

Anti-Shiism in Iran: An Internationally Renowned Scholar Arrested

Iranian Intelligence Services attacked one of Shia's most internationally renowned scholars, Seyed Sadiq Shirazi, in Qum and arrested his son today, March 6, 2018.

Local advocates report the forces attacked the clergy's vehicle, forced his son Seyed Hussain Shirazi, out of the car, and removed his turban degrading him in public, as the father and son were returning home from their daily lecture.

Forces arrested Seyed Hussain Shirazi. Seyed Hussain has been targeted many times by the same forces in the past on allegations of inciting public unrest through a critique of the government's lack of tolerance on free speech.

Seyed Hussain currently acts as the Executive Director of Shirazi Foundation, a multi-national humanitarian and educational organization with special consultative status with the United Nations.

The followers of the clergy are concerned for his health as he suffers from a heart condition.

There is a growing concern over the safety of Seyed Hussain as Iranian forces have used extreme torture such as burning with oil, reverse-hanging, flogging, denial of food and water, among other methods of torture, in the past. There have been some reports by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Shia Rights Watch and other human rights organizations critiquing the extent of the attack and human rights violations toward the Shirazi family in the past.

Arbitrary arrest and assault toward the scholar have provoked some peaceful protests in front of the Iranian embassy in Iraq, the United Kingdom, Kuwait and other Gulf countries in which the Seyed has hundreds of educational, spiritual and public service centers.

The recent attacks on the Shirazi family bring forth concerns of re-emerging anti-Shiism in the Republic of Iran.

Iranian Special Clerical Court has refused to respond to any inquiries by NGO's, family and community members, thus far.

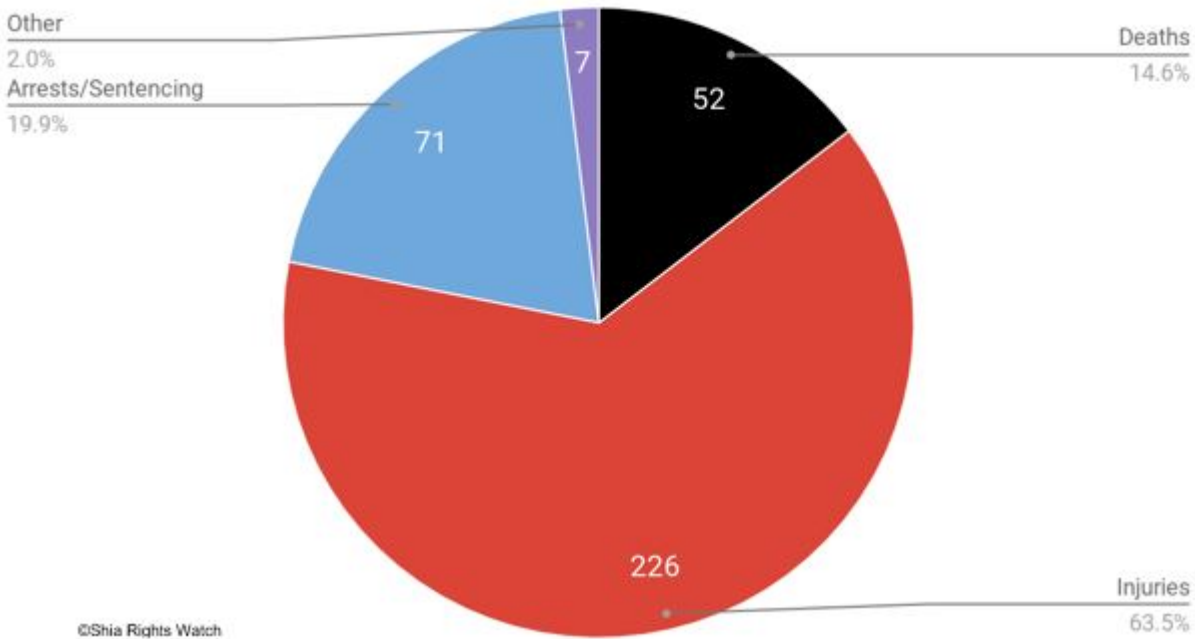
Shia Rights Watch strongly condemns the violent and unlawful act of the Iranian government. This NGO invites human rights activists to stand up for the rights of Shia Muslims and urges the Iranian government to respect the rights of Shia Muslims.

Further, Shia Rights Watch demands the immediate release of Seyed Hussain Shirazi.

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in February, 2018

February proved itself to be a much less violent month than January, with sources reporting 343 incidents of Anti-Shiism, half of last month's 673. However, the crackdowns on freedom of expression and incessant discrimination against the Shia population led to 52 deaths, 226 injuries, 71 arrests and harsh sentencing, and seven related anti-Shia actions, including but not limited to, sectarian slander, police brutality, and vandalism.

February Incidents



Anti-Shia incidents were witnessed in countries including Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan, Nigeria, India, and Canada, while peaceful protests and essential meetings on religious tolerance were held in the United States, United Kingdom, and Italy.

Saudi Arabia

The government of Saudi Arabia continues to crack down on the Shia minority through both passive and active means. The country stood witness to 3 arrests, and two corrupt trials resulting in harsh sentencing on Shia civilians.

This month, Saudi Arabian officials were caught creating and using some fake social media accounts which produced thousands of posts per day to propagate anti-Shia and sectarian sentiments. The statements are also used to drown out dissent on social media by spamming popular hashtags and media feeds.

In addition to social media attacks, three young men were taken into custody by Saudi regime forces on February 11th, after their home was raided without warning. Two brothers, Hani and Ali al-Faraj, and one minor Hussain al-Zanadi were arrested as Saudi forces continue their attacks on the Shia-majority Eastern Province.

On the same day, a Shia civilian was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment by the Saudi court in Riyadh for alleged terrorism, and February 21st saw the death sentence handed down to another on 'security threat' charges.

Bahrain

In the month marking the 7th anniversary of the 2011 uprising, Bahraini Shia saw yet another month consumed by regime crackdown. The government continues to hold responsibility for the mistreatment experienced by its citizens through means of violence and systematic oppression. Bahrain has seen a slight turn away from violent Regime attacks, but has witnessed an increase of the Regime's brute force against the Shia population through a more hidden personification of oppression in the form of court sentences handed down to "security threats." The country saw 66 Shia Muslims jailed or sentenced in court, 25 of which had their citizenship stripped leaving them stateless; 2 were documented as injured from prison torture, and activists were met with police brutality in an attempt to silence human rights advocates.

Beginning on February 1st with the sentencing of 32 individuals in Bahrain's High Criminal Court, 1 defendant, Moosa Abdallah Moosa was sentenced to death as the alleged responsible party for a crime that occurred 3 years ago in 2015, while 13 defendants were handed down life sentences, 8 defendants were sentenced to 15-years imprisonment, 4 defendants received 3 to 5 years' imprisonment, and 6 individuals were acquitted; 25 of the 32 defendants were also stripped of their citizenship.

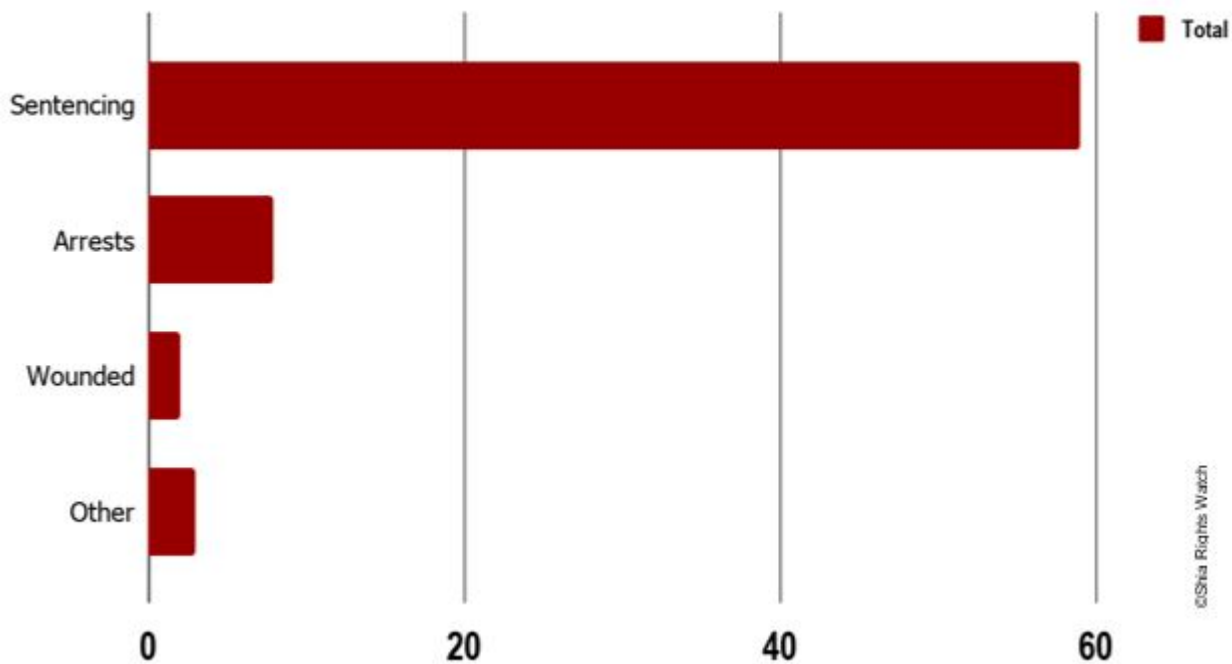
On the 1st of the month, 4 Bahraini citizens were also deported after the upholding of a 2012 sentencing that revoked their citizenship on the count of "damaging state security," however, they were not informed as to what damage they imposed. Of the four deported were three brothers, Mohammed Ali, Abdul Amir, Abdulnabi Al-Mosawi and his wife, Maryam Redha. This deportation comes as the second half of 8 Bahraini citizens, 4 of which were deported two days prior on January 30th. This string of deportations shows an increasing abuse of power from the regime, as the generalization of what it means to be a "threat to state security" is unclear and leaves room for a significant amount of unfounded arrests

and harsh sentences.

Ten others were sentenced by the court on February 6th and charged as anti-regime activists, guilty of multiple unfounded charges with, “forming “unlawful” gatherings of more than 5 people” among the few. 5 of the defendants were sentenced to 10 years in prison, and five were handed down five-year sentences.

President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, was sentenced to an additional five years in prison over tweets that condemned the Saudi-led war in Yemen and Manama’s treatment of prisoners. He was arrested in 2016 and is currently serving a two-year sentence for “spreading rumors and false information” about the government in television interviews. His sentencing came after weeks of international condemnation of his imprisonment and calls for his release. The Manama court’s actions have been slammed by human rights organizations as a “mockery of justice.”

Methods of Oppression (February 2018)



On February 21st, five family members, Amal, Iman and Fatima Ali, and two of their husbands, Mohsen Al-A’li and Ali Al-Shagal, were sentenced to 3 years in prison, each on politically motivated charges of “covering up for a wanted person.” Madina Ali was also sentenced to three years on the same charges. Death sentences were issued against three more civilians, and several other citizens were sentenced to 15 years in jail after coerced confessions.

A 7-year jail sentence was upheld for a 22-year-old citizen accused of participating in the February 14th Coalition, and the al-Wafi Islamic Party; both of which are groups that publicly oppose the Regime's exclusive and discriminatory policies.

Bahrain saw a total of 7 arrests this month. Three citizens were arrested in the early hours of February 3rd after a security raid took place orchestrated by the Ministry of the Interior. The arrests were made on the basis of political accusations, exemplifying the Kingdom's policies that thwart free speech and whistleblowers of human rights violations. Of those arrested in the raids were Ali Mohammad Hassan and Abbas Jassim Bu Hamid from al-Malikiya village, and Mohammad Al-A'am from A'ali.

