

Forum: Human Rights Council (HRC)

Issue: Evaluating the state of human rights in Bahrain

Student Officer: Panagiota Skardoutsou

Position: Deputy President



Personal Introduction

Dear delegates,

My name is Panagiota Skardoutsou, and it is my utmost honor and pleasure to serve as a Deputy President in this year's ACGMUN Human Rights Council (HRC). I attend the 10th grade at Deutsche Schule Athen (DSA), and this is my first time chairing. I would like to start by welcoming you all to the 8th ACGMUN conference and wish you a great experience. The friendships and memories you'll make during those three days will certainly stay with you forever, and hopefully make you fall in love with MUN, like I did.

The topic I was assigned with, "Evaluating the state of human rights in Bahrain" is of paramount importance, as it concerns the violation and breach of human rights in Bahrain and the detrimental effects it has on society. This study guide aims to provide you with all the necessary information you need to construct effective clauses for your resolutions, such as significant Treaties and Conventions, previous attempts to resolve the issue, as well as possible solutions. Aside from reviewing the study guide, I recommend conducting your own personal research, particularly on the policies of the country you have been assigned. This will help you participate more effectively in the debate. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the procedures, the study guide or the topic in general, do not hesitate to contact me via email at pskardoutsou@gmail.com

I cannot wait to meet you in person!

Sincerely,

Panagiota Skardoutsou

Topic Introduction

Human rights are vital for the protection and preservation of every individual's humanity. They guarantee that every human, regardless of their identity and status, can live a life with dignity and self-respect.¹ While many countries uphold human rights as a fundamental principle, Bahrain has faced persistent challenges in this area. In Bahrain, an Arab state located on the Persian Gulf, the state of human rights has gathered significant attention. Although Bahrain has made major achievements in various sectors, such as economy and agriculture, the nation is yet to address the human rights crisis.²



After 2011, a year of major political turbulence for Bahrain, the human rights crisis worsened as various harsh measures were implemented by the government to combat protests. Among other human rights challenges, Bahrain faces various issues with political repression, freedom of expression, the press and discrimination against minorities, women, and adherents of other religions, as well as the detention and torture of defendants.

Figure 1: Human Rights Activism in Bahrain³

According to a 2022 report,⁴ oppressive court trials and harsh punishments have become a common event in the country. Since 2017, Bahraini courts have penalized six defendants to death and as of 2022, 26 citizens remain on death row. After the Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) conducted an investigation into eight of those 26 cases, examining the court records and other official documents, it was found that all eight defendants were convicted solely on the basis of coerced confessions. Additionally, the Kafala system, still enforced in Bahrain, has become increasingly controversial, due to the lack of essential guidelines and measures to shield migrant workers' rights. The absence of essential regulation has led to employers breaching

¹ Council Of Europe. "Questions and Answers about Human Rights." *Council of Europe*, 2012, www.coe.int/en/web/compass/questions-and-answers-about-human-rights Accessed 19 November 2024

² Jill Ann Crystal, and Charles Gordon Smith. "Bahrain | History, Language, & Maps." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 10 Dec. 2018, www.britannica.com/place/Bahrain Accessed 19 November 2024

³ Analysis: Bahrain's Insufficient Response to the Allegation Letter ... *Www.google.com*, 2019, images.app.goo.gl/2mCwPYrnzrk3BJSp9

⁴ Human Rights Watch. "Bahrain: Events of 2022." *Human Rights Watch*, 12 Jan. 2023, www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/bahrain Accessed 19 Nov. 2024

their workers' rights, paying them low wages and making them work in harsh conditions. Workers also face daily discrimination and gender-based violence.⁵

The theme “Balancing infinite opportunities” emphasizes the connection between human rights and societal progress - a relationship that Bahrain needs to advance in order to overcome its human rights challenges. The current human rights state in Bahrain perfectly illustrates that infinite opportunities stem from fundamental human rights. In Bahrain, constraints on freedoms, for instance expression and press restrict citizens and they are thus not able to participate in public dialogue, make decisions, express their aspirations and ultimately make change in society. Opportunities only flourish in environments where human rights are eligible without exceptions and everyone obtains the right to voice their opinion.

Definition of Key Terms

Al Khalīfah family/ Al Khalīfah rule

The Al Khalīfah family is a native Arab dynasty that settled and colonized Bahrain. The family has been ruling Bahrain since the 18th century.⁶

Coerced Confessions

“By definition, coerced confessions are involuntary or false confessions given by a suspect. They usually result from overbearing or forceful law enforcement conduct.”⁷

Constitutional government

“A government in which the powers of the ruler or rulers are limited by a constitution.”⁸

Hereditary Monarchy

⁵ Robinson, Kali. “What Is the Kafala System?” *Council on Foreign Relations*, 18 Nov. 2022, www.cfr.org/background/what-kafala-system Accessed 19 Nov. 2024

⁶ “Bahrain | History, Language, & Maps.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 10 Dec. 2018, www.britannica.com/place/Bahrain Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

⁷ “Coerced Confessions: What Are They?” *Simmrin Law Group*, www.simmrinlawgroup.com/faqs/what-is-coerced-confession/ Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

⁸ “We the People Level 2 Resource Center.” *Www.civiced.org*, www.civiced.org/level2student/lesson.php?lesson=4&ion=terms Accessed 11 Dec. 2024.

A hereditary monarchy is a governmental system in which the position of a monarch is automatically inherited by the next person in their family line.⁹

Military Intervention

“Military intervention refers to the use of military force by a third party to interfere in an ongoing war in order to change its course or outcome in favor of the intervening party's interests.”¹⁰

Kafala system

“The *kafala* system is a set of laws and policies that delegate responsibility for migrant workers to employers, including control over their ability to enter, reside, work, and, in some cases, exit the host country.”¹¹

Jailhouse negotiation

Jailhouse negotiation refers to an informal agreement between prisoners and the authorities. Such negotiations can happen during prison riots or when prisoners agree to help the authorities in return for better treatment or shorter prison time.¹²

Political Reform

Political reform refers to the efforts made to change and improve the political system, structure or policy within a government, as a means to address various issues the state faces.¹³

Repression

Repression is “ the use of force or violence to control a group of people ”.¹⁴

⁹ to, Contributors. “Hereditary Monarchy.” *Micronations Wikia*, Fandom, Inc., 2024, micronations-encyclopedia.fandom.com/wiki/Hereditary_monarchy Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

¹⁰ “Military Intervention - an Overview | ScienceDirect Topics.” *Www.sciencedirect.com*, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/military-intervention Accessed 12 Jan. 2025.

