman from traveling to UN - IFEX](#)
[Members of BCHR targeted by Pegasus spyware – BCHR](#)

9.4 Socioeconomic Inequalities

Beyond politics, women in Bahrain face structural barriers in the workforce and legal discrimination in personal status matters:

- Family Law – Bahrain has two separate family law systems, both of which discriminate against women Nationality rights. [No nationality for the children of Bahraini women – BCHR](#)
- Employment – While women are represented in public sector jobs, they are underrepresented in leadership positions and overrepresented in lower-paying roles. [Gender & Nationality-Based Wage Discrimination is Common in Bahrain & the Government Should Address It – BCHR](#)

9.5 International Obligations and Non-Compliance

The CEDAW Committee's concluding observations to Bahrain in 2023 urged the government to:

1. Amend the Nationality Law to ensure equality in the transmission of nationality.
2. Repeal political isolation measures that disproportionately affect women.
3. Protect women human rights defenders from reprisals.

To date, none of these recommendations have been implemented.

9.6 BCHR Documentation

BCHR has consistently highlighted the intersectional nature of discrimination faced by Bahraini women—where gender discrimination is compounded by political persecution. Its Human Rights Situation Update 2025 details multiple cases of travel bans, harassment, and public smear campaigns against WHRDs, and documents the chilling effect these reprisals have had on women's participation in public life [Ongoing Systematic Human Rights Violations in Bahrain – BCHR](#)

[CEDAW: Concluding observations on the third periodic report of Bahrain – BCHR](#)

10. Human Rights Defenders Under Attack

Bahrain's human rights defenders (HRDs) operate in one of the most hostile environments in the world for civil society. Those who challenge government policies, expose abuses, or engage with international mechanisms face a coordinated campaign of travel bans, arbitrary detention, torture, digital surveillance, and defamation. These reprisals are systematic, not isolated, and are designed to eliminate independent activism both domestically and internationally.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998) affirms the right of everyone to promote and protect human rights, but in Bahrain, HRDs are treated as security threats rather than legitimate civil society actors.

10.1 Travel Bans as a Tool of Repression

Travel bans are one of the Bahraini government's most commonly used non-custodial reprisals. They are often imposed without judicial order, last for years, and are rarely lifted without political pressure. Travel bans prevent HRDs from attending international conferences, UN Human Rights Council sessions, and training programs—effectively cutting them off from global advocacy.

Key Examples:

- Nedal Al-Salman – BCHR Director and Vice President of FIDH, under a travel ban since 2018. In addition to preventing her from attending UN sessions, Bahraini authorities have targeted her with Pegasus spyware, compromising her personal and professional communications. [Meet Nedal Al-Salman, Bahrain - Nobel Women's Initiative](#)
- Jalila Al-Salman – Former Vice President of the Bahrain Teachers' Society, has faced repeated travel bans and harassment for her education rights advocacy. [Global condemnation of travel ban for Bahraini education union leader](#)
- Enas Oun – Head of BCHR's Documentation Unit, subjected to travel restrictions and interrogation over her work compiling human rights violations. [Travel ban](#)

[against human rights defender Enas Oun | Front Line Defenders](#) [Authorities impose several travel bans as crackdown on HRDs continues - Civicus Monitor](#)

Travel bans are rarely communicated in writing, leaving defenders with no legal avenue for appeal.

10.2 Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

Prominent HRDs are often subjected to arbitrary arrest, prolonged pretrial detention, and unfair trials:

- Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja – Co-founder of BCHR, arrested in April 2011 for his role in pro-democracy protests. He was severely beaten during arrest, tortured, and sentenced to life imprisonment by a military court. His health has deteriorated significantly due to chronic medical neglect, including denial of treatment for eye injuries sustained during torture. Al-Khawaja has been described by BCHR as the “Mandela of Bahrain,” a symbol of resilience and peaceful resistance [Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja: The Mandela of Bahrain and the Voice of a Silenced Nation – BCHR](#)
- Ebtisam Al-Sayegh – Detained in May 2017 by the National Security Agency, tortured for seven hours, and sexually assaulted. Her abuse was intended to intimidate her into ceasing her human rights work. Despite international outcry, no official has been held accountable. [Ebtisam Al-Saegh charged under anti-terrorism law, while UN asks for Bahrain to investigate torture and sexual assault allegations – BCHR](#)

10.3 Digital Surveillance and Spyware

Bahrain is a confirmed user of Pegasus spyware, developed by NSO Group, to monitor HRDs, journalists, and political activists. In 2021, Citizen Lab identified at least nine Bahraini activists targeted by Pegasus, including BCHR staff and members of opposition political societies.