On February 25th, four more men were arrested after their homes were raided by security forces. The reason for their arrests has still not been disclosed.

Sheikh Isa al-Moemen, Shia cleric and Imam of al-Kheif Mosque in al-Dair village, was also placed under arrest this month and sentenced to 3 months in jail after being accused of inciting hatred against the regime in a sermon he delivered on July 29th, 2016. Moemen has already served a sentence from the same accusation verdict over an address he gave on August 5th, 2016, having experienced the Regime's unruly policies multiple times.

Behind bars, reports surfaced this month that citizens in Bahraini prisons are being abused, beaten to false confessions, and fed through containers that previously held cleaning supplies, exploiting a massive human rights concern and furthering the mistreatment of the imprisoned Shia majority.

On the days before, and the days following the protests that marked the 7th anniversary of the 2011 uprising, many demonstrations took place, and protesters were met with the brutal police force, used in an attempt to disperse those gathered to commemorate the ongoing battle for political justice and change. Police used tear gas to break up crowds resulting in injuries. However, the extent of these injuries is not known. Due to the lack of freely available medical attention to the Shia population, as well as the fear of Regime backlash, injured Shia protesters often go without medical care, allowing for the number of activists injured to remain unknown. Breaking up the peaceful protests to halt all public dissent against the regime is another way in which Shia Muslims are continually

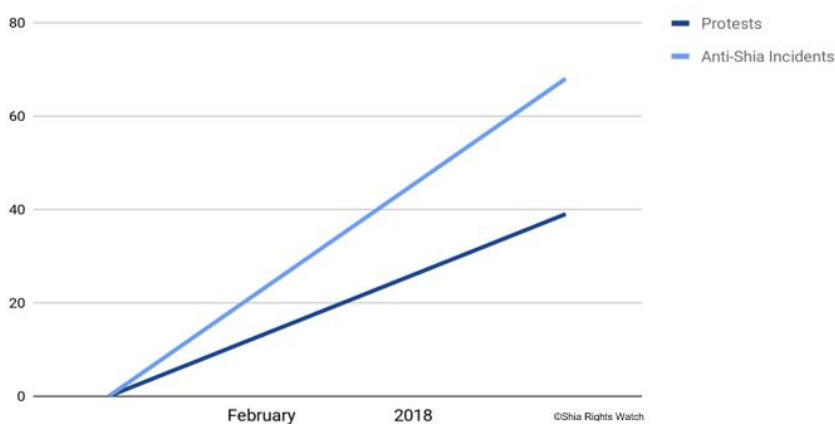
marginalized in Bahrain and denied their right to freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression was also halted this month in Bahrain as the ban on Friday prayer at the Imam Al Sadiq Mosque in Diraz, the largest Shia congregation, continued for the 85th consecutive week. Armored vehicles created a blockade outside of the building, along with concrete barricades and security checkpoints throughout the city.

A total of 72 Anti-Shia incidents occurred this month in Bahrain alone, adding to the sum of 569 this year so far. As activists continue to stand up for their rights and their beliefs, the government crackdowns continue to get more vicious. Freedom of speech or expression, when used to speak against injustices carried out by the Regime, is seen as a terrorist activity, “threat to national security,” and slander. Shia in Bahrain are continuously unable to speak out and advocate for their rights due to the threat of jail, deportations, and death.

Pakistan

Correlation of Protests to Anti-Shia Incidents



Pakistan’s Shia Muslims are routinely the victims of anti-Shia extremist groups, which are met with a lack of government action, turning the situation into a free-for-all allowing anti-Shiism to flourish.

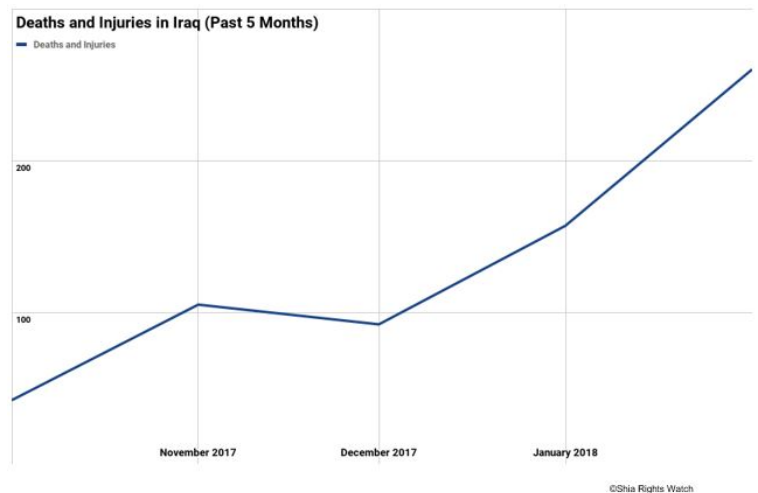
This pattern held true in February with two shootings; both carried out by takfiri terrorists belonging to the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ; formerly Sipah-e-Sahaba) group, which resulted in the deaths of 2 civilians in the Dera Ismail region of Pakistan. Of the two men murdered were Iftikhar Hussain, and Motiullah, the custodian of Mohallah Shaheen Imam Bargah, a Shia place of congregation and ceremony.

The lack of government action to pursue and prosecute the terrorists involved in the attacks led to some massive, but peaceful, protests in the Dera Ismail region to draw attention to the injustices done by allowing the extremist cells to continue

operating and targeting Shia Muslims without repercussion.

Nigeria

Nigeria entered its second month of daily protests calling for the release of Sheikh Zakzaky, the head of Nigeria's Islamic movement who was arrested in 2015 and has been detained at an unknown location without charges since.



While the protests took place in a peaceful manner, some were still met with backlash and brutality leading to the arrest of some Shia protesters. Beyond arrests came the death of Sheikh Qaseem Umar Sokoto, who was shot by Nigerian Police while peacefully protesting for the release of Sheikh Zakzaky. Sokoto died two weeks later due to complications from his wound.

Iraq

Iraq has seen a sudden jump in terror activity and strategic attacks in Shia-majority regions this year, stemming from a previously steady rise in civilian casualties and injuries as the efforts to push these groups out of the country grow stronger. Iraqi Shia were victims to some roadside bombings and other various attacks carried out by extremist groups this month, which caused 45 deaths and 198 injuries, averaging nine incidents per day.

Many bombings in Iraq target areas around the Shia-majority regions of Baghdad and the city of Ramadi, with militant groups typically targeting unsuspecting civilians at famous souqs or markets. This month, detonations of IED devices took the lives of 17 Shia Muslims and left an additional 73 severely wounded and hospitalized. Gunmen claimed the lives of 8, wounding 6, and targeted poisoning left 17 dead and 140 taken ill.

The poisoning took place on February 13th, after members of an anti-Daesh, Shia PMF coalition ate at a restaurant in the Shia area of al-Khalis in the province of Diyala. All members were rushed to the local hospital, with the more critical cases being transferred to centralized medical centers in Baghdad. The details of the poisoning itself currently remain under investigation, as mayor of al-Khalis, Adi Alkhaddran, called for an in-depth analysis of what is anticipated to be deemed an intentional attack.

In addition to bombings, extremist groups like Daesh also take part in the kidnapping and murder of civilian Shia Muslims. In a series of kidnappings this month, two Shia men fell victim to takfiri tactics and were found dead a day after they were kidnapped by the group.

One of the more hopeful events of February took place in Iraq as well, as the college of Jurisprudence at the University of Kufa organized a symposium to discuss rapprochement of the Shia and non-Shia sects of Islam. Dean of the college, Dr. Waleed Farajallah hoped to seek effective inter-faith dialogue to create unity and clarify the image of Shia Muslims. The occurrence of this seminar is a positive step for the advocacy of

Shia rights and non-discrimination in Iraq.

USA/UK

In the United States and the United Kingdom, protesters gathered outside of the Bahrain Embassy on February 14th to stand in solidarity with Bahrain's Shia Muslims and to commemorate the 7th anniversary of the 2011 uprising.

Additionally, on February 6th in the UK, a group of activists protested outside of the Bahrain Embassy in London to demand the release of activist Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, who is serving a life sentence over his role in pro-democracy protests in 2011.

Protests outside of Bahrain's borders draw international attention and recognition to the human rights violations at hand carried out against Shia Muslims. Raising awareness for the injustices Shia Muslims have, and continue to face on the mainstream media of Western countries gives an amplified voice to the Shia in Bahrain, among other countries, whose voices are met with the threat of

persecution and left unheard.

Italy

Various religious leaders, academics, and policymakers met with Pope Francis after a seminar titled, "Violence in the Name of Religion," which was organized by the UK-based Wilton Park Institute in cooperation with Pontifical Council for Interfaith Dialogue at the Vatican.

Al-Khoei stated "The Seminary in Najaf and the Supreme Religious Authority have played an essential role in disseminating tolerance and moderation while focusing on social justice, human rights and dignity regardless of religion, sect, and nationalism," in his speech directed towards academics and religious leaders from around the world.

International religious recognition of Shia rights, and an understanding and aim to secure and protect those rights in the religious community provides oppressed Shia with a world-renowned community of support and advocacy for their freedom from persecution. The increasing amount of global acknowledgment to the prejudice faced by Shia creates an increasing pressure on government and religious authorities to reconcile their beliefs and policies with Shia Muslims both in their countries and abroad.

Canada

Canada experienced an unusual case of anti-Shiism this month when prayer stones in University of Toronto praying room were vandalized and a letter was left stating:

"To the Shia's: No such thing as following Imam Ali.

And no such thing as using a stone for praying.

- Kind Regards."

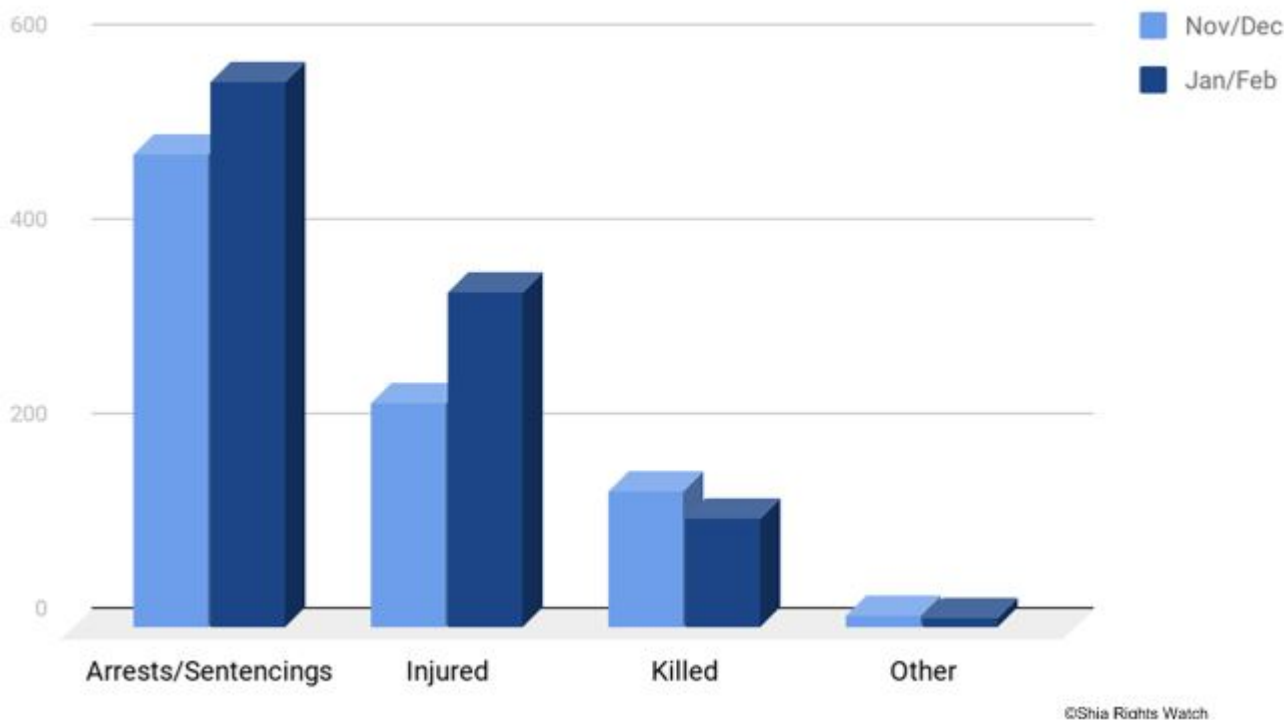
Aside from the hopeful international recognition of Shia Muslims, the public condemnations such as this are a constant reminder that there is much left to be done. While policies can be installed to lessen the suffering of Shia at the hands of

government, and many governments do engage in non-discriminatory practices, ideology proves to be a much more difficult issue to tackle. Without a stress on religious tolerance, the mindsets that foster the poisonous thoughts of anti-Shia sentiments will continue to flourish. The problem of anti-Shia discrimination can not be solved unless the conversation of inclusive peace and acceptance is taught without fail in religious communities.