¹¹ “Life under the Kafala System.” *Walk Free*, www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/findings/spotlights/life-under-the-kafala-system/ Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

¹² Canada. “FPT HEADS of PROSECUTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT of the WORKING GROUP on the PREVENTION of MISCARRIAGES of JUSTICE.” *Justice.gc.ca*, 2024, www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/ccr-rc/pmj-pej/p7.html Accessed 14 Dec. 2024.

¹³ *Fiveable.me*, 2021, library.fiveable.me/key-terms/ap-world/political-reform Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

¹⁴ Cambridge Dictionary. “REPRESSION | Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary.” *Cambridge.org*, 22 Jan. 2020, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/repression Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

Shi'a Islam/ Muslims

Shi'a Islam is one of the two branches of the Islam, namely the smaller one.¹⁵

Background Information

Pre-Independent Bahrain (before 1971)

The region of Bahrain has been inhabited since the prehistoric period, specifically since the 3rd millennium BC, as indicated by some burial mounds in the northern part of the state's main island. After the Muslim conquest of the 7th century AD the region became Arab. The area was also ruled by the Portuguese for 82 years (1521-1602) and by Persians for 181 years (1602-1783). In 1783, Bahrain came under the control of the Khalīfah family, which continues to rule the country to this day.¹⁶

Colonial Period under the British influence

In 1816 Bahrain and Britain entered a foundational agreement to strengthen their partnership¹⁷ and address regional piracy.¹⁸ The agreement became official in January 1820, with the "General Maritime Treaty", which was also signed between other rulers of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Britain. Following that, 41 years¹⁹ later, in 1861, Bahrain and Britain signed the Treaty of Perpetual Truce of Peace and Friendship. This agreement ceded to Britain the control of Bahrain's foreign affairs in return for protection of attack and was the official establishment of Bahrain as a British protectorate.²⁰ Throughout the next years, the two countries signed further treaties, initially the 1880 treaty, which was the first inclusive arrangement between the two

¹⁵ Newman, Andrew J. "Shi'i | History & Beliefs." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/Shii Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

¹⁶ History of Bahrain." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-Bahrain Accessed 1 Dec. 2024

¹⁷ "Bahrain News Agency." *Www.bna.bh*, 2024, www.bna.bh/en/BahrainUKOvertwocenturiesofsolidrelations.aspx?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwlzON1%2BDrNjR0%2BhNFhIYMahvSg47%2FE%3D Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

¹⁸ "Bahrain Protectorate." *Www.britishempire.co.uk*, www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/bahrain.htm Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

¹⁹ The Worldfolio. "200 More Years of Engagement with the United Kingdom." *Theworldfolio*, 2024, www.theworldfolio.com/news/200-more-yearsof-eng/4258/ Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

²⁰ The Worldfolio. "200 More Years of Engagement with the United Kingdom." *Theworldfolio*, 2024, www.theworldfolio.com/news/200-more-yearsof-eng/4258/ Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

states²¹ and the most important one the Prohibition Agreement of 1892.²² Both treaties were highly significant in enhancing British influence over Bahrain, since except from ratifying Britain as the state's protector the agreements also allowed Britain to control Bahrain's international engagements. The authority Britain had over Bahrain's international relations laid the groundwork for Britain's deeper involvement in Bahrain's economic and political affairs.

Social and Political Conditions

During the British colonial period, Bahrain's social and political conditions were shaped by Britain's policy of indirect rule, which upheld the Khalifah family's authority. In the 1800s, Britain's ties with Bahrain's regime became an important source of legitimacy for the country. Since Britain safeguarded the regime from external dangers, it simultaneously also suppressed internal oppositions. Upon the discovery of oil in the region of Bahrain, the British force became increasingly invested in safeguarding their economic and strategic interests in the area in order to gain control over the oil resources. Thus they were ready to rescue the Al Khalifah family from aggressions by its opponents, including nationalists or other tribes.²³ The impact of British colonialism however was mainly noticeable during the 20th century, with the Colonial - Dynastic Rule, which refers to Bahrain's ruling system combining traditional monarchy with British indirect rule. This ruling system was based on the idea that Bahrain's population consisted of divided cultural and religious groups, each controlled by its own traditions and customs. Britain used this colonial strategy in other colonies as well, for instance in India. During the 1950s there was a significant rise of movements against the joint British political and institutional system, which ultimately led to Bahrain's independence in 1971.²⁴

²¹ Al-Baharna, Husain M. "The Consequences of Britain's Exclusive Treaties: A Gulf View." *Routledge EBooks*, 23 Sept. 2020, pp. 15–37, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003070634-2> Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

²² "File:Facsimile of the General Maritime Treaty of 1820.Jpg - Wikipedia." *Wikipedia.org*, Oct. 2024, en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Facsimile_of_the_General_Maritime_Treaty_of_1820.jpg Accessed 2 Dec. 2024.

²³ Jones, Marc. *Political Repression in Bahrain*. 7 July 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108558822> Accessed 12 Dec. 2024.

²⁴ Dailami, A. "Reformers, Rulers, and British Residents: Political Relations in Bahrain (1923-1956)." *Ox.ac.uk*, 2015, ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:34575d84-bc76-4373-97e6-dc4f50fce860, <https://doi.org/10.5287/ora-9oek449om> Accessed 11 Dec. 2024

Independence (1971)

After Britain revealed its intentions to withdraw its military force in 1970, the Bahraini government constructed a constitutional framework to support the state after the British withdrawal.²⁵ The United Kingdom ended the protectorate on the 15th of August 1971 and Bahrain was officially declared as independent. Upon the independence of the country Emir Isa, the former king of Bahrain, who ruled from 1961 until his death in 1999, announced that Bahrain would implement a constitutional governmental form.²⁶

Political unrest and repression (1970s -1980s)

