

Bahrain

In Bahrain, the authorities took several legislative and practical measures to give the impression of complying with the recommendations of the Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), which was set up to investigate grave human rights abuses seen in the country following the popular pro-democracy uprising in February 2011. However, most of these measures were purely cosmetic or of limited effect in addressing abuses, ensuring punishment for the perpetrators, and preventing future violations. The lack of serious political will to adopt and implement the BICI recommendations was clearly demonstrated through the practices of the government in 2012, including continued physical and psychological torture and the use of excessive force in dealing with peaceful demonstrations-particularly those originating in Shiite areas, whose residents face systematic discrimination despite the fact that they constitute the majority of the population.

The government also failed to implement the BICI recommendations aimed at addressing ongoing discrimination on the basis of sect or ideology. However, the greatest failure related to implementation of the commission's recommendations was the lack of action towards prosecuting senior security officials responsible for the serious violations committed in 2011, as only a few low-ranking officers and soldiers were referred to trial. According to official data, as of mid-2012, only 21 policemen, the highest-ranked among them being a colonel, had been charged in connection with the killings and

torture that had occurred in response to the 2011 uprising; of these, only three had been convicted and imprisoned.¹

In light of the continued impunity enjoyed by senior security officials, it is no surprise that demonstrators continue to be killed. Suppression of protests led to some 40 documented deaths since the BICI recommendations were issued. This is particularly significant when compared to the 52 deaths which resulted from violent responses to protests before the BICI report was issued and in light of the fact that additional deaths continued to occur as a result of the widespread use of torture, including the torture of children, in Bahrain.²

As serious human rights violations continued through 2012, attempts to cover up these crimes were accompanied by escalating attacks against human rights organizations. Prominent human rights defenders were subjected to arbitrary trials and imprisonment, while representatives of international organizations were denied entry to the country. The intimidation of human rights defenders included death threats and smear campaigns against them for engaging with United Nations forums. The Bahraini authorities also urged other Arab governments to cooperate in preventing these defenders from participating in regional activities in other Arab countries. Foreign journalists, photographers, and correspondents also came under increasing attack, and some were deported in an attempt to limit criticism targeting the Bahraini authorities. In November, a decree was issued which arbitrarily stripped 31 Bahrainis of their citizenship without due process, ostensibly for harming national security.³

Some minor developments sought to positively address the critical situation in the country. A national committee to salvage the BICI recommendations was created, and on April 9 the cabinet issued a decree tasking the minister of justice and Islamic affairs with the formation of an agency to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and to act as a liaison between all the ministries and government bodies responsible for this implementation. Most importantly, a compensation fund was created for victims of abuses, and the individuals who had been arbitrarily fired from their jobs following the events of 2011 were returned to their positions.⁴

¹ Recommendation Follow-Up Agency, Follow-Up Report, June 2012, <http://www.iaa.bh/downloads/bici_followup_report_ar.pdf>.

² National Democratic Action Society, "Markaz huquq al-insan: siyadat siyasad iflat min al-'iqab," Sep. 8, 2012, <<http://www.aldemokrati.org/details.php?artid=7310>>.

³ Human Rights Watch, "Bahrain: Don't Arbitrarily Revoke Citizenship," Nov. 8, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/08/bahrain-don-t-arbitrarily-revoke-citizenship>>.

⁴ Recommendation Follow-Up Agency, Follow-Up Report.

In terms of legislation, the authorities sufficed with introducing modest amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Penal Code to include a more comprehensive definition of torture, to adopt the principle, as under international law, that prosecuting crimes of torture shall not be subject to a statute of limitations, and to reduce the period during which it is permitted to hold defendants in preventive detention.