Conclusion

The first two months of 2018 have seen a new spark in Anti-Shiism, seeing more incidents in January and February than the final two months of 2017, which were part of a steady decline of Anti-Shia episodes. This February, while significantly calmer than January, was riddled with twice as many injuries, and a similar number of deaths, giving way to the realities of repression and persecution that Shia Muslims experience on a daily basis. However, resiliently pursuing through the hardships, Anti-Shia targeted acts were met by activists with peaceful protests against the injustices they face, using their voices and rising amid the threats of detainment and death.

Anti-Shia Incidents



This new emergence of Anti-Shiism in 2018 exemplifies and emphasizes that there is still much work to be done to correct the systematic repression imposed by government institutions, as well as to correct the discriminatory mindsets and

ideologies that inspire extremists to conduct attacks against Shia Muslims.

Freedom of expression is a key to lessen the suffering and discrimination endured by Shia Muslims, as silence creates complicity and complicity masks the issues at hand. Shia Rights Watch will continue to give a voice to those without, until every Shia Muslim has access to basic human rights and fair treatment.

The Bahrain Uprising, Seven Years Later

The Bahrain Uprising, Seven Years Later

In 2011, Bahraini citizens joined the regional fight for freedom. Thousands of Bahraini nationals came together, protesting the nation's unequal distributions of jobs, housing, and political power. They asked for a new constitution that would allow people to be more involved in their nation-state. Initially, the uprising consisted of Shia and non-Shia Bahrainis. The conflict in Bahrain was not religious at its core- it was a demand for equal human rights.

However, unlike other uprisings in the area, Bahraini dissent received no international support. Moreover, protesters were met with the utmost violence. Within months, 1,500 Saudi Arabian and Emirati troops flooded the country. Furthermore, Pakistani and British intelligence services were recruited to assist torture in prisons. Protesters, their families, doctors who treated them, lawyers who represented them, a journalist who reported their stories and even members of the parliament that hinted support for them were detained. Shia towns were isolated and restricted in the passage.

Soon it became apparent that the Bahraini folks were on their own in the fight for human rights. Although they had a lot to lose, Bahraini activists stood steadfast in their demand for change- what was once a call for equality became a campaign for identity recognition.

Since its inception, the struggle in Bahrain has led to cases of human rights violations. Violations are in the form of citizenship revocations, lack of due process, denial of freedom of expression and religion.

Systematic Discrimination

Once the spark of revolution spread through the kingdom, the Bahraini government took active steps to limit the citizenship of Shia Muslims. Not only was the Bahraini Constitution and recognized United Nations treaties ignored, but amendments were also made to justify the brutal denial of human rights in response to dissent.

Within the first years of the uprising, the Bahraini Parliament added 22 amendments to the “Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts” of 2006. The 2006 law defined “obstructing the public authorities [...] from doing their work” and “harm[ing] National Unity” as terrorism. The law further increased the power of the public prosecution, allowing them to detain and question without due-process.

The amendments, made in 2013, allowed “the security bodies all required and appropriate powers to protect society from terrorist incidents and prevent spreading them.” The changes allowed authorities the liberty of defining “terrorist crimes” and instigation of such activities even harsher than the original law. Protests against government injustice became identified as civil disobedience and were met with the utmost violence. With aims of limiting room for obloquy, trials were held behind closed doors without legal defense representation.

In 2013 alone, the government handed approximately 2450 years worth of prison sentences under the new laws.

So-called, “anti-terror” efforts became even more questionable when a royal decree amended juvenile delinquency to include participation in public gatherings and sit-ins, justifying the arrest of minors. Shia Rights Watch approximates over 450 minors were detained calling into question Bahrain’s ratification of the Convention of Rights of a child in 1992.

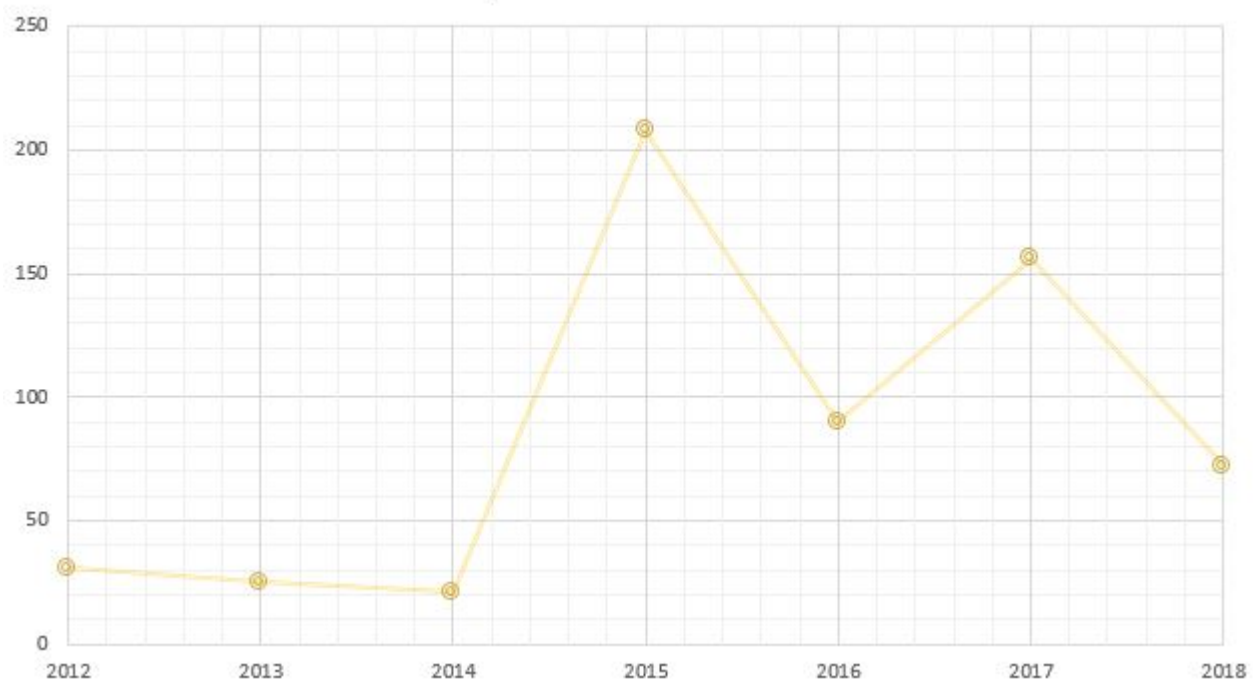
The changes in the government's constitution after the Arab Spring systematically criminalized Shia Muslims. The anti-congregation laws fueled already existing anti-Shia sentiment and were used to limit Shia religious processions and congregations. Thus, what began as an aim to suppress dissent became an active targeting of Shia Muslims religious identity.

Citizenship Revocation

Article 15 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to a nationality... no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality." Nationality is critical in defining one's identity. Recognized nationality in the form of citizenship is a gateway for a diverse range of privileges. Such privileges can be as simple as the power to open bank accounts or as significant as healthcare.

Nationality by birth, to a certain degree, is hereditary. The national citizenship of a parent can influence the range of opportunities available to future generations.

Citizenship Revocation: 2012-2018



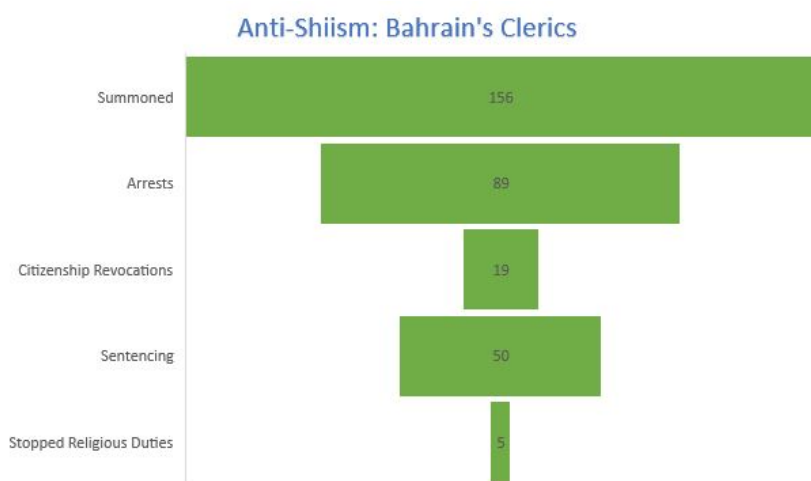
Despite it being recognized as a human right, citizenship is determined by State authorities. To limit dissent, the Bahraini government forced a total of 578 Shia citizens into statelessness by revoking their citizenship. The decision was justified by the Terrorism Act and a 2014 amendment to Article 10 of the Bahraini Citizenship law which grants the power to revoke citizenship to the Ministry of Interior on charges of "causing damage to the interests of the state,"

“undermining state security,” and disloyalty. It must be mentioned that said changes in governance themselves undermine the Bahraini Constitution which states, “Bahraini nationality shall be determined by law. A person inherently enjoying his Bahraini nationality cannot be stripped of his nationality except in cases of treason and other cases as prescribed by law.”

Those stripped of their citizenship are ordered to turn in their legal identification such as passports to legal authorities. The lack of documentation dramatically affects the lives of these individuals and their families. Within the country, they cannot buy property, obtain jobs, or even apply for social services for their children. On the other hand, they are also restricted from moving out of the country. They do not have a nationality to base visa applications upon, nor do they have documentation to travel with.

Despite efforts, revoking citizenship has not silenced criticism of Bahrain’s government. Not only has revocations increased momentum for humanitarian advocacy, but it has also created a spotlight for international attention.

Lack of Due Process



Sources report, citizenship revocations are merely announced on state news. Those charged under alleged actions of “terrorism” or “disloyalty” are denied opportunities to refute or repeal such decisions. One such source states, “I do not even know

which of my activities led to such charges.” Ambiguity in laws about citizenship and terrorism allow for a great deal of power for the government. Because revocations are mainly under the power of the Ministry of Interior, they are not “under judicial control,” thus they cannot even be repealed.

The lack of due process is real for those who are arrested and detained. A significant portion of arrested occurs through unwarranted community raids. Those taken are detained unlawfully for long periods of times in which they

undergo extensive torture. The Bahraini Constitution states “no persons shall be subjected to physical or mental torture or inducement, or undignified treatment...” and “any statement or confession proved to have been made under torture, inducement, or such treatment, or the threat thereof, shall be null and void.” However, countless Shia Muslims have been charged with confessions made under extensive torture. Numerous detainees have died as a result of said tortures.