After Bahrain's independence, political movements became public coalition-based activities. This was catalyzed by the establishment of the Constitution Committee (CC) for the General Federation of Workers, a movement which aimed to organize workers and advocate for labor rights, as well as establishing a general labor union. The CC was the first and one of the most important public movements after the state's independence and was an inclusive coalition of individuals from other parties as well, for instance the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG), the National Liberation Front (NFL) and the Movement of Arab Nationalists (MAN), who joined in order to combat local monarchies, foreign powers and capitalist exploitation. Regardless of its significance, the government of Bahrain wouldn't recognize the CC, which resulted in the March 1972 uprising, in which workers of the airline company, Gulf Air, declared a strike, after the employment of foreign workers. The movement exacerbated rapidly nationwide, leading to the necessity of military intervention to prevent further escalation, during which CC members were arrested and banished from the country. These events led to the creation of the Constituent Assembly in 1972, which was assigned to create and ratify a constitution. This establishment was a paramountly important step for the country's political history. Later on, the PFLOAG and the NFL alongside other parties would form an alliance, the Shehabi bloc. The alliance was formed in order to resolve common issues all parties faced, such as repression of political action and social injustice and was the aftermath of previous attempts to make change that failed due to a lack of coordination. Due to ideological

²⁵ dayhist.com. "National Day, Celebrates the Withdrawal of United Kingdom from Bahrain, Making Bahrain an Independent Emirate in 1971." *Dayhist.com*, dayhist.com, 2024, dayhist.com/holidays-and-occasions/bahrain-s-national-day-celebrating-52-years-of-independence Accessed 11 Dec. 2024

²⁶ "Al Khalifa Rule since 1971." *The MENA Chronicle* | *Fanack*, 3 Apr. 2023, fanack.com/bahrain/history-of-bahrain/al-khalifa-rule-since-1971/ Accessed 11 Dec. 2024

differences however, the Shehabi bloc boycotted the Constituent Assembly, which led to the creation of the 1973 National Assembly, which had counseling authority in order to strengthen and create a foundation for the new independent government of Bahrain. The Shehabi Bloc reemerged as the “People’s Bloc” and was granted eight seats in the parliament, alongside independents, nationalists and Shi’a religious figures. The Assembly however was dissolved in 1975, 20 months after its establishment, by Emir Isa, labeling it as weak when it refused to validate emergency laws and the renewal of the lease for the American naval base in Bahrain. While suspending the constitution, the state also declared a state of emergency and arrested opposition leaders. The abolishment of Bahrain’s National Assembly marked the beginning of an immense period of political suppression, including censorship, arrests and surveillance. The victorious Islamic revolution in Iran, of 1979, coupled with the continuing security repression further changed Bahraini politics, leading to political movements being even more violent yet underground. In 1981, Shi’a Islamist movements, specifically the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, gathered attention after the failed attempt to overthrow the government. Simultaneously, PFLOAG was weakened rapidly, due to the constant security pressure and tried to overthrow the government as well 2 years prior. The two coups had a significant impact on politics, since they signaled a retreat from cohesive, public movements and return to violent and detrimental strategies that aim at overthrowing the regime.²⁷

The rise of protests (Early 1990s)

The uprising was initiated in June 1994, through a staged protest by more than 1500 unemployed people, in front of the Ministry of Labour. The demonstrators protested about the rising unemployment rate of the country, which at that point was at 15% ²⁸. The rising unemployment rate was tied with systemic discrimination against marginalized communities and thus catalyzed such harsh protests. In order to dissolve the demonstrations, police used tear gas and arrested participants of the protest. Other such demonstrations occurred in the upcoming months, for instance a petition campaign, calling for political reform, which summoned over 20000 ²⁹ signatures, predominantly from the Shi’a Islamists. In November of 1994, the issue escalated

²⁷ Jadaliyya . “Political Movements in Bahrain: Past, Present, and Future.” *Jadaliyya* - جدلية, 2017, www.jadaliyya.com/Details/25261 Accessed 13 Dec. 2024.

²⁸ “1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events.” *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

²⁹ “1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events.” *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

when Shi'a Muslims protested against a charity marathon. The marathon passed some Shi'a majority villages and some inhabitants were offended by the female dressings. As a result, some inhabitants threw stones at the marathon, which led to security forces arresting those responsible for the disruption. In December, the opposition leader Ali Salman was put in detention, after being accused of initiating the incident. The imprisonment of Ali Salman sparked further harsh protests in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, and Sitra, an island in Bahrain.

Escalation of the Uprising after 1994

By mid-December of 1994, approximately 600 ³⁰ people were imprisoned and in early 1995, various opposition leaders, including Ali Salman were banished from the country. Even though the government claimed to have released some prisoners the protests still continued. In February of 1995, the government asserted that only 300 ³¹ individuals remain in prison, while activists alleged that number was way higher, namely 2000 ³². Violence escalated once again in March and April of 1995, due to the arrest of opposition leaders, such as Abdul Amir al-Jamir, Abdulwahab Hussain and Hassan Mushaima. One month after the arrest of those leaders the government initiated jailhouse negotiations with opposition leaders. As a result an agreement was reached, the so-called "the Initiative". The agreement stated that if released, opposition leaders, who were convicted in court, were obliged to calm people in order to finally ensure peace and safety within the country. The government allegedly agreed to attempt to begin political dialogue with the opposition under the condition that the establishment of peace and safety by opposition leaders was successful. At first the plan was successful and protests paused for a while. Nonetheless, when the government claimed that the agreement never existed and was thus not open for political dialogue with the opposition, the tension within the country escalated once again. In the following months, in December 1995 and January 1996, bombings in public places caused further tensions. In May 2007, various opposition leaders were once again arrested without any charges being filed against them. Bombings continued during the

³⁰ "1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events." *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

³¹ "1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events." *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

³² "1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events." *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

next months, resulting in eight people losing their lives due to injuries. In total 24 people³³ died, some of which allegedly were tortured while in police custody, including reports of electric shocks, extended isolation and beating. During that time, arrests of women and children gradually increased. After the government detected a network, namely the “Military wing of Hizb Allah Bahrain” it claimed that it was supported by Iran and had caused unrest throughout the last years. The Human Rights Watch however declared the claim as incredible and didn’t further investigate the matter.³⁴

2000s Reforms and continued repression

After his father, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa inherited the throne on the 6th of March 1999. He reportedly released 500 prisoners³⁵ including Shi'a Muslims, as well as other individuals aiming at easing tension in the country.³⁶ This was seen as a significant step towards human rights reform.