Despite the existence of multiple arbitrary restrictions on freedom of expression in Bahraini law, legislative amendments only abolished two articles of the Penal Code: the first had criminalized the dissemination of false data, news, or rumors abroad, and the second had criminalized the possession, distribution, creation, or posting of images harming the country's reputation. Only a limited amendment was made to Article 168 of the Penal Code, which punishes the publication of false news; this article now stipulates that such acts must be intentional and entail harm to national security, public order, or public health in order to be punishable.⁵

The year 2012 also saw the adoption of minor constitutional amendments to give parliament a measure of oversight over the government's performance. Theoretically, these amendments also give the parliament the right to withdraw confidence from the government, yet in practice it is the king who is authorized in this case to dismiss the government and appoint a new one or to dissolve the parliament.⁶

Escalating Crackdown on Human Rights Defenders

Human rights defenders continued to pay a high price for standing up to ongoing violations in Bahrain. On January 6, security forces fired tear gas to disperse a peaceful demonstration held in solidarity with detainees. During the demonstration, Nabil Rajab, the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), was specifically targeted: After being pushed to the ground, he was brutally beaten with batons and other weapons, leaving him with serious injuries on his body and face. He was taken to the Salmaniya Hospital, where he was detained and interrogated before being allowed to return home the following day.⁷ On May 5, the authorities arrested Rajab upon his return from Beirut following an advocacy workshop, and on May 16 he was referred to trial on charges of insulting the statutory bodies on his

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ BCHR, "al-Bahrain: i'tida' athim 'ala-l-mudafi' 'an huquq al-insan Nabil Rajab," Jan. 8, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/4950>>.

blog.⁸ Rajab was again detained on June 6, one day after he appeared in an interview with Al-Jazeera English, during which he criticized the lack of serious reforms and the ongoing violations faced by the people of Bahrain.⁹ On July 9, the Lower Criminal Court convicted him of charges of libel against citizens of al-Muharrar and sentenced him to three months in prison.¹⁰ On August 16, the Supreme Appellate Court sentenced him to three years in prison on charges of partaking in illegal assemblies following his participation in peaceful protests demanding basic liberties and democracy.¹¹ Rajab was held in solitary confinement, deprived of private phone calls to his family, and denied access to newspapers.¹² On December 11, the appellate court upheld the conviction but reduced his sentence to two years in prison.¹³

On February 12, blogger and activist Zeinab al-Khawaja was detained while taking part in a peaceful march toward the Pearl Roundabout in Manama; the Public Prosecution charged her with gathering unlawfully with more than five persons.¹⁴ She was arrested again on April 21 during a demonstration protesting the ongoing imprisonment of her father, prominent rights advocate Abdulhadi al-Khawaja; she was charged with obstructing traffic and insulting an officer.¹⁵ On September 26, the Lower Criminal Court

⁸ BCHR, “100 munazzama min anha’ al-‘alam tuwajjih nida’ li-inha’ al-i’tida’ ‘ala hurriyat al-ta’bir wa itlaq sarah kull al-mudafi’ in al-huquqiyyin al-mu’taqalin wa-l-mudawwinin,” May 18, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5271>>; CIHRS, “Learning from the Worst Dictators: Human Rights Defenders under Severe Attack in Bahrain,” May 7, 2012, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=2097&lang=en>>.

⁹ BCHR, “al-Bahrain: i’adat i’tiqal al-mudafi’ al-bariz ‘an huquq al-insan Nabil Rajab,” June 8, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5313>>.

¹⁰ BCHR, “al-Bahrain: al-mudafi’ al-bariz ‘an huquq al-insan Nabil Rajab yatalaqqah hukm bi-l-sajn li-muddat thalathat ashhur natija li-kitabatih ‘ala twitir,” July 9, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5355>>.

¹¹ BCHR, “al-Bahrain: khubara’ al-umam al-muttahida yutalibun bi-inha’ hamlat al-idtihad didd al-mudafi’ in ‘an huquq al-insan,” Aug. 23, 2012, <<http://www.bahrainrights.org/ar/node/5400>>.

¹² BCHR, “al-Bahrain: al-mudafi’ ‘an huquq al-insan Nabil Rajab yata’arrad li-su’ al-mu’amala fi-l-sajn wa yuda’ fi-l-habs al-infiradi,” Aug. 21, 2012, <<http://www.bahrainrights.org/ar/node/5399>>.

¹³ Human Rights Watch, “Charges against Rights Defender Raise Concerns,” Jan. 3, 2013, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/01/03/bahrain-charges-against-rights-defender-raise-concerns>>.

¹⁴ BCHR, “al-Bahrain: i’tiqal al-mudafi’ a ‘an huquq al-insan Zaynab al-Khawaja,” Feb. 14, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5050>>.