A systematic review of Bahrain’s dissent cases shows high-level police brutality towards Shia protesters. Those arrested are met with great violence. One example of harsher than the usual due process is the trying of Shia civilians in military courts. In early to mid-2017, a law was ratified allowing military tribunals to try and convict civilians charges with threatening of the Kingdoms safety.

Such conditions are void of age and gender restrictions. Time and time again have Bahraini officials arrested, detained and tortured minors on allegations of political involvement. In addition to physical violence, sources report incidents of sexual assault to male, female and minor detainees.

Restriction of Basic Freedoms

While the conflict in Bahrain began in response to the demand for equality, ongoing violence sheds light on extensive anti-Shia sentiment within the Bahraini government. What started as a crackdown on dissent has advanced to restrictions

on the religious expression of religion. SRW reports over 320 incidents of anti-Shiism against Shia clerics or religious leaders. Incidents are inclusive of summonings,

arrests, citizenship revocations, life and death sentences and restrictions in religious duties. When summoned, numerous clerics report being questioned on the content of their speeches, ideological tendencies, political views.



Major religious leaders such as Shiekh Isa Qasim and Sheikh Hussein Najati have been subject to direct violence by authorities. Shiekh Qasim remains under house arrest despite deteriorating health.

Bahrain: A Priority

One of the most prolonged Arab Spring revolutions, Bahrain has reached its 7th anniversary. Ongoing violence and the lack of international attention has shed light on the dissonance between humanitarian action and humanitarian belief. Nations who have stood for democracy in countries such as Libya, Tunisia, and Syria have ignored the struggle of Shia Muslims in the Gulf. It must be recognized that the conflict in Bahrain has led to regional unrest that could have been prevented had the Shia Muslims of Bahrain been given a safe venue for self-expression. Instead, the lack of international support and the crackdown of the Bahraini government has riled conflict secondary to the original movement.

Shia Rights Watch calls for a spotlight on anti-Shiism in Bahrain. Pro-democracy initiatives in the nation must be empowered, and avenues of communication between the Bahraini government and Bahraini Shia must be bolstered. Reports from previous meetings between the government and its critics show a lack of legitimacy given to such efforts. Critics state low government participation and even lower levels of change post-dialogue. Increased international attention on peace-building endeavors hold parties accountable and drive palpable change.

Further, international organizations must establish a cohesive definition of terrorism that serves to protect all walks of life as opposed to being used to quell freedom of speech and target a determined few.

Reform in Bahrain must become a multi-industry, international dialogue. Bahrain's lack of stability reduces prosperity in regional business efforts. Deportations and citizenship revocations create changes in regional demographics and can even influence immigration statistics in the international community. Many of those under abuse in Bahrain are holders of dual-citizenships, yet they are detained and prevented from travel. In order to reduce the pervasion of conflict repercussions out of Bahrain, international entities must be actively engaged in monitoring ongoing violence in the nation.

2017 Annual Report



2017

Annual

Report

2018 marks the 7th anniversary of Shia Rights Watch. Over the past seven years, our organization and our team have grown from a Washington, DC-based minority rights group to an internationally renowned institution active in both the United Nations and the International community.

Our qualitative and quantitative research and development teams work together to present unique tools to mediate religious conflict and systematic discrimination of minority groups all over the world. Our organization offers holistic data to promote peace-building endeavors in both regional governments and grassroots entities with the hopes of one day reducing prejudice against religious minority communities.

Shia Rights Watch's dedicated team of volunteers work strenuously to make sure incidents of Shia Rights violations are documented meticulously and are profiled such that they can be used in the prosecution of anti-Shiism in the high courts. Our team members prioritize humanitarian action, putting their utmost effort into holding SRW accountable.

In 2018, Shia Rights Watch has trained a team of researchers and conflict resolution practitioners in the creative facilitation of dialogue and outreach, allowing them to exceed their geographical and social limitations. Given the technological and informational advancements of our times, Shia Rights Watch believes in a global community in which time and location are continuous.

Each year, we look back to our past work and think of ways to develop tools that would help the global community to either prevent or confront Shia rights

violations. Our organization aims to sponsor, mediate and facilitate dialogue between the Shia community and their governments, giving them autonomy to design a strategy that would allow their society and state to work hand in hand towards building an environment free of violence.

I am proud of our team and encourage anyone who can help to join the Shia Rights Watch team, and use their creativity, momentum, and ambition towards building a global community that lives in peace, respect, and acceptance.

Mustafa Akhwand

Executive Director of Shia Rights Watch

Beside moral obligation, human rights and democracy are the essential foundations of secure and functioning societies. Safe countries are ones with the most productive politicians, prosperous economies, satisfied citizen and successful developments. Therefore advancing liberty, honoring human rights and dignity, and global prosperity through reciprocal respect between governments and their constituents are a must.

The Shia Rights Watch monthly and annual reports demonstrate the scope of ongoing Shia rights violations and the need for immediate international commitment to stop and prevent anti-Shiism. Violence prevention can lead to a more stable and safer society in which people can reach their full potentials.

Shia Rights Watch reports are meant to provide policymakers, journalists, human rights activists and prospective researchers with an accurate accounting of Shia rights violations in different parts of the world. This NGO also hopes these reports will help governments, civil society leaders, campaigners, and individuals reflect on the state of human rights in their countries and work to promote accountability for violations and abuses.

Human rights are where interest and values meet, not only to serve nations but to make them safer places.

Hawraa Zakery

Researcher and Human Rights Advocate

The world has gone through significant changes during 2017. Changes have been predominantly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and are inclusive of, but not limited, to the following:

- Kurds considered minorities within Iraq and Syria declared independence referendum.
- Saudi Arabian prince Mohammad bin Salman reformed the hierarchy of the kingdom by launching anti-corruption committee, threatening and arresting a number of princes and businessmen. This nation also promised historically unknown freedoms for Saudi women.
- Gulf nations such as Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain, abandoned Qatar by cutting all relations with this country.
- Unnecessary and on-going Saudi-led war in Yemen killed on average 100 civilians each month according to the United Nations and resulted in the outbreak of cholera in Yemen.
- ISIS has lost ground in Syria and Iraq which is a great victory but suggests the expansion of ISIS to a new shelter in neighboring countries .

These events may have happened independently of each other, but together they represent a powerful shift in politics of the region. A change in power has profound effects on minority groups.

For the sake of this report, and to keep the focus on Shia Muslims, we look at some of the significant changes in the countries in which Shia Muslim rights violations has become a growing concern.

09 COUNTRIES OF CONCERN



AFGHANISTAN

BAHRAIN

EGYPT

INDONESIA

IRAQ

MALAYSIA

PAKISTAN

SAUDI ARABIA

SYRIA

Countries of Concern are countries in which Shia Muslim rights violations have been reported over the past decade. Nations with temporally and systematically prolonged abuses are listed under Countries of Concern (CC), and countries with sporadic incidents of violence are listed under Watch List (WL).

Countries of Concern: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Malaysia,

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

09 Watch List



Watch List: Algeria, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Lebanon, Madagascar, Nigeria, Turkey, United Kingdom.

Nations listed under CC and WL are monitored in frequency and severity of violations in an ongoing database, which is used to suggest policy measures to governmental and non-governmental peacekeeping endeavors.

This annual report reviews anti-Shiism in each of these countries and suggests analyses to understand trends of violation better and take measures to prevent future incidents.

Reduction of Anti-Shiism?

Although restrictions and political pressure continue in some countries, the overall number of fatalities published in 2017 has decreased compared to previous years. SRW is happy to share with its members and audience that their advocacy, support, consultations, and representation in the United Nations along with cooperation and hard work of other human rights NGO's and entities have resulted in more awareness of Shia Muslim minority around the world.

Although the loss of one life is way too many, any reduction of violation and causality is good news. Shia Muslims, in a noticeable number of countries, enjoy more freedom and safety. Shia Muslims of Oman, Kuwait, and Azerbaijan have reported feeling safer than before compared to many neighboring countries. Even Iraq had fewer casualties than previous years.

As a human rights NGO, there is always a concern that reduction in numbers

could be as the result of systematic neglect of media outlets toward this population. However, the overall living standards, satisfaction and freedom of expression and religion of Shia Muslims have improved as per local activists and grassroots interviews. SRW continues to advance human rights availability and enhances the lives of all humankind, especially those isolated by repressive governments.

Highlights of the year

The following are some of the episodes that have directly affected the life of Shia Muslims in 2017.

Saudi Arabia: First Military Crackdown of Shia Muslim

Although Shia Muslim rights' violations have been reported in this country, in the past, most violations took place behind closed doors. The first quarter of 2017 was an eventful and unfortunate time for Saudi Shia Muslims as national forces openly attacked and seiged Shia Muslim towns and cities, arrested peaceful protestors, and limited resources to this population.

Such crackdown did not stop, however, midway through the year, launches of anti-corruption committee shifted the news' focus from anti-Shia Muslim activities to the arrests of multi-millionaires such as Prince al-Waleed Bin Talal, the world's wealthiest individuals. Shia Muslim violations are hardly covered by news agencies, and new changes in politics took away the very little that was included. Mohammad bin Salman also promised to give more freedom to women, allowing them to drive, obtain a driver license without their male guardians' permission, and to attend sports games. Women rights activist are thrilled with the new promises and changes that result in social and political participation for women. However, there is no sign of more freedom for other minorities in the kingdom. Local activists report more freedom for women could be a cover up for many violations happening within the nation.

Bahrain: Civilians Try in Military Court!

In a historic decision, on April 2017, Bahrain's king, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, approved a constitutional amendment to Article 105(b) of Bahrain's constitution

granting military courts the right to try civilians. Military courts in Bahrain were previously limited to prosecuting members of the armed forces or other branches of the security services and could only try civilians under a state of emergency. Under the new amendment, the courts have the power to prosecute any civilian accused of threatening the security of the country.

As a result any pro-democracy movement, critique of the king, and assemblies to demands equality and right are considered “threatening,” activists, who happen to be mainly Shia Muslims, will be tried in military courts.

Although this amendment took place in 2017, in 2011, seven men went on trial in a military court as the country’s first-ever civilians to be tried before such court. SRW believes the Bahraini government has gone out of its way to ratify anti-Shiism into its laws.

Afghanistan: ISIS and Taliban Hand in Hand

In an unusual cooperation between Taliban and ISIS, on August 4th, approximately 800 armed men launched a three-pronged attack on a village in a remote mountainous region in north-central Afghanistan. Mirza Walang is a large and densely populated area in a strategic district called Sayyad in the province of Sar-e-Pul. In a joint effort, ISIS and Taliban agents attacked the village at midnight. More than 1800 families were trapped and surrounded by the extremists. According to local activists, 80 people including women were reportedly taken a hostage and transported to different regions.

The governor of the district, Sharif Aminyar, told The New York Times, “Despite several demands for air support and special forces, the demands were ignored by central government.” . On the 15th of August, three mass graves were discovered in the area containing bodies of more than 40 people including beheaded women and children.

Although there are many similarities between ISIS and Taliban, these two groups have not publically collaborated in the past. Since ISIS has lost ground in Syria and Iraq, the fear of them looking for new shelter has raised.

Lack of local governmental support to Shia Muslims, in addition to the existence of Taliban created the environment in which ISIS could find a haven, and that is worrisome for both Shia and their rights activists.

Pakistan: New Fears

The insecurity and lack of protection of Pakistani Shia Muslim once again manifested in the year 2017. Beside ongoing targeted attacks, roadside shootings and explosion, fear of increased anti-Shiism interrupted the life of Pakistani Shia. This July, approximately 1,000 Shia, on their way back from a pilgrimage from holy sites in Iran and Iraq, found themselves unable to continue at the border between Iran and Pakistan in the town of Taftan. The pilgrims preferred to put up with the harsh environment at the border than risk traveling through Pakistan unguarded as historically many buses were attacked in similar situations.