Pegasus allows authorities to:

- Access all files and messages on a device.
- Activate microphones and cameras remotely.
- Track the defender's location in real-time.

The use of spyware has had a chilling effect on activism, as HRDs fear that their communications—both with international partners and with victims inside Bahrain—are compromised. [Members of BCHR targeted by Pegasus spyware – BCHR](#)

10.4 Defamation and Smear Campaigns

State-controlled media outlets regularly publish articles attacking HRDs, portraying them as traitors, foreign agents, or destabilizers of national unity. These campaigns often coincide with major international advocacy efforts, such as UN sessions or EU Parliament debates on Bahrain, and aim to discredit defenders both domestically and abroad.

10.5 International Condemnation

The UN Secretary-General's annual reports on reprisals have repeatedly included Bahrain for its targeting of HRDs. In its 2024 report, Bahrain was cited for travel bans, arbitrary detention, and threats against family members of defenders engaging with UN mechanisms. [Reprisals by States against people who assist UN human rights work are deeply concerning | OHCHR](#)

The European Parliament and international NGOs such as IFEX, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and FIDH have called for the immediate release of imprisoned defenders, the lifting of travel bans, and an end to surveillance and harassment. [Bahrain: Joint Letter on Human Rights Situation to Member and Observer States of the United Nations Human Rights Council - IFEX](#)

10.6 BCHR Documentation

BCHR's Human Rights Defenders Under Attack statement (2025) provides detailed accounts of reprisals against defenders, including the cases of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Nedal Al-Salman, Jalila Al-Salman, and Enas Oun.

11. Religious Freedom

Religious freedom in Bahrain is deeply undermined by institutionalized discrimination against the Shia Muslim majority, who constitute an estimated 60–70% of the citizen population. While Bahrain's Constitution (Article 22) states that "freedom of conscience is absolute" and guarantees the "freedom to perform religious rites," in practice, the

state restricts Shia religious expression through security measures, administrative controls, and targeted harassment of clerics and religious communities.

11.1 Historical Context of Repression

Since the 2011 pro-democracy protests—where many demonstrators came from Shia-majority areas—the government has increasingly conflated Shia religious gatherings with political dissent. This securitization of religious practice has resulted in:

- Demolitions or closures of Shia mosques in 2011–2012 under claims of “illegal construction.”
- Systematic monitoring of sermons for “political content.”
- Denial of permits for certain religious processions.

The government maintains direct control over both Sunni and Shia endowments (waqf), but its regulation of Shia religious affairs is notably more restrictive.

11.2 Ban on Friday Prayers in Diraz

Since June 2016, Bahraini authorities have imposed a de facto ban on Friday prayers in the village of Diraz, home to the country’s largest Shia mosque (Imam Al-Sadiq Mosque). The ban coincided with the revocation of the citizenship of Sheikh Isa Qassim, Bahrain’s most senior Shia cleric, and the arrest of multiple religious figures.

[As the Religious Season of the Month of Muharram Begins, Bahrain Increases Restrictions and Attacks on Religious Freedom – BCHR](#)

[Duraz Remains Under Siege One Year Later – BCHR](#)

Security forces have repeatedly cordoned off Diraz, preventing worshippers from attending prayers. Clerics who attempt to lead Friday sermons have faced summons, interrogation, and in some cases short-term detention.

[Denial of Friday Prayers and Ashura Repression in Bahrain: Religious Freedom Under Siege – BCHR](#)

11.3 Ashoora Commemorations

The repression intensifies during Ashoora, a key Shia religious observance. Authorities frequently:

- Remove black banners and flags from streets and community centers.
- Restrict processions by demanding permits or imposing route changes.
- Summon organizers and clerics for questioning over sermon content.

June 2025 Incidents:

BCHR documented multiple violations during Ashoora 2025:

- 21 June – Removal of mourning banners in Al-Sahla.
- 23 June – Confiscation of black flags in Al-Daih.
- 25 June – Violent dispersal of processions in Diraz, resulting in injuries and several arrests; Interior Ministry issued a directive prohibiting the raising of Hussaini flags in Manama.
- 26–27 June – Attacks on processions in Tubli, Musalla, Bilad Al-Qadeem, and Sitra; several clerics barred from entering Diraz to deliver sermons.