¹⁵ Amnesty International, “Bahrain Court Delays ‘Toying with Hunger Striker’s Life,’” Apr. 23, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/bahrain-court-delays-toying-hunger-strikers-life-2012-04-23>>.

sentenced her to two months in prison on charges of destroying property of the Interior Ministry¹⁶ for ripping up images of the king of Bahrain.¹⁷

On February 14, the authorities arrested two prominent human rights activists, Najji Fateel and Hassan al-Jaber, while they were documenting rights violations during demonstrations commemorating the one-year anniversary of the pro-democracy uprising in Bahrain.¹⁸ On April 15, the security apparatus detained Sayyed Yousif al-Mahafithah, who is responsible for the monitoring and documentation work of BCHR, and two members of Human Rights Watch, Tom Malinowski and Nadim Houry, while they were observing a peaceful protest against the Formula One race in the village of al-Diraz. They were held for four hours before being released.¹⁹ Al-Mahafithah was later detained in November while observing an anti-government demonstration; he was held for 12 days with no charges brought against him before being released. On December 17, security forces again arrested him while he was observing a demonstration in Manama held in commemoration of the deaths of two demonstrators in 1994. The following day, the public prosecutor accused him of publishing a photo on his Twitter account showing the leg of a person with apparent shotgun injuries and ordered that he be detained for one week pending investigation. On December 25, his detention was renewed for 15 days on charges of intentionally disseminating false news.²⁰

On October 16, Mohammed al-Maskati, the president of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, was arrested on charges of rioting and taking part in an illegal assembly after he participated in protests in Manama on October 12; he was released the following day. Previously, al-Maskati had been subjected to an intimidation campaign in September, when he received at least 12 anonymous phone calls threatening his life and the safety of his family after he presented an oral intervention to the UN Human Rights

¹⁶ Al-Wasat, "Hukm bi-l-habs li-shahrayn 'ala-l-nashita Zaynab al-Khawaja," Sep. 26, 2012, <<http://www.alwasatnews.com/3672/news/read/704499/1.html>>; Assafir, "al-Bahrayn: al-hukm 'ala Zaynab al-Khawaja bi-l-sajn shahrayn," Sep. 27, 2012, <<http://www.assafir.com/Article.aspx?EditionID=2267&ChannelID=54404&ArticleID=2757>>.

¹⁷ BHCR, "al-Bahrayn: tawasul al-hamla al-qada'iya didd al-mudafi'in 'an huquq al-insan wa-l-nushata'," Oct. 1, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5484>>.

¹⁸ BCHR, "al-Bahrayn: i'tiqal wa ihtijaz ithnayn min al-mudafi'in 'an huquq al-insan," Feb. 16, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5065>>.

¹⁹ BCHR, "al-Sultat al-Bahrayniya tus'id hamlataha didd nushata' huquq al-insan qabl bad' sibaq al-furmula wahid," Apr. 20, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5201>>.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Charges against Rights Defender Raise Concerns"; Reporters Without Borders, "Authorities Use Arrests, Expulsion to Prevent Information Circulating," Dec. 28, 2012, <<http://en.rsf.org/bahrein-authorities-use-arrests-expulsion-28-12-2012,43844.html>>.

Council during a discussion on intimidation and reprisals against human rights defenders.²¹

The Bahraini government's hostility to human rights defenders was most clearly expressed during the 21st session of the UN Human Rights Council, attended by al-Maskati. Human rights defenders faced retaliation for their participation in the session, including death threats, intimidation, harassment, and incitement to hatred and violence against them by state-owned media.²²

Despite international protests and appeals for the release of 13 prominent political and rights activists who had called for democratic reforms, they remained in prison. These activists had been subjected to unfair trials by an exceptional military court, which issued a sentence of life in prison against seven of the defendants, including Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, the founder of BCHR, and sentences ranging from two to fifteen years in prison against the remaining defendants. Following heightened international pressure and criticism, the authorities held a retrial for the activists, yet on September 4 the Supreme Criminal Appellate Court upheld all the verdicts against the 13 activists without opening investigations into or even taking into consideration the fact that their original convictions were based on statements and confessions made under torture.²³

As part of the harassment of rights activists outside of Bahrain, Nabil Rajab was denied entry to Egypt on April 21, when the authorities confiscated his passport, held him in Cairo International Airport, and informed him that he was on a list of persons prohibited from entering the country.²⁴ Maryam al-Khawaja was also denied entry on August 16,²⁵ as was rights advocate Falah

²¹ BCHR, "al-Bahrain: tawassul al-hamla al-qada'iya didd al-mudafi'in 'an huquq al-insan wa-l-nushata'," Oct. 17, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5484>>.