National Action Charter 2001

The National Action Charter is a national document that was established to represent Bahraini citizens. It reflects on the aspirations, the needs and the development visions of Bahraini citizens. After inheriting the throne from his father on the 6th of March 1999, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, pledged to implement this reform project as a means to bring peace and order to his country. Issued in December 2000, the National Action Charter outlines Bahrain’s essential components, as well as its cultural, historical, Arab and Islamic identity and international relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and other Arab countries. After a public referendum on February 14, 2001, in which 98.4%³⁷ of the population approved the charter, the government officially adopted it. The King stated that the implementation of the National Action Charter was a “historic breakthrough” for Bahrain since it included various political and economic guidelines that reinforced the country's approach. While it has contributed to some institutional and social improvements, its implementation is criticized due to its failure to live up to the anticipated

³³ “1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events.” *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

³⁴ “1990s Uprising in Bahrain - Main Events.” *Liquisearch.com*, 2024, www.liquisearch.com/1990s_uprising_in_bahrain/main_events Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

³⁵ “Freedom in the World 1999 - Bahrain | Refworld.” *Refworld*, 2023, www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/freehou/1999/en/95399?utm_ Accessed 16 Jan. 2025

³⁶ “Bahrain - Domestic and Foreign Relations since Independence.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/Bahrain/Domestic-and-foreign-relations-since-independence Accessed 14 Dec. 2024.

³⁷ Government of Bahrain. “Home.” *Bahrain.bh*, 2023, www.bahrain.bh/wps/portal/en/ Accessed 14 Dec. 2024.

outcomes. Despite that, the anniversary of the National Action Charter is still celebrated within the country.

Establishment of the Bahrain Human Rights Society in 2001

In May 2001, a group of Bahraini activists founded the non-governmental Organization (NGO) Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS), in a time where the government of Bahrain underwent major political reforms. Their goal was to promote and protect human rights, by spreading values, guidelines and knowledge about human rights among the population of Bahrain.³⁸

New constitution adopted 2002

The establishment and implementation of the National Action Charter and the creation of the BHRS was followed by the announcement of a new constitution in 2002. This constitution established a constitutional monarchy in Bahrain and aimed at guaranteeing equality between Sunnis and Shi'is, as well as, ensuring civil and property rights to all citizens. While the constitution introduced some changes, its effectiveness in tackling inequalities and preventing human rights abuses was strongly criticized. The first parliamentary elections in approximately 27 years³⁹ were held in May 2002. The elections of 2002 also marked the first time female candidates were allowed to run for public office.

The 2011 Arab Spring

The Arab Spring was a series of pro-democracy movements and uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010 and 2011. The Arab Spring began when successful uprisings took place in Egypt and Tunisia. The two successful movements led to similar movements taking place in other Arab countries as well. However, not all uprisings were victorious. While in many countries some uprisings of the Arab Spring resulted in political changes others, including Bahrain, faced harsh crackdowns by the authorities.⁴⁰

³⁸ “ABOUT - Bahrain Human Right Society.” *Bahrain Human Right Society*, 21 July 2024, www.bahrainhrs.org/en/?page_id=1306 Accessed 15 Dec. 2024

³⁹ “Bahrain - Domestic and Foreign Relations since Independence.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/Bahrain/Domestic-and-foreign-relations-since-independence Accessed 14 Dec. 2024

⁴⁰ Britannica. “Arab Spring.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14 Jan. 2015, www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

The 2011 uprising in Bahrain

Bahrain was one of the countries that was influenced by the various protests in the Middle East and North Africa. Protests in Bahrain erupted on the 14th of February 2011 and were led by human rights activists and members of the Shi'a community, demanding political and economic reforms, as well as an end to systematic discrimination, including economic inequality and political exclusion. On the first day of the uprising



Figure 2: 2011 Protest around Pearl Roundabout⁴¹

one protester was killed. During their funeral another person is killed by police who interrupted the funeral. The following day Bahraini police stormed the Pearl Roundabout, a monument in the capital of Bahrain, Manama, to clear out activists that camped there as part of their protests. The attack resulted in seven people losing their lives. On the 3rd of March, conflict broke out between the Sunnis and the Shi'a Muslims. Over 100,000 Bahrainis have joined the protest at that point making it the largest protest in Bahraini history.⁴² Approximately ten days later, at the request of the ruling family to protect government facilities, security forces, with the support of the GCC, who sent troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), deployed in Bahrain. The GCC's involvement intensified human rights concerns, since the support exacerbated sectarian tension and led to disproportionate violence. The government declared martial law, suppressed protesters and cleared the camp on Pearl Roundabout. Additionally, the military implemented a curfew in Manama and prohibited public gatherings. King Hamad bin Isa al- Khalifa called for talks on reform, willing to engage in dialogue with opposition leaders, groups or protesters on May 31st 2011. Following that the country lifted its state of emergency.⁴³ In total nearly 3000 ⁴⁴ people and bystanders were arrested, hundreds were brought before the military

⁴¹ "File:2011 Bahraini Uprising - March (214).Jpg - Wikimedia Commons." *Wikimedia.org*, 16 Mar. 2011, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2011_Bahraini_uprising_-_March_%28214%29.jpg Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

⁴² *SPECIAL EDITION MARKING THE BAHRAINI UPRISING: 10 YEARS ON 2021 2021 EVENTS OF 2020*. <https://birdbh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BIRD-Annual-HR-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf>

⁴³ Reuters. "Timeline: The 2011 Uprising in Bahrain and What's Happened Since." *Reuters*, 16 Feb. 2021, www.reuters.com/article/world/timeline-the-2011-uprising-in-bahrain-and-whats-happened-since-idUSKBN2AG1K6/ Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

⁴⁴ Bahrain: Rebellion and Repression (2011-2012)." *CJPME - English*, 2023, www.cjpme.org/fs_161 Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

court and around 40 people were killed⁴⁵ during the protest, including 4 protesters dying due to torture and medical neglect.