[عاشوراء 2025 تحت القمع واعتقالات واستدعاءات واعتداءات تطال الحريات الدينية في البحرين – مركز البحرين لحقوق الإنسان](#)

These actions not only violate Bahrain's own constitution but also breach Article 18 of the ICCPR, which protects the right to manifest one's religion in public or private.

11.4 Interrogation and Prosecution of Clerics

During 2024–2025, BCHR recorded at least 27 cases of clerics being summoned for interrogation, many accused of “inciting hatred” or “illegal assembly” based solely on their religious sermons. This has created a climate of fear among religious leaders, leading to self-censorship and a reduction in community-led religious programming.

11.5 International Standards and Bahrain's Obligations

Under international human rights law, including the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (1981), states must protect the right to worship without discrimination. Bahrain's targeting of Shia religious practices violates both the letter and the spirit of these obligations.

11.6 BCHR Documentation

BCHR's July 2025 statement on *Religious Freedom Violations During Ashoora* provides a detailed account of the incidents listed above, confirming that these measures are part of an ongoing state policy to suppress Shia identity and limit public religious expression.

12. Closure of Civic Space

Bahrain's civic space has effectively transitioned from "repressed" to fully closed, with the state eliminating channels for participation, dissent, and oversight. The cumulative effect of restrictive association and assembly laws, criminalization of expression, a dismantled free press, and the prosecution of human rights work has produced a public sphere where independent civic engagement is structurally impossible. This is not the result of isolated measures but rather a coherent policy implemented through legislation, policing, and courts.

Dissolution and Bans. All major opposition societies—Al-Wefaq, Wa'ad, Amal—have been judicially dissolved; their leaders are imprisoned, in exile, or subject to long-term silencing orders. Professional bodies, unions, and student groups operate under intrusive ministerial oversight that chills internal democracy and advocacy. Independent NGOs face licensing denials, foreign-funding vetoes, and criminal penalties for unregistered work, effectively closing the legal route to operate inside the country.

Blocking International Scrutiny. Bahrain has refused country visits by UN Special Procedures since 2006 and limits access for international NGOs and media. Defenders engaging UN mechanisms face reprisals, including travel bans and prosecutions, undermining the integrity of international oversight. Domestically, quasi-official institutions (ombudsman, NIHR) lack independence and have not secured accountability in emblematic cases.

Consequences. With opposition dismantled and civic actors silenced, elections occur without meaningful competition, and policy-making proceeds without independent input. This governance model, anchored in "security-first" logic, deepens polarization and forecloses pathways to reconciliation.

References: BCHR, [Ongoing Systematic Human Rights Violations in Bahrain – BCHR](#) . See also BCHR, Arrests and Attacks on Peaceful Protesters, [Wave of Arrests and Suppression of Peaceful Protests in Bahrain \(January–June 2025\) – BCHR](#).

13. Children's Rights

Despite Bahrain's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the rights of children—especially those from Shia-majority areas—are routinely violated in the context of political policing. Children are arrested during night raids, questioned without lawyers or guardians present, and prosecuted under public-order or anti-terror provisions that are inappropriate for minors.

Arrests and Due Process Failures. BCHR documentation shows that children as young as 13–14 have been detained for participating in or being near protests, or for social media activity. Interrogations frequently occur at Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) facilities without prompt access to counsel. Parents report being kept uninformed of whereabouts for hours or days—amounting to de facto enforced disappearance.

Detention Conditions and Harm. Juveniles report beatings, threats, and pressure to sign prepared “confessions.” Detention facilities provide inconsistent access to education, healthcare, and psychosocial support. Long pre-trial detentions and criminal records inflict lasting educational and economic harm, compounding trauma for the child and family.

Discriminatory Impact. Arrests cluster in villages such as Sitra, Sanabis, Bilad al-Qadeem, Diraz, and Al-Daih, reflecting broader patterns of sectarian discrimination. Children are targeted during periods of heightened tension (e.g., Ashoora, protest anniversaries), and community leaders note that crackdowns disrupt schooling and social cohesion.

Illustrative Case (2025). A 14-year-old from Sitra was arrested after a peaceful gathering, held incommunicado for nearly 48 hours, and threatened with sexual violence to coerce a confession. His release on bail was conditioned on a curfew and restrictions on movement, impacting his schooling and mental health.

Required Reforms. Bahrain should codify absolute bans on the detention of children for peaceful expression or assembly, ensure immediate guardian and lawyer access, establish specialized juvenile procedures consistent with CRC General Comment No. 24, and prioritize diversion, rehabilitation, and expungement.