²² CIHRS, "Bahrain Threatens Rights Defenders in Geneva Exposing the Insincerity of the Will to Reform," Sep. 20, 2012, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=4133&lang=en>>; CIHRS, "Bahrain: Reprisals and Intimidation against Human Rights Defender Mohammed al-Maskati Must End Immediately," Sep. 19, 2012, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=4076&lang=en>>.

²³ Amnesty International, "Bahrain Must Free Prisoners of Conscience after Outrageous Verdict," Sep. 4, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/bahrain-must-overturn-outrageous-verdict-prisoners-conscience-2012-09-04>>; Human Rights Watch, "Bahrain: Reject Confessions Linked to Torture," June 21, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/21/bahrain-reject-confessions-linked-torture>>.

²⁴ CIHRS, "Authorities Detain Nabeel Rajab at the Cairo International Airport," Apr. 11, 2012, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=1983&lang=en>>.

²⁵ BCHR, "Risala maftuha ila ra'is jumhuriyat Misr al-'arabiya al-duktur Muhammad Mursi," Aug. 27, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5404>>.

Rabie on April 24. Political activist Qassem al-Hashimi and Bahraini critic Ali al-Deiri had also been prohibited previously from entering the country.²⁶

The authorities also imposed further restrictions on international organizations and denied them entry to Bahrain on several occasions. On January 8, the authorities refused to grant entry to Richard Sollom, the deputy director of Physicians for Human Rights, to attend the appeal of the case against the medical staff who had been charged in the context of the uprising.²⁷ On April 12, Doctors Without Borders also announced that its team had been denied entry to Bahrain and that the Health Ministry had refused to grant a permit for it to work in any clinics in Bahrain.²⁸

Suppression of Peaceful Assembly

The authorities continued to use excessive force against peaceful protests and assemblies, with tear gas, birdshot, and rubber bullets killing several and inflicting serious injuries. Sayyed Hashem Said, age 15, died after being injured with a tear gas canister while facing security forces in a protest in Sitra, located south of the capital, on December 31, 2011. Salma Mohsen Abbas also died after a security officer launched a tear gas canister into her home in Barbar while dispersing a protest in the village on January 13, 2012.²⁹ On January 20, Yassin al-Asfour, age 14, died when security forces launched tear gas canisters into his home in Maamir, south of the capital. Rights sources said that some 13 people have died since February 2011 because of the use of tear gas against protestors and the throwing of tear gas canisters into citizens' homes.³⁰

On April 13, security forces attacked thousands of mourners at the funeral procession of photographer Ahmed Ismail, who was killed by unknown

²⁶ BCHR, "Istimrar al-'amal bi-l-qawa'im al-sawda' fi Misr li-l-tadyiq 'ala-l-mudafi' in 'an huquq al-insan," Apr. 25, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5215>>.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Bahrain: Rights Activist Attacked," Jan. 13, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/01/13/bahrain-rights-activist-attacked>>.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Grand Prix Decision Ignores Abuses," Apr. 14, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/14/bahrain-grand-prix-decision-ignores-abuses>>; CIHRS, "United Nations Member States Jointly Call on Bahrain to End Rights Violations," July 28, 2012, <<http://www.cihrs.org/?p=3132&lang=en>>.

²⁹ Amnesty International, "Bahrain's Use of Tear Gas against Protesters Increasingly Deadly," Jan. 26, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/bahrain-s-use-tear-gas-against-protesters-increasingly-deadly-2012-01-26>>.