Post-uprising repression

After the Arab spring in Bahrain, various suspected protest leaders were convicted of anti-government activity and imprisoned. An immense number of Shi'a workers believed to have supported the demonstrations were fired by the government. Bahrain received heavy criticism from various states and organisations for its approach, to which it responded with the establishment of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), in order to examine the uprising. After an investigation into the uprising was conducted by the BICI, it was found that the government used unnecessary violence and mistreatment against protesters. Even though the government implemented some of the commission's suggestions, the suppression of opposition movements increased.⁴⁶

International response

The 2011 uprising in Bahrain gathered significant attention from various countries and organisations. Responses however varied and were mainly influenced by geopolitical concerns. Countries of the GCC, like Qatar and Saudi Arabia supported the Bahraini monarchy and their handling of the situation. Other countries however, criticized the military intervention of the GCC, more specifically of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, during the demonstrations, claiming that authorities used extensive violence and thus breached human rights while trying to suppress protests. Although the intervention by the Peninsula Shield Force, an alliance formed by the countries of the GCC to ensure regional security, helped Bahrain combat the protests, it also led to criticism, due to violence against demonstrators. Western Nations, such as the United Kingdom (UK) expressed concern over Bahrain's violent approach to the protest and thus suspended the export of weapons and military equipment in Bahrain. Simultaneously, the United States of America (USA) disapproved of the violence of security forces during the protest, but decided to keep a diplomatic position, due to its interests in the region and the presence of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. Human Rights Organisations, for instance the Human Rights

⁴⁵ Bahrain: Rebellion and Repression (2011-2012)." *CJPME - English*, 2023, www.cjpme.org/fs_161 Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

⁴⁶ Britannica. "Arab Spring." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14 Jan. 2015, www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

Watch or Amnesty International criticized the violent repression of protesters as well, highlighting the utilisation of excessive force, torture and unjustified arrest.⁴⁷

Recent Developments (2010s - 2020s)

Reforms and International Scrutiny

Following the 2011 Arab Spring, Bahrain experienced significant challenges regarding the human rights state within the country. Initially, the investigation conducted by the BICI conformed the alleged abuses such as torture, unwarranted arrest and violence during the protests. BICI made 26 suggestions to help the government address abuses, for example accountability for torture and judicial reform. The government adopted some recommendations, like establishing bodies to assess the human rights state of the country, for instance the Ombudsman Office and Special Investigation Unit. However, both bodies faced criticism for their limited effectiveness in addressing human rights concerns. Other vital recommendations, including the need for transparency among senior officials, were mostly ignored and remained unimplemented. Aside from that, there have also been legislative changes made in 2017, when the government changed its citizenship revocation laws, granting the cabinet of ministers the power to withdraw nationality from citizens. The power of the cabinet of ministers to suspend citizenship was however misused, since it was mainly targeting activists and reformers. Further restrictions on civil liberties were also implemented in 201. Severe political repression was evident in cases such as the imprisonment and prosecution of Ali Husain al-Hajee, a human rights activist, who organized and attended peaceful protests. After serving 10 years in prison, he was released in June 2023 and was rearrested five months later, due to his alleged participation in protests against the country's travel ban.⁴⁸ Opposition groups were banned and opposition leaders were unwarrantedly imprisoned. The country shut down its last independent newspaper, called Al-Wasat. Disagreements on social media regarding the government were tackled through legal action, such as the use of cybercrime laws to imprison individuals for criticizing officials, as well as charges of spreading fake news. One among many examples is the activist Nabeel Rajad who

⁴⁷ "International Reactions to the Bahraini Uprising of 2011 - Infogalactic: The Planetary Knowledge Core." *Infogalactic.com*, 2015, infogalactic.com/info/International_reactions_to_the_Bahraini_uprising_of_2011 Accessed 15 Dec. 2024.

⁴⁸ "Bahraini Human Rights Activist Faces Trial in Further Prosecution for Protesting Travel Ban." *Amnesty International*, 3 May 2024, www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/05/bahrain-human-rights-activist-faces-trial-in-further-prosecution-for-protesting-travel-ban/ Accessed 16 Jan. 2025

in December of 2018 was convicted to a five year imprisonment for criticizing the government of Bahrain online.⁴⁹ Ultimately, after ten years of suspension Bahrain resumed executions as a form of punishment for legal misconduct.⁵⁰

International Engagement

Even though Bahrain faced a major human rights crisis, it managed to maintain significant relationships with various countries, for instance Western Nations, international organisations and its regional allies, the GCC. Many human rights organisations, such as the Human Right Watch and Amnesty International heavily condemned Bahrain's failure to implement the recommendations made by BICI. However, due to its geopolitical significance, some Western countries, for instance the U.S, continue to support Bahrain, in order to ensure regional stability and strengthen counterterrorism efforts. This support has been controversial and western governments have been accused of ignoring human rights violences and prioritizing geopolitical interests.⁵¹ Bahrain's relationship with its regional allies, the GCC, which includes Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE⁵², has raised concerns among international human rights organisations, due to the Council's prioritization of stability and security over democratic and human rights reforms and Bahrain's increasing power, despite the lack of progress in tackling the human rights violations.⁵³ Finally, Bahrain has also made economic investments, through economic diplomacy, trying to reduce its dependence on fossil fuel. The country strengthened its relationship with global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support changes in the country's economic system. Even though Bahrain's efforts were successful and beneficial for the country, they were overshadowed by the ongoing political and human rights conflicts.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Briefing: Human Rights Situation in Bahrain. 2020. <https://salam-dhr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020.10.10-EEAS-Human-Rights-Situation-in-Bahrain-overview-FINAL.pdf>

⁵⁰ SPECIAL EDITION MARKING THE BAHRAIN UPRISING: 10 YEARS ON 2021-2021 EVENTS OF 2020. <https://birdbh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BIRD-Annual-HR-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf>

⁵¹ "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Bahrain." *Human Rights Watch*, 16 Dec. 2019, www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/bahrain Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁵² "Gulf Co-Operation Council." *Www.fatf-gafi.org*, www.fatf-gafi.org/en/countries/detail/Gulf-Co-operation-Council.html Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁵³ SPECIAL EDITION MARKING THE BAHRAIN UPRISING: 10 YEARS ON 2021-2021 EVENTS OF 2020. <https://birdbh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BIRD-Annual-HR-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf>

⁵⁴ "World Report 2020: Rights Trends in Bahrain." *Human Rights Watch*, 16 Dec. 2019, www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/bahrain Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