Facing so much insecurity and lack of governmental support either prevents Pakistanis from attending pilgrimages or creates more fear and disturbance in their lives.

In the past year, Pakistani Shia Muslims took to display their power by peacefully protesting their concerns. Incited by the increased frequency of violence, civilians voiced their needs and worries.

Africa, New Home for both Shia Muslim and Anti-Shia Muslim

Africa is the most recent target of anti-Shia groups as it is home to the fastest growing Shia Muslim population. In countries such as Nigeria and Madagascar, Shia Muslim leaders have been attacked, their education centers been raided, and Shia security threatened. As the Shia Muslim population grows in this part of the world, SRW's concern of establishment of anti-Shia Muslim groups grows too. More importantly, as ISIS is losing ground in Syria and Iraq, Africa could become a safe haven for this terror group and their supporters.

Now that this continent has opportunities for both groups to grow, it is vital that Shia Muslim populations take measured to be safe and to create rapport and collaborate with local authorities to prevent possible violations.

Dangerous Associations

Shia Muslims are citizens of different countries of the world and come from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, political views, etc. In the past it was to the benefit of the local governments to associate Shia Muslims to Iran, and as a result, withdraw their support from their Shia population.

SRW has published a number of articles, presentations and informative sessions to educate the international committees about the falsehood and danger of such association. Shia Muslims are not dependent on any governments. Governments and international committees have to separate the general Shia Muslim public from specific groups with political agendas. SRW requests that all international entities, governments, scholars, and researchers distinguish the general Shia Muslim population from any specific government, political or militant group. Shia Muslim have strong citizenship manners as honoring and respecting their country and law are part of their faith requirements.



There has yet to be an accurate account of the Shia Muslim population. Their numbers are unknown. Shia, no matter where they live, have been a targeted minority. Whether discriminated against by their governments, local or international terrorist groups, or individual extremists, this population keeps a low profile as a survival mechanism. As a result, there is no country in which the quantity of Shia Muslims is known.

This article intends to offer a fresh look at this population.

The Middle East is home to 24% of the global population and all countries in the Middle East are Muslim nations. The total population of the Middle East is estimated to be 218 million. A lack of information fuels belief that the majority of the Middle Eastern population, all countries combined, are non-Shia. However,

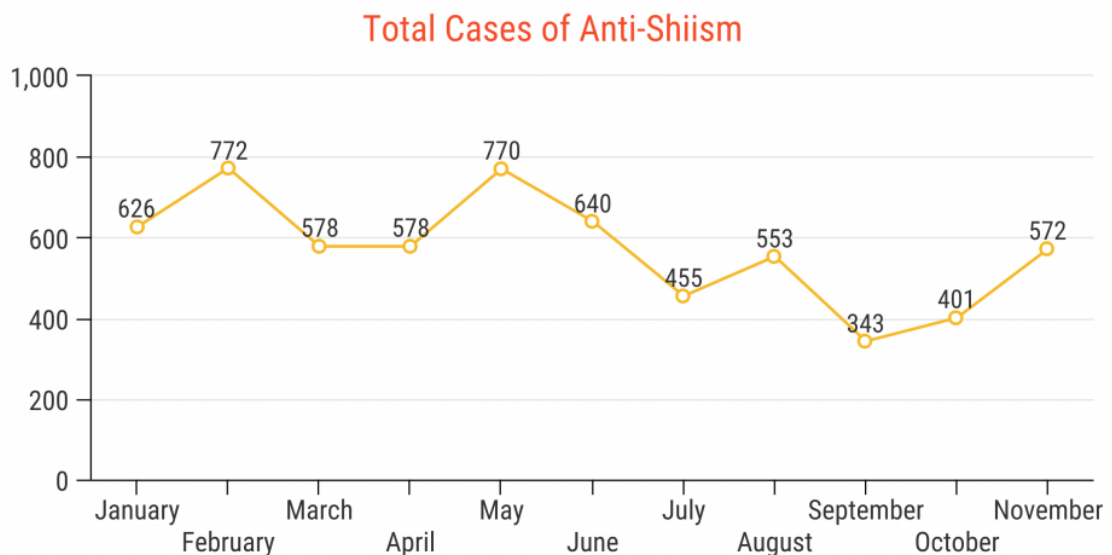
that claim is inaccurate.

More than 120 million people live in Iran, Iraq, and Bahrain, all of which are majority Shia Muslim populated. Take note Shia exist in other countries as minority populations. If we were to add the probability of Shia existing as minorities to nations in which they exist as the majority, the Middle East would comprise more than 50% Shia Muslims.

Based on the population of Shia Muslims in majority in the aforementioned nations, more than 50% of the Middle East are Shia. It is accurate to say this region of the world, in general, is a Shia Muslim majority area. Regardless of leadership, this group is the number one most killed, arrests, tortured, pressured and interrogated in their homelands and elsewhere.

In other words, in the Middle East, Shia Muslim are the majority in numbers but a minority in rights.

Anti-Shiism: Trends, Numbers and Locations



To view trends of anti-Shiism, SRW has collected data on cases of direct, systematic and cultural violence against Shia Muslims. Anti-Shiism is defined as the ac

tive targeting of Shia Muslims to limit their visibility and expression. SRW emphasizes that Shia Muslims are constituents of all nations around the world, and thus data is international. Information in regards to the case of anti-Shiism is collected by local respondents, self-reports, and through international news sources.

The year 2017 stood witness to a total of 6,388 cases of anti-Shiism in the nations of Iraq, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Madagascar, Algeria, and Nigeria. It is important to note that Shia rights abuses listed in this report are a summary of incidents that have reached SRW. Violations are not limited to those in this report. Further, cases of cultural discrimination or the isolation of Shia individuals are qualitative data that was not highlighted in this report.

More information can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

The nature of violations is specific to each nation. Types of violence include, but are not limited to death by unnatural means, injury via malice, abduction, arrests, limitation in religious expression and congregation, all of which are detailed in the sections below.

NOTE: Nations below are presented in alphabetical order.

Afghanistan

Amidst conflict in Afghanistan, Shia Muslims live in peril. Anti-Shiism propagates in the nation by the extremist organization and systematic discrimination. Terror groups such as the Taliban and ISIS continue to target Shia centers of education and religious practice. Passenger vehicles carrying Shia pilgrims to and from major holy sites in and out of Afghanistan are also identified and targeted. Within the first half of 2017, the United Nations reports 1,700 Shia civilians have been killed as a result of anti-Shia sentiment.

Attacks are mediated to allow for mass exposure. They occur mainly during holy months and in crowded areas. The month of Ramadhan stood witness to the extensive targeting of Shia mosques and centers. Previous to Ramadhan, in a speech, ISIS leaders renounced Shia, called for their cleansing and promoted the month of Ramadhan as the best month for anti-Shia action.

Attacks in Afghanistan have centered mainly Shia populated areas of Kandahar, Baluchistan, Kabul, Mirza Olang, and Tala was Barfak.

The single most gruesome incident of anti-Shiism was in late December when ISIS affiliates detonated three consecutive IED's in a building in west Kabul. The date

coincided with the anniversary of USSR invasion of Afghanistan. Over 50 people were killed, and 84 were injured when the first bomb exploded in the basement of the building, where a Shia center of the congregation was located.

In addition to increased direct violence from terror groups, the lack of prosecution of previous acts of anti-Shiism continue. The government fails to provide security for Shia populated areas, and despite advocacy, Shia Muslims are treated as second-class citizens. Ethnic groups such as the Hazara are discriminated against due to their religious identity.

Algeria

Pilgrims traveling home from a trip to Iraq for the annual Arbaeen ritual were detained upon entrance to the country. Sources report over 400 Shia Algerians were treated in a discriminatory fashion, harshly investigated and forced to wait long hours for a two week period following Arbaeen. Religious material such as prayer stones, prayer books, and attire were seized by government forces.

Such a scale of anti-Shiism was new for this country. However, this incident may be the first sign of systematic anti-Shia sentiments.

History of Shiism in Algeria reaches back to the Middle Ages when the western region of the nation was a segmented ruled by the Idrisid Dynasty. Among the immigrated Shia Muslims are native Ismaili Shia Muslims with roots in Kutama Berbers who converted to Shiism in 909 CE.

Bahrain

In 2017, crackdowns against freedom of religion and expression continued leading to the detainment and even death of native Bahraini Shia.

Despite government aims of deterrence, the house arrest of Shiekh Isa Qasim has incited more protest among Shia communities. Sheikh Qasim was revoked of citizenship in 2016 and now is limited to the confines of his home in Diraz. The single most incident of arrests occurred in May, two days after Sheikh Qasim was convicted, security forces raided Sheikh Qasim's home and arrested 286 protesters called upon the government to free Sheikh Qasim. By reports of the Interior ministry, five were killed as well.

Post-2011, Bahraini Shia has taken to the streets in protest of their lack of representation in legal affairs. Bahrain is comprised of a majority Shia population but is led by a minority non-Shia group. In addition to lack of representation, Shia

in Bahrain is limited in expression and freedom of congregation. Human rights activists report a systematic slowing of internet speeds, cutting off phone lines as well as limitations in travel. In early September, Bahraini officials called upon religious scholars and centers ordering limitations in visibility and restriction of religious expression to inside religious centers. The ministry of interior furthered that failure to meet the new guidelines will result in detention and torture. Days following the threats, security forces raided numerous Shia villages, namely Shahrakan, Jid Ali, Malkiya, Ekr, Abu Saiba, Shakhura, Sitr, and Karzakan, removing visible banners, posters, and flags that mark the commemoration of Muharram, a holy month for Shia Muslims. Religious centers such as the al- Sadiq Mosque in Diraz continue to be banned in attendance and congregation.

In 2017, news of sexual violence against detainees and prisoners raged. In May, human rights activist Ebtissam al-Saegh reported torture and sexual assault while in detainment. Later, on July 3rd, Yousef Ali Riza said being sexually harassed by guards in his prison cell. Prisoners are held and treated in the worst of conditions. In August, Abdel-Jabbar and Ahmed Mansoor, two minors detained were subjected to electric shocks while in detention at the Dawar 17 police station. Ebrahim Sarhan, an activist, was tortured, punched and kicked while being interrogated. Sarhan was stripped down and threatened as well. Detainees report being treated with malice and prevented in the most basic right of medical care. Those arrested face maltreatment to a record extent. Sources report physical, sexual and mental abuse as a result of torture. The deteriorating conditions of the detainment centers led to an outbreak of one of the most significant hunger strikes in modern history. Local respondents report fast failing health of hunger strikers. Ebtissam al- Saegh says losing over 7 Kilos, 15.4 lb, of weight in the first few weeks of her detainment.