³⁰ Ibid.

gunmen; dozens of mourners were injured.³¹ On June 14, a peaceful demonstration in the village of Ali was similarly met with repression. When a group of demonstrators sought shelter in a local house to get away from the tear gas and gunfire, security forces stormed the house, beat them with batons and shoes, and kicked and punched them. A 16-year-old boy who was in the house was beaten and insulted, after which police took him to the central square of the town, where he was subjected to further torture and beatings and threatened with murder and rape.³²

On June 22, five associations of the political opposition (National Democratic Action Society-Waad, Wefaq, Nationalist Assembly, Unitary Assembly, and al-Ikha—all legally licensed) called for a march, but the head of General Security banned the march and warned against taking part in it. When the associations went ahead with the protest, participants came under gunfire at close range that targeted the upper parts of their bodies, leaving several demonstrators seriously injured. Yousif al-Mahafithah, who is responsible for the monitoring and documentation work at BCHR, was beaten by a member of the security forces and an attempt was made to steal his phone.³³

On June 27, security forces responded to a peaceful protest in Buri by using tear gas and birdshot, and several demonstrators were injured, among them rights activist Zeinab al-Khawaja, who sustained fractures that kept her from being able to walk without crutches. On June 29, security forces banned a march of political opposition associations on al-Badie Street, surrounding the area, attacking anyone present in the streets, and imposing an unofficial curfew; dozens of citizens were brutally beaten and several were injured with birdshot.³⁴ On September 21, the authorities used excessive violence to disperse a peaceful demonstration in Manama called for by the February 14 Youth Coalition to demand political and social reforms and to show solidarity with detainees; several were injured and a number of demonstrators were detained. On September 23, 29 of these detainees were

³¹ BCHR, “Ba’d tahdidat wazir al-dakhiliya bi-l-tas’id didd al-mutazahirin: ‘asharat al-jarha wa-l-musabin bi-talaqat rasant al-sayd la yahsulun ‘ala-l-‘ilaj al-lazim,” Apr. 19, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5198>>.

³² BCHR, “al-Bahrayn: istimrar mumarasat al-ta’dhib didd al-mu’taqalin wa bi-taghtiya min al-niyaba al-‘amma,” July 21, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5359>>.

³³ BCHR, “Istihdaf al-nushata’ fi-l-Bahrayn yattakhidh ashkalan ‘anifa wa muhawalat idha’ jasadi taqtarib min al-tasfiya al-jasadiya,” July 6, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5347>>.

³⁴ Ibid.

brought before the Public Prosecution, which remanded them for a month pending investigation.³⁵

Violations of Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Restrictions on freedom of expression and media and repression of government critics and political dissidents continued. Pressure on journalists, including foreign correspondents, mounted with the goal of quelling media coverage of ongoing assaults on peaceful protests. Several journalists and political opposition activists were also targeted with arrest, prosecution, and even physical assaults. On March 31, journalist Ahmed Ismail Hussein was shot and killed while he was photographing violations by security forces against demonstrators in the village of Salmabad, southwest of Manama.³⁶ Photographer Mazen Mahdi was attacked on January 3 while covering a demonstration in front of the central police station in Samahij, northeast of Manama.³⁷ On April 8, anti-riot forces beat and insulted journalist Ahmed al-Busta while he was covering a protest march in Manama.³⁸

The authorities rejected applications for entry visas for six foreign journalists on the eve of the one-year anniversary of the popular uprising, including Nicholas Kristof and Adam B. Ellick of the *New York Times*, Kristin Chick of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Cara Swift of the BBC, Alex Delmar-Morgan of the *Wall Street Journal*, and Gregg Carlstrom of Al-Jazeera.³⁹ The authorities also detained seven foreign journalists who were attempting to cover anti-government demonstrations in the run-up to the Formula One race in Manama on April 22. Two of them—correspondents with Britain’s Channel Four and the *Sunday Telegraph*—were deported. Among those detained in this context was freelance journalist Mohammed Hassan, who had also been detained just two days before, after he was hit with a

³⁵ BCHR, “al-Bahrayn: tawasul istikhdam al-quwwa al-mufrita ka-radd wahid ‘ala-l-ihitijajat al-mutaliba bi-l-dimuqratiya,” Sep. 23, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5446>>.

