

# SRW's Statement to UN in Regards to Bahraini Shia Rights Violations

In advocacy effort for Bahraini Shia and their basic human rights, the following statement is submitted by SRW to the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva

Greetings esteemed colleagues and member states,

On behalf of Shia Muslims around the world, it is a pleasure to be able to present this address to the commission. Today Shia Rights Watch would like to highlight the UN body's attention towards acts of anti-Shi'ism and terror in Bahrain. The country has great variety in cultural and religious heritage which must be embraced. However, ongoing and increasing systematic crimes against the majority Shia are instigated by government and individuals who condemn Shia as infidels. Bahrain is the only Shia majority country with such high rate of anti-Shiism. Although Shia rights advocacy has increased since the Arab Spring, Shia rights violations continue to rise.

During the first six months of 2017, a total of 982 people have been arrested. Arrests were with aims to suppress protests. Some Shia were arrested in peaceful protest and others by night time raids. Bahrain has shown little mercy in suppression as 84 of those arrested are minors, and 28 are women.

The violations continue as an increasing number of arrest, and ill treatment has been reported since July 2017.

Those arrested report harsh torture and violence in detainment in addition to denial of their rights to medical needs.

- Prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab received a two-year sentence on July 10th after being accused of spreading 'fake news' about Bahraini authorities.
- Ebtissam al-Saegh, a prominent activist, has testified to sexual assault and coercion of false confessions. Al-Saegh was previously held in May where she reported torture and sexual assault. She started an open-ended hunger strike on July 11<sup>th</sup>.

- On July 3rd, the same day that Ebtisam al-Saegh was detained for the second time for government criticism on social media, Yousef Ali Riza reported sexual harassment by guards in his prison cell.
- The Bahraini authorities arrested Shia cleric Sheikh Hani al-Banaa' while he was visiting his detained son in Dry Dock Prison on July 3rd. Al-Banaa' was released after being held in the prison for nine days.
- Another prisoner, Hussein Mohamed Habib died on July 5th after being arrested and subjected to severe torture and abuse in prison in March 2011.
- On July 20th in the northwestern coastal town of al-Budaiya, state troopers stormed the house of Sheikh Bashar al-Aali and arrested the cleric without providing any reasons.
- In July 28th, Bahraini authorities charged 60 Shia for forming a group against the king. These individuals were accused of "forming a terrorist group,." Their arrests are graphic displays of continued suppression of government opposition.
- In August Abdel-Jabbar and Ahmed Mansoor, two teenagers detained were subjected to electric shocks while in detention at the Dawar 17 police station.
- Another human rights activist, Ebrahim Sarhan, stated being tortured, punched and kicked during interrogations at the National Security Agency office. He also shared that he was stripped down, and threatened.
- On August 5th, another Shia, Al-Jamri, revealed that he was subjected to torture at the National Security Agency.
- On August 28th, the family of Hassan Mushaima recounted that Jaw prison's administration continues to deprive him of his right to receive medical treatment. The 65 years old English teacher and human rights activist was arrested in 2011 and sentenced to life in prison. In 2010, Mushaima was diagnosed and treated for stage four follicular lymphoma in London and had since been on regular medication to prevent relapse of the disease.
- On August 17th, Bahraini authorities arrested another Shia cleric, Mohieldin Al-Mashaal.
- Forces also attacked prisoners inside Jaw Prison on Tuesday the 22nd, as detainees held religious ceremonies inside their cells. Some detainees were transferred to solitary confinement as punishment.
- Pro-rights protests continue to be met with violence. In late August, the

village of Sanabis was left in toxic smoke in response to the villagers' demand of updates of the whereabouts of 11 women arrested.

- Zainab Al Khamees was detained on September 6th.
- At least 10 activists were arrested on September 8th for their involvement in peaceful protests.
- In response to the ongoing violations and ill treatment, 1500 prisoners of conscience started a hunger strike as of September 10th.

In addition to the reprehensible treatment of prisoners, many Bahrainis have lost their citizenship.

- By July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 103 people had citizenship revoked or denied (that year alone).
- On July 22, the wife of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Deqaq lost her citizenship after refusing to spy on her husband.

The denial and revoking of citizenship have seemingly become the way in which the Bahraini government suppresses their critics. Loss of citizenship in combination with the growing detention of human rights advocates and their ill-treatment while in prison reinforces the regime's systematic crackdown on minority populations and Shia Muslims in the country.

### Worrisome Future of Bahraini Shia

With many children and women under arrest, the future of Bahrain is widely destabilized. Children arrested are not able to attend school and in many cases, are not given the opportunity to make up missed work. The current lack of national stability because of direct violence creates an opportunity for foreign involvement in Bahrain. Mistrust and lack of cooperation among protesters and the government have also led to a shift in national identity. SRW predicts a decreased rate in Bahrain's educated population. Further, due to the increased detainment of women and the high rate of mortality for Shia men, SRW predicts a rise in single parent families and even orphan children. These predictions are further supported by the approximate 780 sentenced Bahraini citizens and the revocation of 92 others. To this point, over 60 people have been given life sentences. The numbers are expected to rise as Bahrain has issued death sentences for many activist despite a de facto moratorium on the death penalty.

The government's unwillingness to engage in dialogue has created a rift between it and its citizens. Sources say, Bahraini citizens, do not trust the government. This mistrust, one can relate to the lack of sufficient representation in legislation and years in the suppression of rights by officials. Furthermore, sources report that the extent of Saudi involvement in Bahrain undermines the Bahraini government. Many feel as though dialogue with Bahraini officials are insignificant as officials are under the influence of Saudi policy.

Through this statement, SRW, requests in depth investigations in regards to increasing violence toward Shia majority in Bahrain. The pro-democratic peaceful protest must be supported and protected by United Nations to reach peace in Bahrain.

Sincerely,

Shia Rights Watch