Key issues Bahrain faces

Despite some advancements, Bahrain still faces severe human rights challenges. The 2023 U.S Human Rights Report Summary for Bahrain⁵⁵ has highlighted some of the key issues the country faces, that prevent it from developing and advancing its human rights policies. Initially, Bahrain is a country with restricted political freedoms. Since the government is led by the king, he maintains authority over most, if not all, political and economic issues and limits opposition groups that are against the government's policies. This centralization of power affects parliamentary elections within the country, restricting the participation of governmental bodies, for instance the parliament, judiciary and civil society organisations. Freedom of speech, press and assembly is restricted as well and even social media are strictly controlled by the government and are set to adhere to its policies, through spreading propaganda dismissing opposition narratives as false and subversive and filtering comments and posts that promote opposite political views. Individuals that criticize the government even in the slightest, face harassment, arbitrary arrest and in the worst cases prosecution. The judicial and political system is heavily influenced by the government, which is clearly visible in the unfair trials courts provide in the country, especially in cases featuring political activists and opposition leaders. Defenders are often held accountable for violations without trial and the authorities use coerced confessions as evidence to imprison them. Among many cases, the one involving Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa, two men arrested in 2014 for alleged involvement in bombings, provoked criticism from various Human Rights Organisations. Despite the lack of physical evidence, both men were convicted by the court through the use of coerced confessions, which eventually led to their execution.

Additionally, the prison conditions are reportedly extremely poor with cells being overcrowded and medical care being inadequate. According to an investigation conducted by the Human Rights Watch in 2019⁵⁶ Bahrain's authorities denied medical care to human rights defenders and activists that participated in opposition and pro democracy protests in 2011. Furthermore, peaceful protests are severely limited as well. Public demonstrations that condemn the government and its policies, for instance the protests around Pearl Roundabout during the Arab Spring, are violently suppressed by the authorities through the use of excessive force. Individuals that take part in unauthorized political gatherings and protests are strictly monitored and human rights defenders, activists and members of NGOs that are against the government's policies are targeted by the government and face travel bans,

⁵⁵ "Bahrain - United States Department of State." *United States Department of State*, 22 Apr. 2024, www.state.gov/reports/2023-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/bahrain/ Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁵⁶ "Bahrain: Prisoners Denied Medical Care." *Human Rights Watch*, 8 Oct. 2019, www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/08/bahrain-prisoners-denied-medical-care Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

imprisonment and in some cases prosecution. Even though Bahrain's constitution ensures freedom of religion, minorities such as the Shi'a Muslims, that make up the majority of Bahrain's citizens, face harsh discrimination, including marginalization, political repression and limited opportunities. This discrimination manifests in specific policies and practices such as limited access to political representation, where opposition groups face severe restrictions on their involvement in political processes.

Regarding women's rights, Bahrain has made some progress, allowing women to be active in numerous sectors of society, but challenges and barriers remain. Women face various forms of discrimination, including social, legal and cultural discrimination, for instance through inheritance laws that are based on Islamic jurisprudence and result in unequal distribution of inheritance between male and female as well as workplace restrictions that limit women's opportunities. While laws to protect women from domestic violence exist, their implementation is often too weak due to cultural stigmas and lack of enforcement mechanisms, leading to domestic violence being a serious concern. Moreover, Bahrain faces economic and social rights issues. Despite the abolishment of the Kafala system in 2019, the lack of labor rights and the inefficient labor system is a severe challenge. Bahrain's labor market is highly dependent on migrant workers, many of whom work under harsh conditions in unsafe environments, with relatively low wages. Some immigrants, mostly from South Asia, are subjected to poor living conditions and restricted rights. According to an 2023 report ⁵⁷, South Asian workers, mainly from India and Bangladesh, frequently face dangerous living conditions, such as overcrowded accommodations with inadequate ventilation and sanitation.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have strong relations and mutual visions toward numerous issues. Since both countries are part of the GCC and the Peninsula Shield Force, Saudi Arabia supported Bahrain during the 2011 uprisings by dispatching around 1000 soldiers to help suppress the protests.⁵⁸ Even though the military intervention by Saudi Arabia contributed to the suppression of protests, human

⁵⁷ *Migrant Workers in Bahrain*. 12 Apr. 2024, minorityrights.org/communities/migrant-workers/?utm Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

⁵⁸ "International Reactions to the Bahraini Uprising of 2011 - Infogalactic: The Planetary Knowledge Core." *Infogalactic.com*, 2015, infogalactic.com/info/International_reactions_to_the_Bahraini_uprising_of_2011 Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

rights organisations, such as the HRW and Amnesty International documented various cases of violent suppression further intensifying human rights concerns. In return, Bahrain has been a significant partner in Saudi Arabia's political and economic framework. After the backlash Bahrain received, regarding its violent approach to the uprising, Saudi Arabia continued to support Bahrain, stating that it handled the issue correctly and that the intervention was necessary to ensure regional stability. Additionally, through their actions, Saudi Arabia believes that Bahrain took into account its main political concerns including countering Iranian influence. Iranian influence was seen as a threat to the balance of power between members of the GCC, due to the support they showed to Shi'a groups.⁵⁹

United Arab Emirates (UAE)

Similarly to Saudi Arabia, the UAE has strong relations with Bahrain. The UAE's approval of the country's human rights system and the government's approach to the 2011 protests, shows rather political alignment than actual acceptance of Bahrain's human rights practices. In order to ease tension within Bahrain and simultaneously avoid internal conflicts, the UAE provided military forces during the uprising, namely 500 police officers⁶⁰. Again Bahrain became for the UAE as well an paramountly important political and economic partner, further strengthening the two countries' relation. After the criticisms Bahrain received from various other countries and organisations, the government of the UAE continued to support Bahrain and its human rights record.⁶¹

United Kingdom (UK)

The relationship between the UK and Bahrain has been complicated especially after the 2011 uprising in the country. Despite the significant human rights violations and political repression in Bahrain, as well as the concerns and criticism the UK voiced, concerning the situation and the failure to enforce the recommendations of the BICI, the two countries managed to maintain a strong partnership, mainly because of UK geopolitical interest in the Gulf region. Several years after the 2011 uprising, the UK established a new British naval base and had an ongoing military presence in the country to ensure regional stability. Furthermore, the UK is trying to help Bahrain advance its human