³⁶ BCHR, “al-Bahrayn: maqtal muwatin sahafi min qibl madaniyin musallahin tabi’in ila-l-quwwat al-amniya al-Bahrayniya,” Mar. 31, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5143>>.

³⁷ Reporters Without Borders, “Despite Government’s Promises, Journalists Continue to Be Harassed and Attacked,” Jan. 7, 2012, <<http://en.rsf.org/bahrain-despite-government-promises-07-01-2012,41642.html>>.

³⁸ BCHR, “Rabitat al-sahafa al-Bahrayniya: al-i’tida’ ‘ala-l-sahafi Ahmad al-Busta dimn musalsal istihdaf al-sahafiyin fi ‘asimat qam’ al-hurriyat,” Apr. 9, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5168>>.

³⁹ IFEX, “Authorities Urged to Grant Entry to Journalists,” Feb. 9, 2012, <http://www.ifex.org/bahrain/2012/02/09/journalists_denied_entry/>.

percussion grenade, beaten, and kicked. Hassan had been working with journalists from the British ITN network.⁴⁰

On December 28, the authorities detained Mazen Mahdi, a photographer with DPA, for more than two hours while he was covering popular demonstrations in the town of Sar, 10 km west of the capital.⁴¹

The government blocked several independent news websites, especially those with live feeds, for “violating regulations and laws of the Kingdom of Bahrain.” The site live973.info, which streams live images of opposition demonstrations, was blocked, as was the “Al-Wefaq Live” page on the audio streaming website mixlr.com. The authorities also blocked the new “Sahet al-Hurreya” page on the mixlr.com site⁴² as well as Livestation applications for smart phones and iPads in Bahrain, as these applications permit the streaming of television broadcasts.⁴³

On June 2, the authorities arrested director and artist Yasser Nasser al-Abbasi, who was then brutally beaten by security forces. The Public Prosecution ordered him to be detained for 15 days pending an investigation into accusations that he had participated in an unauthorized march.⁴⁴

On 19 April, journalist Reem Khalifa was fined 100 Bahraini dinars and ordered to pay compensation of 500 dinars after she was convicted of libel and physically assault against pro-government elements; Khalifa had filed a suit against government supporters who beat and insulted her in February 2011.⁴⁵ On May 17, the authorities arrested journalist Ahmed Radhi following statements he made during interviews criticizing the proposed

⁴⁰ Committee to Protect Journalists, “Bahrain Cracks down on News around Formula One Races,” Apr. 23, 2012, <<http://cpj.org/2012/04/bahrain-cracks-down-on-news-around-formula-one-rac.php>>.

⁴¹ Reporters Without Borders, “Authorities Use Arrests, Expulsion to Prevent Information Circulating.”

⁴² Reporters Without Borders, “Unabashed Bahrain Authorities Get Tough as Uprising Anniversary Nears,” Feb. 13, 2012, <<http://en.rsf.org/bahrain-foreign-reporters-denied-visas-10-02-2012,41838.html>>.

⁴³ Al-Wasat, “al-Bahrayn tandamm li-qa’imat al-duwal al-mu’adiya li-l-intarnat,” Mar. 13, 2012, <<http://www.alwasatnews.com/3475/news/read/642814/1.html>>.

⁴⁴ BCHR, “Bayan rabitat al-sahafa al-Bahrayniya hawl istimrar al-sultat al-Bahrayniya istihdaf al-i’lamiyin wa-l-tadyiq ‘ala hurriyat al-ta’bir,” June 11, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5314>>.

⁴⁵ BCHR, “Murasilun bila hudud: al-Bahrayn: istimrar al-hukuma fi takmim al-sahafa,” Apr. 20, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5225>>.

union between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain;⁴⁶ he was released four months later.⁴⁷

The deputy secretary-general of the opposition group National Ikha, Al-Sayyed Youssef Qudrat Amrullah, was abducted by civilians—likely Interior Ministry subordinates, according to the BCHR—while taking part in the funeral procession of Youssef Muwalli. The Muwalli family rejected the Interior Ministry’s statement that it had found Youssef’s body after he had disappeared in mysterious circumstances, accusing the authorities of torturing him to death. A Wefaq activist, Wahib al-Shuwaikh, was also detained after his home was raided at dawn on January 23 without a warrant; this occurred only weeks after he had addressed the issue of the workers who had been fired for political reasons in a public speech.⁴⁸

Continued Torture

Torture continues to be used against detainees and during the arrest of demonstrators, and deaths thought to be the result of torture have also been reported. In a new development, these practices have begun to frequently target children as well. Nevertheless, the country saw no serious measures to apprehend those responsible for torture or to hold them to account.