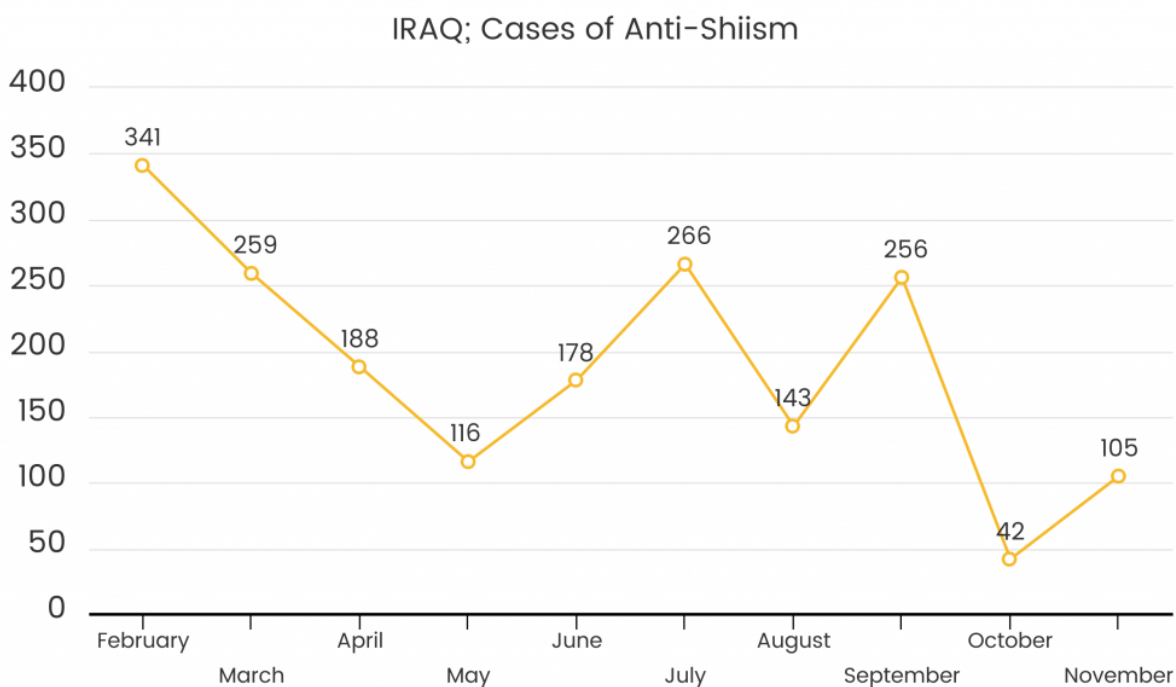
Not only are those held unlawfully mal-treated, but families of activists and critics of the Bahraini government are also harassed. In numerous cases were close relatives of humanitarian activists, even those living outside of the Bahraini Kingdom, called upon and tortured, being used as leverage upon critics of the restrictive Bahraini policies.

Despite international humanitarian efforts, trends of anti-Shiism continue as before in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Dialogue among activists and the government is practically nonexistent, and violence progresses.

Iraq

Attacks on Shia Muslims continued in 2017 as terror organizations targeted Shia populated areas. Although overall violence in Iraq is high as a result of ISIS activity, Shia Muslims have primarily been targeted by their religious identity. A high proportion of the attacks recorded have occurred in the capital of the nation, Baghdad. Baghdad is home to an explosion per day. Attacks carried out are in commercial areas such as shopping centers and marketplaces in the form of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED's). The most significant incident of anti-Shiism was in May in the city of Karrada. Two bombs were detonated, one in an ice cream parlor and another near a government building during rush hour. The explosions resulted in the death of over 80 civilians and injury in 50 others.

On average, an IED is detonated in Baghdad. One local



states, "We are never sure if we will return home from the simplest of trips; even going to the market is a risk." A substantial majority of explosions occur in popular shopping centers and civilian areas. Attacks are coordinated to be the busiest times to guarantee the most number of casualties. Furthermore, bombs are detonated consecutively to target not only people in specific areas but also aid workers.

Shia populated areas of Iraq lack sufficient security. Despite the recognized trend of attack prominence in densely Shia populated areas, the Iraqi government has yet to manage said areas and adequately reduce violence. Iraq is home to prominent Shia holy sites, and thus must be able to guarantee the safety of

pilgrims.

Dangers of increased attacks exist as a result of a decrease in geographical ISIS stronghold. As per SRW analysis, civilian targets have grown with the decline in ISIS power. Iraq continues to be a haven for ISIS extremists, terrorist groups, and radical individuals. Although fewer bombings and casualty numbers seem lower than 2016, Iraq is far from safe for the Shia minority.

In the second half of 2017, a high frequency of mass graves was discovered. These graves hold the bodies of hundreds of civilians killed as a result of direct violence. Bodies may also be of those reported as injured or with undiscovered trauma. Medical research shows that many of those recovered displayed signs of extreme malnutrition. SRW notes that the death count of those found in mass graves was not initially in reported death counts. Further, SRW warns the trend of reduced casualty count in Iraq may be a result of unreported death.

Madagascar

Due to the islands vast resources, prominent Shia businesses have set grounds in Madagascar. In the past five years, two incidents of anti-Shiism have been seen, the second of which was in 2017.

Yanish Ismail was kidnapped and held for ransom by 14 armed assailants on his way back from a funeral.

The Ismail family have since paid the ransom and have left Madagascar due to the nation's lack of security. Due to the island nations lack safety for Shia Muslims, Shia businesses and investors have reduced their business ventures in this country, substantially affecting the economic development of the nation.

Malaysia

In September 2017, Malaysian authorities arrested 200 Iraqi Shia Muslim students from Kuala Lumpur as they attended a Muharram commemoration. The authorities also arrested the Iraqi ambassador along with his wife and children. All arrestees were released after diplomatic interference. Malaysia banned all Shia Muslim related activities and publications year ago, but this time they did not even respect diplomatic immunity that this group had within the Iraqi embassy.

Despite Malaysia's rich cultural diversity, tolerance for Shia Muslims is nonexistent. Shia Muslims are not recognized as a religious entity and their

practices are considered unlawful. Fueled by anti-Shia education, marginalization of Shia Muslims increases day by day. Due to the lack of recognition by the nation's constitution, Shia Muslims are left without facets to pursue justice. Anti-Shia incidents in 2017 point to an increase in structural and direct violence against this population by the nation's authority.

Nigeria

In the past five years, Nigeria has displayed exponential growth in its native Shia Muslim population. However, along with it, extremism and anti-Shia sentiment have also grown. Governmental forces have repeatedly targeted Shia Islamic centers in the Kunduna region. In continuance with the arrest and detainment of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky in 2015, the Nigerian government continues to limit expression and aims to contain the Shia community. Zakzaky and his wife were ordered to be released by the Abuja Division of the Federal High Court however the couple is yet to be freed. The court also awarded them 50 million NGN (Equivalent to approximately 138,500 USD) and a temporary residence. There has been no regulatory compliance with the court's ruling.

In late December, sources reported Zakzaky has lost vision in his left eye entirely and is losing sight in his right eye. Since their violent detainment in 2015, Zainab Zakzaky still has a bullet lodged in her chest. Despite him and his wife's deteriorating health, medical attention is restricted.

Letters of appeals were sent to President Buhari calling on him to "embrace peace and obey the laws of the land" as he had asked Shia Muslims to do in his 2017 New Year's message by Femi Falana, the Zakzaky's lawyer. Falana further called the government's lack compliance to the court's ruling as a sign of a "weak state."

Pakistan

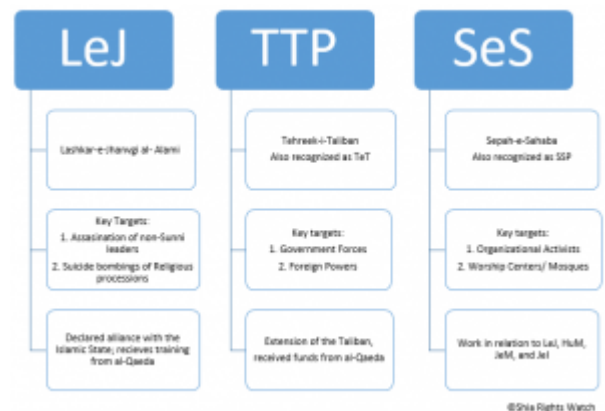
Shia in Pakistan is among the highest tier of society. A significant portion of Pakistan's professional is of the Shia faith. Despite their political, economic and social success, Shia in Pakistan remains targeted for their faith. Terror organizations identify and target officials who identify as Shia, killing them and their close associates.

In addition to targeting individuals, Shia populated areas are home to violence. Shia education and religious centers are also targeted. Anti-Shia sentiment is

apparent in attacks in Pakistan as they take place in Shia majority locations of the main cities. The incidents stand in support of anti-Shia beliefs that Shia individuals are not Muslims and are seen as unworthy of fundamental human rights.

Terror organizations remain proactive in Pakistan. Groups like Lashkar-e-Jhagvi (Lej), an extremist militant group, have pledged: “all Shias are worthy of killing, and the intention is to make Pakistan their graveyard,” according to an open letter they wrote to the Hazara people in Baluchistan. Organizations such as Tehreek-i-Taliban (TeT) and Lej have killed over 2500 Shia Muslims in Pakistan.

Attacks orchestrated are sporadic yet detrimental. Over the span of 2017, there have been a handful of significant explosions that have killed and injured over 100 civilians. These attacks are mainly in religious places of worship as well as religious education centers.



The fear generated by attacks similar to this one has caused some Shia to avoid traveling alone. Even the government fears that people of the Islamic sect travel at their peril.

In July 2017, around 1,000 Shia on their way back from a pilgrimage from holy sites in Iran and Iraq found themselves unable to continue at the border between Iran and Pakistan in the border town of Taftan. The pilgrims found themselves with the option of having to continue through hostile territory that is extremely dangerous for Shia without protection. They have requested to be escorted by the security forces, but their application has not been granted yet.

Sources report negligence on the part of the regional governments. Shia Muslims feel their operations have been “impeded” by lack of procedural security measures and primary access to electricity and local management.

Although Shia makes up at least one-third of the Pakistani population, Shia face discrimination and live under psychological and physical torment. In the past five years, targeting of Shia individuals in prominent sects of society has increased. Shia Rights Watch predicts an aim of inducing fear in the Shia population in this nation as a means of limiting Shia expression.

The lack of government response to anti-Shiism in the form of prosecution points to existing systematic discrimination against the Shia population. With close analysis, one can see a trend of authority involvement after cases of anti-Shiism, and that in response to immense and widespread Shia protests.

Furthermore, not only does the Pakistani government fail to carry out due procedure, new laws such as the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act of 2016 allows for prosecution of allegedly “blasphemous” social media posts. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that 40 people are on life-sentences, some on death row, on charges of “blasphemy.” Trends of increased religious and ethnic minorities charged on the grounds of this law show that this regulation is used as a means of limiting expression and speech in the nation.

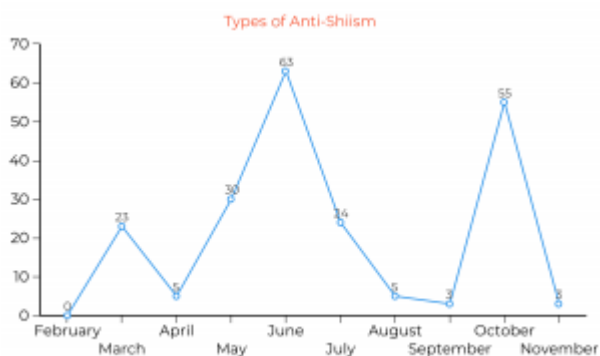
Shia populations are most dense in geopolitically essential areas of Pakistan and chaos in those regions create regional distress. Thus, despite their social isolation, Shia individuals hold great power for influence. In early July, after a protest in response to twin Parachinar terror attacks, provincial governor Iqbal Zafar distributed the equivalence of 5,000 USD to those injured in the bombings and approximately 9,000 USD to families with lost loved ones on behalf of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Reparations distributed were in response to occurring protests. Although there is substantial discrimination against Shia Muslims, the Pakistani government realizes growing dissent in Shia populated areas results in regional instability and can lead to increased foreign involvement in the nation.

Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is home to significant shifts in politics and economy as of 2017. With the rise of Mohammad bin Salman as the crown prince, Saudi Arabia continues to undergo a claim of modernization of the Kingdoms rights system. Bin Salman led an “anti-corruption” committee by which over 11 Saudi Princes and officials were arrested. Many hoped bin Salman would pave the way for intergroup dialogue within the nation and possibly even lead to reduced anti-Shiism. However, 2017 in Saudi Arabia consisted of everything but reduced religious discrimination.