⁵⁹ *SPECIAL EDITION MARKING THE BAHRAINI UPRISING: 10 YEARS ON 2021-2021 EVENTS OF 2020*. <https://birdbh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BIRD-Annual-HR-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf>

⁶⁰ "International Reactions to the Bahraini Uprising of 2011 - Infogalactic: The Planetary Knowledge Core." *Infogalactic.com*, 2015, infogalactic.com/info/International_reactions_to_the_Bahraini_uprising_of_2011 Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁶¹ *SPECIAL EDITION MARKING THE BAHRAINI UPRISING: 10 YEARS ON 2021-2021 EVENTS OF 2020*. <https://birdbh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BIRD-Annual-HR-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf>

rights system and thus provides technical support to the Bahraini reform program and encourages human rights bodies to conduct further investigation into the human rights policies.⁶²

United States of America (USA)

The relations between the US and Bahrain have been influenced by both military interests, as well as the ongoing human rights concerns in Bahrain, especially from 2011 to 2020. Bahrain houses the US Navy's Fifth Fleet, which makes the country a major partner, regarding USA's defense strategies in the Middle East. Due to the important military ties between the US and Bahrain, the criticism towards Bahrain's human rights record has often been overshadowed.⁶³ After the 2011 uprising, the US strongly criticized Bahrain's approach and called for the government to accept political reforms. Bahrain responded to the criticism by banishing US diplomats and restricting the entrance for US lawmakers.⁶⁴ This decision basically limited diplomatic engagement between the two countries and resulted in the US deciding to discontinue the import of military equipment in Bahrain. Despite the ongoing human rights violations, the US decided to lift the ban in 2015 and made the decision to prioritize its military partnership with Bahrain. However, this decision led to major criticism from organisations, stating that the US overlooks human rights abuses for geopolitical reasons.⁶⁵ The decision to lift the ban was mainly led by the requirement to sustain strong security cooperation in regional stability and thus prioritized military interests over human rights concerns.

Amnesty International

Amnesty International has emphasized the human rights crisis in Bahrain, especially after the 2011 protests, and has been monitoring and documenting the widespread violences by the Bahraini government, such as arbitrary arrests, torture and the restriction of freedom and expression. The organisation has published various reports on the human rights state of Bahrain, including the Human Rights Review of 2018, the wrongful imprisonment of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, as well as the case of Ali Husain al-Hajee, a human rights activist, who was arrested for participating in peaceful protests. The promises made by the Bahraini government after the uprising to create oversight bodies and to

⁶² "Page 3&4." *Human Rights Abuses and the UK Assistance to Bahrain*, researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0197/CDP-2018-0197.pdf Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁶³ *Bahrain: Issues for the U.S. Policy*. 12 Mar. 2024, researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0197/CDP-2018-0197.pdf Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁶⁴ "Technical Difficulties." *State.gov*, 2024, www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BAHRAIN-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁶⁵ "Recommendations to the U.S. Government on Bahrain - Human Rights First." *Human Rights First*, 7 Dec. 2022, humanrightsfirst.org/library/recommendations-to-the-u-s-government-on-bahrain/ Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

implement the recommendations made by the BICI, remained unfulfilled, leading to further criticism by Amnesty International.⁶⁶

Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS)

The BHRS is one of Bahrain's most important NGOs. It was established in 2001 for the advancement and protection of human rights within the country. One of its main activities is drafting annual human rights reports, monitoring human rights violations and conducting seminars and awareness campaigns. In addition to that, the BHRS addresses issues regarding torture, violence, discrimination and the rights of women, children and migrant workers. The organisation tried multiple times to improve the human rights system of the country. Moreover, since it functioned in an environment where activism was heavily restricted it faced various barriers, including repeated censorship on several publications. To help the county overcome the human rights crisis the BHRS has cooperated with international bodies, such as the International Federation for Human Rights. This cooperation between the International Federation for Human Rights and BHRS has made it increasingly easier to monitor and document human rights abuses, resulting in increasing pressure on Bahraini authorities to implement reforms. Furthermore, the BHRS provides support to victims of human right violence by conducting investigations into cases and coming up with solutions.⁶⁷

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

Similarly to Amnesty International, the Human Rights Watch has openly criticized Bahrain's human rights practices, particularly its political isolation laws and the suppression of opposition. Through its reports on Bahrain's human rights state, including the World Reports 2023 and 2024, as well as a report documenting the use of political isolation laws of the government, the organisation highlights the need of political reform within the country. Aside from the concerns the organisation voiced regarding the government's approach to the protests, it has also noted that the human rights situation impacts civil society, limiting or even preventing the operation of organisations advocating for human rights. Additionally, the HRW has called for the release of unlawfully imprisoned people and for

⁶⁶ "No One Can Protect You: Bahrain's Year of Crushing Dissent." *Amnesty International USA*, 10 Oct. 2017, www.amnestyusa.org/reports/no-one-can-protect-you-bahrains-year-of-crushing-dissent/ Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

⁶⁷ "Bahrain Human Rights Society." *Arab.org*, 27 Feb. 2016, arab.org/directory/bahrain-human-rights-society/ Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

political reform to ensure that peaceful activism and opposition is not criminalized, as well as urged foreign governments to improve the human rights conditions within the country.⁶⁸

Blocs Expected

Alliance 1

Countries supporting Bahrain's policies

The first alliance should consist of countries that would defend Bahrain's policies, as well as their handling of the protests in 2011 and be against external interference. These countries believe that the state's national sovereignty should be respected and secured. Countries that belong to alliance 1 are for instance Bahrain's regional allies, therefore countries part of GCC, for instance Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman, as well as countries that support the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) such as Turkey.

Alliance 2

Countries that criticize Bahrain's human rights record

Alliance 2 should consist of countries that are likely to highlight the need for reform in Bahrain's human rights policies, especially regarding minority rights, political freedom and accountability for abuses. Countries that belong to this alliance are UN Human Rights Advocates, for instance the Netherlands and Switzerland, western Democracies like Germany and France and countries that criticized Bahrain's approach, concerning the 2011 uprising, such as the United States of America (USA) and the United Kingdom (UK).

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
January, 1820	Signing of the General Maritime Treaty.
15 August, 1971	Bahrain is declared independent from the United Kingdom.
2001	National Action Charter.