Political prisoners are specifically subjected to ill treatment before and after receiving family visits. Before the visit, prisoners are forced to stand for up to six hours blindfolded and handcuffed, without food or water, typically in the same room where they report having been tortured at the beginning of their detention. Prisoners are not permitted to pray during this time. As a result of this treatment, the families of some prisoners suspended family visits as of November 22, in protest of the mistreatment of their loved ones.⁴⁹

On January 13, the Interior Ministry announced that it had found the body of Youssef Ahmed Muwalli on the Amwaj Islands five days after he had disappeared. His mother had filed a missing persons report, and an officer at the Samahij police station had told her that her son was in the investigations building. After his body was found and identified by his parents, the family

⁴⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists, “Bahrain Arrests Critical Journalist,” May 17, 2012, <<http://www.cpj.org/2012/05/bahrain-arrests-critical-journalist.php>>.

⁴⁷ Al-Wasat, “al-Sultat al-amniya tufrij ‘an al-sahafi Ahmad Radi,” Sep. 21, 2012, <<http://www.alwasatnews.com/3667/news/read/703190/1.html>>.

⁴⁸ BCHR, “Istimrar istihdaf al-nushata’: i’ tiqal na’ib amin ‘amm jam’iya al-ikha’ wa nashit fi jam’iya al-wifaq al-watani,” Jan. 23, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/4990>>.

⁴⁹ BCHR, “Sujana’ siyasiyun yata’arradun li-mu’amala sayyi’a wa qasiya qabl wa ba’d al-ziyarat,” Nov. 21, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5543>>.

said there were signs of torture on the victim's head and neck, as well as cigarette burns on his hands and bruising all over his body.⁵⁰

On January 27, Mohammed Ibrahim Yaaqoub, age 19, died only hours after he was arrested and beaten in an area near the Sitra police station by 15-20 policemen, according to eyewitnesses. Before he was buried, bruises and cuts were seen on various parts of his body.⁵¹

On January 3, police detained student and political activist Hassan Awn from his school. He was subjected to various forms of torture, including beatings on his feet with a rubber hose, being forced to stand for more than 11 hours, and being stripped and raped with a water hose.⁵²

On February 11, anti-riot police arrested five people during a demonstration in the town of Sanabis, after which they were taken to an unofficial detention site. There they were beaten, slapped, insulted for their Shiite beliefs, bound and thrown in a swimming pool, and threatened with electrocution. On April 17, the police arrested a group of young adults and seven children and beat and threatened to rape them for participating in protests.⁵³

On April 14, Mansour al-Jamri, age 16, was detained with a group of demonstrators. Mansour, who helps document human rights violations against demonstrators in Shiite villages, was tortured and beaten in prison after his arrest.⁵⁴ Similarly, Sayyed Yassin Shibr, age 13, and another minor, Abd al-Karim Hassan, were also tortured after being arrested during clashes between police and demonstrators on April 29.⁵⁵ Al-Sayyed Hashem Salman Juma, age 18, was tortured after he was arrested in June when anti-riot forces attacked the village of al-Malekiya. He was transferred to the municipal building in Karzakan where he was beaten with batons, had water poured

⁵⁰ BCHR, "al-Bahrayn: wafat shabb wa 'a'ilatuhu taqul bi-anahu maqtul taht al-ta'dhib," Jan. 14, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/4973>>.

⁵¹ BCHR, "Quwwat al-amn al-Bahrayniya tuwasil mumarasat al-ta'dhib al-mumhanaj bi-haqq al-mutazahirin fi marakiz ihtijaz rasmiya wa ukhra ghayr rasmiya," Mar. 9, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5107>>.