In late June, Saudi forces seized the town of Awamiya. Entrances to the city were closed, and discriminatory bullets and mortar rockets were shot damaging existing infrastructure. The government claimed aims of renovating the area. However, violence exhibited towards residents suggests otherwise. The al-Musawarah neighborhood, home to historical structures dating back to the Ottoman empire has been mostly demolished by soldiers. Demolition of homes and businesses has led to a shortage of water, electricity and gas supply. Residents state that renovation in other sections of the nation did not require

demolition and claimed the government had targeted Awamiya to limit Shia activities. Later in May, the government changed rhetoric from “restoration” to

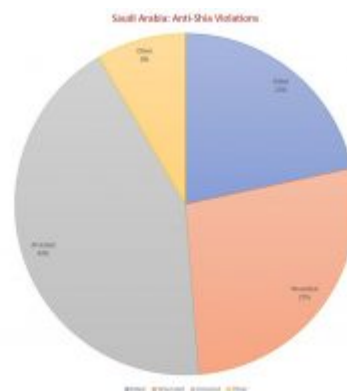


“anti-terrorism” to justify the use of arms.

In addition to damages in infrastructure, systematic use of violence against town residents has to lead to the death of over ten people and the arrest of numerous others. Passage of public service vehicles such as ambulances endangered the life of residents. In multiple cases, bodies of

residents shot were left on the street, locals state. One resident reports, “No one has been able to leave their houses to go to work, school or even get food as people are afraid to move” because of the numerous armored tanks and forces that roam the town. By mid-June, snipers shot upon civilians wounding over 40 civilians, many of which were women and children. By August 2017, over 488 homes and hundreds of businesses were destroyed.

For decades, Shia Muslims have lived as second-class citizens in their native Saudi land. Despite ongoing systemic violence and years of repression, the occupation of Awamiya was the first official act of direct violence. While Shia Muslims report living under a “glass-ceiling” by which their professional and economic advancements are limited by their religious identity, 2017 witnessed the first significant government operation in mass destruction of Shia residential areas. Furthermore, the lack of humanitarian engagement in the occupation of Awamiya is worrisome. Despite the demolition of major historically S



hia regions and the arrest and torture of residents, the international community watched in silence.

Across Saudi Arabia, over 100 people have been arrested. Due to the indiscriminately violence against the Shia population, 51 have been killed, and 64

others have been wounded. A significant number of those killed and injured are women and minors amidst crackdowns in Awamiya.

Figure 1. displays trends of anti-Shiism in Saudi Arabia in 2017. June stood witness to the highest number of violence in correspondence to the seizure of Awamiya.

The majority of deaths and injury came from snipers perched upon buildings who shot at passersby. The lack of medical resources in the town augmented death tolls post-violence. As the entrance and exits of the city were restricted, ambulances were prevented from entering the city. Further, aid was precluded to those injured as people feared going out of their homes.

Arrests took place concurrent with the seizure of Awamiya as troops ransacked the area and targeted activists in the region.

The second most frequencies of anti-Shiism occurred in October. Muharram, a month by which Shia Muslims take to commemorate the death of Prophet Mohammad's grandson, fell parallel to October. SRW notes that because Muharram has the largest congregation frequency, terror organizations use this time to target the a large number of Shia Muslims.

Compared to previous years, death tolls in Saudi Arabia were high, pointing to an augmentation of violence against Shia individuals. As seen in figure 2. 22% percent of violations were deaths, and 27% were injuries sustained from government violence.

The term "other" consists of illegal raids and setting of personal property on fire as forms of coercion and induction of fear. Threats to family members and loved ones were also included in the "other" category of anti-Shia violations.

Conclusion

There is a fine line between human rights and political benefits. Politics are to serve people of nations; human rights are to ensure their dignity and humanity. Despite international efforts to merge the two, politics and human rights remain polar, to a certain degree. As a result, politics is left for governments to manage and rights are left for citizens to demand.

Shia Muslims, with their long history of nonviolence, impactful contributions to science, humanity, economy and social good, have always been attacked. Discrimination towards Shia Muslims is not because of their faith or religion, but

because this population stands up for justice and calls out prejudice. They demand rights and dignity, not only for themselves but all.

SRW invites the readers to pay particular attention to the location of anti-Shiism, in fact not only anti-Shiism but the area in which most human rights violations take place. Countries with limited democracy, governments that prioritize power over leadership, societies in which higher education is a privilege rather than a right, and nations with a high number of unemployment have the most human rights violations. In such communities, Shia Muslims and their pro-democratic actions are considered “threats to national security.” Shia Muslim who live in free countries, in which their dignity is valued and have freedom of religion and speech, are prosperous and peaceful educators, businessmen and women, social-good contributors and more. As an example, there has not been a single terrorist action carried by a Shia Muslim in Europe and America.

Therefore, SRW highlights that Shia Muslim is not killed or discriminated against because they cause problems with their ideologies or practices, but they are neglected because they believe in the power of humankind and openly invite all to take part in making their societies a better and more welcoming place.

From SRW to Shia Muslims:

SRW recognizes the decades of ongoing conflict Shia Muslims have had to endure. Shia Muslims all over the world face direct, systemic and cultural discrimination by their religion. SRW believes the first front against human rights violations. Hence, SRW promotes the use of dialogue and peaceful protests as a means of raising awareness against oppression. * Shia Muslims must first build an active, educated and aware populace that promotes justice and condemns anti-Shiism.

* Minority groups have the right to demand equality in their communities. However, SRW warns against the use of violence to demand rights. At its core, Shia Islam denounces violence while encouraging education and peace-building endeavors.

* SRW encourages active participation of Shia Muslims in their nations legislative process such to show active citizenship.

* Further, Shia Muslims must contact their national officials volunteering participation in dialogues and planning that directly, and indirectly effects their communities.

Ways to become directly involved in the ongoing peace-building projects can be

found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

From SRW to Leaders and Governments:

* SRW invites governments and Shia Muslim leaders to take steps towards building a better rapport and mutual respect.

* We further encourage taking advantage of nonviolence and peaceful approaches Shia Islam offers to create communities in which people from all faith, ethnicity, religion, color, and background live happy and productive lives.

* Shia Muslims and their governments must rebuild broken bridges, re-establish trust and open communication avenues.

* Attacks against Shia Muslims are dense on religious occasions such as Ramadhan and Moharram, and that in religious centers. Protection of major Shia centers on religious occasions can reduce the casualty count significantly.

* SRW invites governments to allocate resources and management to the protection of Shia Muslims ,especially in these two holy months.

* Further, SRW encourages the co-creation of security plans by both Shia Muslims and their governments. Cooperation between Shia Muslims and their policy makers instills trust in both parties and thus can lead to long-term positive social change. While state leaders are the official decision-makers in the nation, Shia Muslims are targets of a significant portion of violence.

* SRW calls for a unity of command in planning of security measures, and a unity of effort by which national officials and Shia Muslims constituents both carry out measures to reduce violence.

* This NGO also invites governments to establish relationships with their Shia Muslim communities through their leaders and Marja'. Marja means "source to imitate/follow" or "religious reference," is a title given to the highest level Shia leaders. Maraji' (plural of marja) are influential resources within the Shia communities, thus they can be a great source of encouragement for human rights involvement.

* We invite governments to free political prisoners and treat detainees with fairness as a sign of their intention to rebuild healthy relationships with their Shia Muslim constituents.

Respect to rights enhances life for all: Shia Rights Watch wishes for 2018 to be a peaceful year for all humankind.

John F. Kennedy

“The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened.”

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in January, 2018

Shia Rights watch continues its research and advocacy for the 7th consecutive year. The year 2018 began with the release of the SRW Annual Report, highlighting minority rights violations and the persecution of Shia Muslims. The 18-page report analyzed the state of the Shia Minority in relation to international events and presented a set of recommendations to reduce human rights violations as well as increase dialogue among conflicting parties.

In January, 667 cases of anti-Shiism were reported. Incidents of anti-Shiism were reported in Bahrain, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia. The majority of Shia deaths occurred in Iraq, while arrests and sentencing were predominant in Bahrain. Incidents of Anti-Shiism were mainly single incidents with high numbers of casualty.

Bahrain

In a single day, Bahrain stood witness to the arrest of 49 people; 290 others had charges filed against them. Two days later, on the 23rd of January, 18 others were arrested in peaceful protests against unlawful detainment of Shia Muslims in the towns of A'ali, Barbar, Maqabah, Samaheej, and Al Daih. The 31st of January marked the largest single event of anti-Shiism as 58 were sentenced; 19 were given life sentences, and the 37 others were handed a total of 400 years in prison.



Figure 3. is a display of non-arrest acts of violence against Shia Muslims in Bahrain.

Throughout the month, Bahrain was home to 106 arrests. Those arrested report incidents of torture and malpractice. In mid-January, 171 detainees were called to court- 141 of which were released on 200BD bail. The 24 remaining detainees were scheduled for a hearing in February. Sources report those who were released were initially held on charges of “illegal congregation” while those still in holding had charges of “attacking security men,” “damaging public property.” Sources furthered that those charges are only allegations and that officers have tried time and time again to obtain confession via coercion of torture.

The alleged charges used to detain Shia Muslims in Bahrain point to a systematic targeting of the group. Shia Islam by nature is a religion with the prominence of rituals that are done in masses. Charges such as “illegal congregation” are displays that any congregation can be deemed illegal given the government’s

orders.

Bahrain displays trends of increased prosecution of religious clerics in the region. In 2017, over 300 incidents of anti-Shiism against clerics alone were reported- 90 of which were arrests. Targeting of clerics continued into 2018 with the arrest of numerous prominent clerics active in Bahrain.

Overall, there have been 493 cases of anti-Shiism in Bahrain- 120 of which are arrests and 69 are sentencing. Other forms of anti-Shiism include raids, deportation, denial of medical care, revocation of citizenship and police brutality. Attacks have been reported in the towns of Diraz, Sanabis, Sitra, Dumistan, Karzakan, Abu Saiba, Buri, A'ali, and Shakhura.

Iraq

As a result of direct anti-Shiism, 48 have lost their lives, and 109 others have been wounded. Baghdad remains one of the most unsafe areas of Iraq. Sources report approximately 70% of Baghdad is of the Shia faith, and in January, Shia populated areas of Baghdad saw an average, the death of 5 people as a result of anti-Shiism. The single most significant attack in Baghdad was a series of suicide bombings in Tayyaran Square where 38 civilians were killed. Attacks in Baghdad are primarily centered in Shia populated commercial areas such as shopping centers and markets.



Detailed reports of Anti-Shiism in other cities of Iraq are limited due to the lack of technological development of said areas. Information in regards to the reduced overall anti-Shiism across Iraq, in consistency with reporting from the United Nations, can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

Nigeria

Following the arrest of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky in Kunduna State, Nigeria, protests have erupted all over the world. Zakzaky was arrested along with his wife, Hajia Zainab Zakzaky, in 2015 as part of the national government's efforts to thwart the rise of Shia power in the nation. From the United Kingdom to Turkey, Shia Muslims congregate in protest of prosecution of Shia Muslims in Nigeria.

Zakzaky's daughter reports her parents have deteriorating health. Until early-January, the Zakzaky couple were denied medical care and media correspondence. On the 13th of January, Sheikh Zakzaky was allowed to speak to the press after two years. In his talk, he confirmed that he was allowed to see a medical doctor and that his ailments were being treated. SRW believes Zakzaky was permitted contact with the media after unrest in the nation in response to his maltreatment while detained.

After the couple's arrest, a panel of investigators set by Nasir el-Rufei, the state governor, concluded that Zakzaky had been arrested on illegal grounds. Later, the Abuja division of Federal High Courts ordered the release of the Zakzaky's, awarding them 50 million NGN and temporary accommodations as reparations for crimes against them by the state. However, despite the judge's order, the couple remain in detainment.