⁶⁸ Shea, Joey. "You Can't Call Bahrain a Democracy." *Human Rights Watch*, 31 Oct. 2022, www.hrw.org/report/2022/10/31/you-cant-call-bahrain-democracy/bahrains-political-isolation-laws Accessed 16 Dec. 2024.

31 May, 2001	Establishment of the Bahrain Human Rights Society.
2002	New constitution adopted.
14 February - 18 March, 2011	The Arab Spring in Bahrain.

Relevant UN Resolutions, Treaties & Events

- UNHRC Resolution 28/29, 2015⁶⁹
- National Institution of Human Rights (NIHR), 10 November 2009⁷⁰
- UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR), May 2017⁷¹
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), 3 May 2008⁷²

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI)

As a response to the widespread protests of the 2011 uprising Hamad bin Al Khalifa established the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, an organisation, whose goal was to investigate allegations of human rights abuses and provide suggestions to tackle systematic problems. The BICI made a total of 26 recommendations to help the country's system improve, including the reform of the government's security forces, judicial reform, the return of workers who have been unreasonably fired, as well as the freedom of media and expression. Bahrain implemented some of the recommendations, other suggestions however were incomplete and inconsistently enforced.

⁶⁹ UNHRC Resolution 28/29 (2015). 2015, documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g15/085/94/pdf/g1508594.pdf%20 Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

⁷⁰ National Institution of Human Rights (NIHR). www.nihr.org.bh/en/MediaHandler/GenericHandler/documents/download/9-%2520NIHR%2520Book.pdf Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

⁷¹ UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR). May 2017, digitallibrary.un.org/record/862307/files/A_HRC_WG-6_27_BHR_2-EN.pdf?withWatermark=0&withMetadata=0&withDownload=1&version=1%0A Accessed 18 Jan. 2025.

⁷² United Nations. "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities." *United Nations*, 12 Dec. 2006, www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities Accessed 18 Jan. 2025

Efforts to Improve Labor Rights

In the past, Bahrain has led efforts to improve labor rights and ensure the rightful treatment of workers. Initially, in 2009 Bahrain was the first country to abolish the Kafala system and thereby allow migrant workers to change jobs without needing their employers' approval to do so. In order to ensure the fair treatment of workers and oversee labor policies, Bahrain also established the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA). This organisation introduced programs such as the Flex Permit System, a system in which migrant workers without a legal employment status were granted permission to work and reside in Bahrain under stable conditions. Furthermore, Bahrain has ratified various conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), such as the Convention on Forced Labour and the Discrimination, (Employment and Corruption) Convention. The implementation of these conventions have helped Bahrain align its policies with international standards, however they haven't been able to fully resolve the issue.

National Dialogue Initiatives after the 2011 uprising

Following the 2011 Arab spring, the government of Bahrain launched various dialogue initiatives as a means to foster political stability and fight against the turbulent human rights situation within the country. The initiative aimed at uniting political groups and civil society to discuss potential political reforms. The Participants, which included representatives of the government, opposition groups and opposition leaders, as well as other civil society organisations, mainly discussed the country's political representation, constitutional reforms, human rights and economic concerns. Though some recommendations and discussed solutions led to some small constitutional changes, many opposition groups condemned that the dialogue failed to address other issues that were more important, for instance a way to end systematic discrimination.

Possible Solutions

Investigation on Human Rights Violations

Establishing local, as well as international independent investigative mechanisms, to ensure objectivity, while addressing alleged abuses and crimes, such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), is an efficient way to resolve the issue at hand. These bodies will guarantee the transparent reporting of crime, the enforcement of strict penalties against criminals, as well as ensure that every case is treated fairly, regardless of any political, social and economic factors. In order to protect these mechanisms

from government interference and enforce accountability for officials, the involvement of NGOs to control and assess the investigations is vital. To further empower the efforts of assessing the human rights state in Bahrain, such bodies should be granted access to all vital resources and information, as well as the authority to hold individuals accountable for their acts.

Strengthen International Oversight

In order to ensure unbiased reports of the human rights state of Bahrain, an efficient solution could be to encourage the country to cooperate with UN mechanisms, such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or the UN Special Rapporteurs, through highlighting the economic, social and reputational benefits of this partnership. These mechanisms will annually assess Bahrain's adherence to international human rights standards, while also maintaining an objective view of the investigation. Additionally,, the establishment of monitoring systems, to track the government's implementation of recommendations the mechanisms propose, would further help the evaluation of the country's human rights state. In order to ensure compliance, monitoring systems can rely on periodic reporting handed over by entities, to assess the country's progress in implementing human rights protections. If reports are lacking vital information, the UN can request additional clarification and in case of potential non-adherence entities may conduct further investigation or issue more recommendations. Additionally, possible consequences of non-implementation would be financial penalties, loss of operational privileges and licenses, as well as reputational damage.

Establish an Independent Judicial Reform

The establishment of an Independent judicial reform, led by NGOs to ensure objectivity, is an efficient solution. This can be achieved through the creation of mechanisms that ensure trials meet the international standards, meaning courts don't prosecute individuals without adequate evidence or using coerced confessions as evidence. In order to identify coerced confessions, courts and independent judicial bodies will have to review cases and evaluate the legitimacy of testimonies and evidence. Additionally, those mechanisms will ensure public and transparent judicial reviews of cases, especially from those involving activists and opposition groups, for instance through the implementation of Freedom of Information Laws (FOI). These measures will not only help Bahrain with establishing judicial reforms, they will also strengthen the judicial system to prosecute perpetrators of human rights violations, such as government officials and security personnel, regardless of their rank.

Strengthening Media Freedom

Another efficient solution for the issue at hand would be to strengthen media freedom in Bahrain. In order to achieve that, a multi-faceted approach is necessary, including legal reforms, the ending of media censorship and surveillance, as well as the support for autonomous journalism. Initially, legal reforms are vital for the protection of journalists and news platforms from arbitrary restrictions. This involves modifying laws that restrict freedom of expression and censor certain information, as well as guaranteeing transparency in regulatory processes. In addition to that, the government must address and review practices that facilitate digital and offline surveillance of data shared via media channels. This will establish a safer environment for journalists to operate without the fear of punishment and contribute to the promotion of independent journalism.

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