References:

BCHR, Targeting and Arrest of Children in Bahrain (July 2025) [A Report on the Arrest Targeting and Discrimination Against Children in Bahrain – BCHR](#).

BCHR, Children’s Rights Documentation Update (June 2025), [Bahrain: Four Underage Political Prisoners on Hunger Strike in Dry Dock Prison – BCHR](#) .

14. Conclusions

The evidence presented across expression, association, assembly, press freedom, prison conditions, the death penalty, women’s rights, HRDs under attack, religious freedom, closure of civic space, and children’s rights reveals a systemic architecture of repression. Laws written with vague national-security language are enforced by security agencies with broad discretion, adjudicated by courts that admit coerced confessions and penalize peaceful dissent, and insulated from scrutiny by information controls and blocked oversight.

This system has produced predictable outcomes: long-term political prisoners, torture allegations without remedy, discriminatory policing of religious and community life, and the erasure of independent civic actors. Incremental reforms that leave this architecture intact will not deliver rights protection or social trust. Only structural changes—legal, institutional, and political—can reverse Bahrain’s trajectory and open credible paths to dialogue and reconciliation.

15. Recommendations

Legal and Institutional Reform

1. Repeal or amend Penal Code arts. 133, 134, 165; Cybercrime Law provisions on “false news/rumors;” and Anti-Terror amendments criminalizing peaceful dissent—align with ICCPR arts. 19, 21, 22.
2. Amend Law 21/1989 (Associations) and Law 26/2005 (Political Societies) to end discretionary licensing/dissolution, remove foreign-funding vetoes, and guarantee independent operation of NGOs and parties.
3. Repeal Decree 32/2013 banning protests in Manama; replace Law 18/1973 with a framework consistent with the UN Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly (notification—not authorization; necessity/proportionality tests).
4. Enact a press and media law that ends prior licensing for content, decriminalizes defamation, and guarantees source protection and independent regulation.

Accountability and Oversight

5. Establish an independent special prosecutor to investigate torture, deaths in custody, and excessive force; ensure victim participation, witness protection, and public reporting.
6. Reform the Ombudsman and NIHR statutes to guarantee independence, transparent appointments, subpoena powers, and publication of findings.
7. Invite and schedule visits by UN Special Rapporteurs (Torture; HRDs; Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Assembly/Association; Independence of Judges and Lawyers) with full access.

Prison Reform

8. Implement the Nelson Mandela Rules: independent medical assessments, prompt specialist referrals, non-discriminatory care, and an end to punitive medical denial.
9. End solitary confinement beyond 15 days; guarantee family visits; expand non-custodial measures for non-violent offenses; review all mass-trial convictions.

10. Immediately and unconditionally release prisoners detained for peaceful expression/association/assembly, including Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Sh Ali Salman, Abduljalil Al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and others.

11. Close the gap between law and practice in juvenile justice: ban detention of children for peaceful protest or speech; guarantee guardian/counsel presence from the first interrogation; prioritize diversion and expungement.

Death Penalty and Fair Trial

12. Declare an immediate moratorium on executions; commute all death sentences; reopen cases with allegations of torture and exclude tainted evidence.

13. Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR (aiming at abolition of the death penalty).

Equality and Non-Discrimination

14. Amend the Nationality Law to grant Bahraini women equal right to transmit nationality to children and spouses; implement CEDAW recommendations in full.

15. Cease spyware targeting and adopt a rights-based surveillance law.

16. Guarantee religious freedom: lift restrictions on Friday prayers in Diraz, cease interference in Ashoora commemorations, and end interrogation of clerics for sermon content.

To the Judiciary and Prosecution

17. Exclude all evidence obtained under torture; order independent forensic medical exams per Istanbul Protocol; dismiss cases based solely on coerced confessions.

18. Ensure public, reasoned judgments and access to case files; end mass trials and collective charges.

19. Open public consultations on rights legislation; publish draft bills; accept input from independent experts, unions, bar associations, and NGOs
20. Condition security cooperation, arms sales, and high-level visits on verifiable human rights benchmarks (release of named prisoners; legal amendments; access for UN mandate holders).
21. Support independent monitoring and documentation inside and outside Bahrain; fund protection programs, emergency grants, relocation and digital-security support for HRDs at risk.
22. Pursue Magnitsky-style targeted sanctions for individuals credibly implicated in torture, unfair trials, and command responsibility for protest crackdowns.
23. At the UN Human Rights Council, lead or join joint statements and request briefings from the High Commissioner on Bahrain; explore options for a monitoring mechanism if benchmarks are unmet.