⁵² BCHR, "Nida' 'ajil: hayat Hasan 'Awn fi khatar," Jan. 4, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/4957>>.

⁵³ Human Rights Watch, "Bahrain: Police Brutality, Despite Reform Pledges," Apr. 29, 2012, <<http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/04/29/bahrain-police-brutality-despite-reform-pledges>>.

⁵⁴ BCHR, "al-Sultat al-Bahrayniya tus'id hamlataha didd nushata' huquq al-insan qabl bad' sibaq al-furmula wahid."

⁵⁵ BCHR, "al-Bahrayn: atfal fi-l-thalithat 'ashar min al-'umr rahn al-ihitjaz wa-l-ta'dhib wa dahiya li-l-tuham al-ta'assufiya," May 3, 2012, <<http://www.bchr.net/ar/node/5239>>.

over him, and was electrocuted on his back seven times before police left him in an abandoned field.⁵⁶

On November 27, anti-riot police stormed the Dry Dock Prison after a coalition of prisoners of conscience issued a statement about the conditions of Bahraini political prisoners, vowing to claim their rights. The families of the prisoners have had no contact with the prisoners since that time.⁵⁷

Adnan al-Mansi, who has been detained since May 30, was also subjected to severe physical torture, including sexual assaults, denial of adequate medical treatment, being forced to stand in the sun, denial of access to a toilet, and deprivation of water. Adnan's lawyer reported that Adnan had been raped by officials from the Ministry of Interior, leading to severe anal bleeding. Adnan was also brutally beaten on the head, causing temporary paralysis and chronic headaches. Due to his deteriorating health, he lost consciousness in the prison and was taken to the Salmaniya Medical Complex for treatment.⁵⁸

Discrimination against Shiites

The authorities took no serious steps to end the systematic sectarian discrimination against Shiite citizens. In order to exhibit some compliance with the BICI recommendations, the authorities adopted training programs to prevent the spread of sectarian and communal hatred and showed a limited interest in repairing Shiite houses of worship, which had been severely damaged during clashes following the popular pro-democracy uprising in February 2011.

However, despite government assertions that the issue of the workers who had been arbitrarily dismissed from their jobs in the context of the uprising had been resolved, a group of workers belonging to the Shiite majority still awaits reinstatement. According to Bahraini trade unions, many of those permitted to return to work were asked to sign pledges stating that they would not participate in protests again and pressured to suspend their union

⁵⁶ BCHR, "al-Bahrayn: istimrar mumarasat al-ta'dhib didd al-mu'taqalin wa bi-taghtiya min al-niyaba al-'amma."

⁵⁷ BCHR, "al-Bahrayn: taqarir 'an intihakat wa tahdid wa darb al-sujana' al-siyasiyin fi sijn al-hawd al-jaf," Dec. 2, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5545>>.

⁵⁸ BCHR, "al-Mu'taqal 'Adnan al-Mansi yu'ani shalalan mu'aqqatan bi-sabab al-ta'dhib al-shadid," Nov. 7, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5530>>.

activities; in some cases, they were asked to perform jobs and duties other than their original positions.⁵⁹

In addition, Shiite clerics continue to be humiliated by security personnel. On July 27, a security patrol stopped Sheikh Ibrahim Ali Nasser al-Safa, the director of the Ghadir *hawza* (a religious school for Shiite Muslims) as he was returning to his home in the Sitra area. The patrol forced the sheikh to remove his turban as they watched and laughed derisively.⁶⁰ On July 29, the same thing happened to Sheikh Mohammed Jawad al-Shihabi, the director of the Imam al-Baqer *hawza*.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Amnesty International, "Bahrain: One Year on, Accountability Remains a Distant Aspiration," Feb. 13, 2012, <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/bahrain-one-year-accountability-remains-distant-aspiration-2012-02-13>>.

⁶⁰ BCHR, "Markaz al-Bahrayn yutalib al-sultat fi-l-Bahrayn bi-waqf musalsal al-ta'jj al-ta'ifi al-mumanhaj wa-l-tadyiq 'ala-l-hurriyat al-diniya," Aug. 9, 2012, <<http://bahrainrights.hopto.org/ar/node/5378>>.

⁶¹ Ibid.