In January 2018, Femi Falana, the couples lawyer, filed a Contempt of Court proceeding against the Director General of State Security Service, the Nigerian Police Force and Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) for failing to obey the judgement of Justice Kolawole of the Federal High Court Abuja with regards to the continued detention of Sheikh Zakzaky.

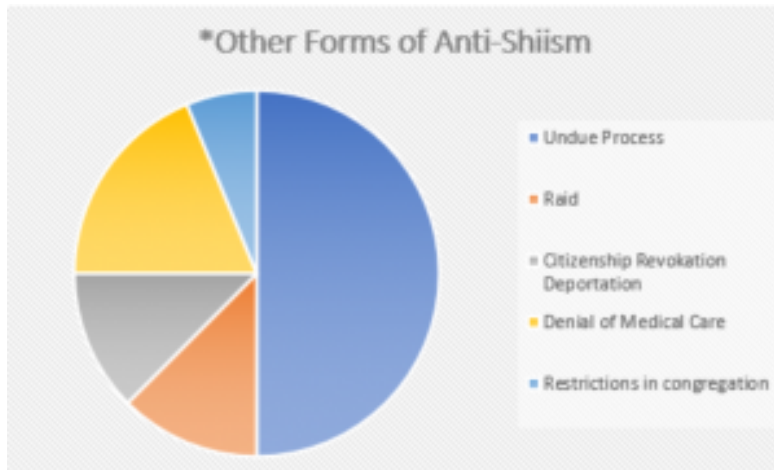


Figure 2. breaks down forms of anti-Shiism in addition to the killing, wounding and arresting of this population.

Pakistan

Anti-Shiism by extremist organizations continue in Pakistan. In Dera Ismail Khan, Sepah-e-Sahaba agents shot Syed Hassan Ali. Ali's uncle was killed by the same group.

Late in the month, a van carrying Shia Muslims from the Afghan border was targeted by an IED. Eight people were killed, three of which were women and one of which was a seven-year-old boy.

Shia Muslims in Pakistan unite in protest of the lack of prosecution of anti-Shia agents in the nation. All over Pakistan, Shia Muslims have organized protests, marking their intolerance towards extremism against religious and ethnic minorities.

As a result of increased protests, Shia Muslims were included in the Apex Court of Pakistan as minority groups targeted by terrorists in the area. This recognition is considered a milestone in the struggles for rights as Pakistan has displayed systemic discrimination against Shia Muslims in the past. SRW hopes that this identification can be a step towards increased security for this group.

Additionally, January stood witness to the appointment of Agha Syed Mohammad Raza as the nation's first Shia legislator to be appointed as minister in

Balochistan, Pakistan.

Saudi Arabia

Despite what seems to be a reduction of violence in the town of Awamiyah in comparison to mid-2017, Shia in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia is still subject to brutality. Passer-by vehicles going to and from Awamiya are at risk of being shot or subject to questioning. One such incident was the case of Abdullah al-Qallaf who was shot driving his car in the town. Al-Qallaf has no history of dissent or political involvement. Sources report al-Qallaf may have been a victim of a mis-target on the part of troops who were targeting political activists.

The main Saudi narrative is that the government is at qualms with the political dissent in the nation- regardless of religion or ethnicity. However, the prominence of non-politically active victims points to the targeting of Shia Muslims based on a stereotype of Shia being foreign agents. Shia Rights Watch condemns any and all acts of violence, noting the degree of damage caused by mis-association of Shia Muslims, particularly in Gulf Nations.

Also new in January 2018 is the cessation of arms sales to Saudi Arabia by Germany. Once one of the largest arms dealers in the Kingdom, the German government announced it would no longer export arms to nations waging war in Yemen. Saudi Arabian involvement has created one of the most extensive modern-day war crimes- 5,200 civilians killed and 9000 others injured as direct results of Saudi weapons, not the mention the famine and disease that spreads like wildfire as a result of reduced resources in the nation.

Conclusion



Compared to January of 2017, there has been a computational 6% increase in violence has been seen against Shia Muslims. The rise in violence can be a result of quintupling of anti-Shiism in Bahrain. Despite international

efforts, Shia in Bahrain remains prosecuted for their religious beliefs. Time and time again, peaceful protests are met with violence. Further, an increase in arrest and prosecution of Shia clerics are seen in the nation.

Another significant comparison is in the case of Iraq in which a reduction of anti-Shiism can be seen. The same trend can be observed in United Nations reports. Since the beginning of 2017, a slow but steady decrease in violence against Shia Muslims can be found. SRW believes a reduction in local reports of abuse in minor cities accounts for such a trend. Attacks in Baghdad make up a significant portion of the statistical data of Anti-Shiism in Iraq.

A Brief Look at the Shia Muslims in 2017

Shia Muslims are the most significant minority group in the world. Although they make up half of the worlds Muslim population, Shia Muslims remain targets of human rights violations. Cases of Anti-Shiism are widespread and extensive. Over the past year, Shia Rights Watch declared 6,388 incidents in which Shia Muslims have been killed, injured, arrested, or harassed solely by their religious association. The number above is only in a handful of nations in which Shia Muslims make up a significant portion of the population and feel courageous enough to broadcast their human rights violations. Such countries are inclusive, but not limited to Pakistan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Malaysia. Anti-Shiism in each country is unique. In countries such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, the

government limits its Shia constituents while in countries such as Iraq, terror organizations independently target Shia Muslims. In Asian countries such as Malaysia and Pakistan, terror organizations are the primary source of direct violence. However, the lack of protection for Shia Muslims and the prosecution of anti-Shia agents has created a void by which extremist organizations can further their anti-Shia actions.

In both nations in which terror organizations are active, and in those by which the government limits its Shia Muslim constituents, security is a significant issue. Frequently, Shia Muslim entities report a lack of security for their communities. In March of 2017, 3,000 Shia Muslims protested the lack of government protection. Men, women, and children sat at the Taftan border for a week, demanding security for the 25 buses carrying Shia pilgrims traveling back from Iran. The protests came after some attacks targeting buses moving Shia Muslims killed tens of civilians. The travelers stated they feel “unsafe” in their nation.

In a separate incident, Shia mourners reported a lack of security after complying with the state organized schedule of ritual processions in Moharram. Government leaders had allocated specific areas for Moharram mourning rituals, claiming aims of city organization. Later in the month, numerous groups reported harassment and violations by anti-Shia groups. Due to a lacking in communication lines, Shia Muslims state they could not contact and warn their fellow mourners at other locations. Local sources reported that they felt “vulnerable and susceptible” because the new organization of mourning processions did not take into account the anti-Shia sentiment in neighboring areas. Further, locals report a lack of trust towards the local officials as the rate of arrest and prosecution of anti-Shia agents are extremely low.

The trend of perceived lack of justice and mistrust is not unique to Pakistan. In Gulf nations such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, Shia Muslims also feel that they are treated as “others” in their home nations. Many feel they are denied due process granted to their non-Shia counterparts. For example, in late 2016, the Bahraini government ratified a law that would allow for civilians to be tried in military court- thus far, those who have been tried in military court have been of the Shia faith. In Saudi Arabia, students and workers report they are denied access to the same education and work opportunities that their non-Shia counterparts have. Numerous humanitarian reports note the stark developmental differences between Shia populated areas such as Awamiyah, in comparison to

non-Shia populated areas, despite the fact that the Eastern Province is the oil-rich region of the Kingdom.

A history of perceived lack of justice has created mistrust among Shia Muslims and their nations. Having been left alone to defend their populations, some Shia Muslims feel as though they are not regarded as members of their geopolitical community.

Perceptions of violence and anti-Shia sentiment is, by the fact, independent from the universal yearning for peace and safety. The frequency of violence in the Middle East affects everyone. The regularity of violence reduces tourism, and the instability diminishes foreign investments in the region. Thus, peace is benefits all walks of life.

Peace in the Middle-East

To create stability in the Middle East, security measures to protect Shia Muslims must be put into place. To do so, both the Shia populace and government officials (local and national) must work in unison. First, the unity of command must be created by these two groups.

Trust is a cornerstone of any social construct. For people to act, they must first trust that said action is to their benefit, at least it won't endanger them. Security measures are no different. Everyone wants ultimate stability. It's just a matter of how the balance will be achieved. Fact is, balance cannot be made by enforcement of the government alone. Take Bahrain as an example. By allowing civilians to be tried in military court, the Bahraini government aimed to reduce insurgency involvement. Saudi Arabia also sought to minimize anti-government action by using military action against the residence of Awamiyah. As seen by the increased humanitarian outrage on both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, the government's efforts did everything except stabilize the Gulf region. In these two nations, the government failed to take into account citizens of the country. Their concerns were completely undermined. The anti-Shia sentiment of government action in turn fuels anti-government protest creating a cycle of violence. The current level of violence in the Gulf region is destructive to all facets of society. Not only has the number of international business ventures in Bahrain decreased, but numerous studies have also shown a reduction in the nations education rate when compared to non-conflicting Gulf nations.

Upon investigation, it becomes clear that upholding national identity is a prominent goal of their actions. Thus, patriotism should be a cornerstone in joining government officials and protestors together. A developmental plan to redefine means of improving the global standing of Bahrain can be used to drive a unified command to build stability in the nation. With the unity of leadership is a unity of enforcement, by which, both parties can carry out legislative changes in their circles of influence.

Suggestions:

A transparent map of co-evolution of parties at power (national and grassroots) through space and time are needed to ensure trust, confidence, and activity between the parties and onlookers. While coevolution of power is not always tangible, the dynamic nature of power can be traced, at the very least in comparison to the point of departure. The mapping must define party participants, their values, objectives, and their roles.

Within the dialogue process, validation must be made for the others perceived hardships. Keep in mind; conflict is defined by perceived divergence of needs or goals, not necessarily an “actual” divergence of interests. Validation is a form of power, and when communicated diligently it can be in the hands of the giver. By recognizing hardships each is enduring, the struggle to “prove an upper hand” diminishes and parties can move on to building a resolution.

To reduce damages of anti-Shiism, parties must focus on the overarching damages created as a result of violence. Recognizing that pro-Shia and anti-Shia agents both act with a perceived goal of advancing the state, national economics and wellbeing must be a cornerstone of pro-peace plans.

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in

November, 2017

November Monthly Analysis

The month of November stood witness to the continued restriction of religious expression for Shia Muslims. Anti-Shiism spanned the East and West as Shia Muslims faced attacks for their livelihood.

Shia in Bahrain and Iraq faced the most number of Anti-Shia violations. Algeria is a newly added country with Shia rights violations concerns.

As we analyze the human rights violations toward Shia population, SRW is deeply concerned over reduced media coverage of this community. Inadequate coverage, in addition to fear and insecurity of Shia activists, has resulted in lack of data on Shia rights violations.

Bahrain

Human rights status of the Shia in Bahrain has not improved. Arrests, pressures, torture, and raids continue in this country as majority Shia struggle for freedom of expression, religion, and assembly.

The Shia population in Diraz remain limited in their religious expression as the al-Sadiq Mosque remains under seizure by army forces. In late November, the ban on Friday prayers and congregation in the mosque enters its 72nd week.

Peaceful protest has been met with extreme violence. Forces used tear gas and pellets to disperse protesters, causing irreparable injury and harm. In the western village of Dumistan, security forces flooded the streets with tear gas as residents rallied in a show of support for Bahrain's highest religious authority, Sheikh Isa Qassim.

Also, Bahraini security forces reportedly raided the headquarters of the Islamic Awareness Society in the country's northwestern village of Diraz.

Raids were also reported in Sitra, Bani Jamra, Eker, Sehla, Buri Mahaza, and Damistan.

Across Bahrain, religious leaders and prominent members of the community are arrested and detained, many times without due cause. Activist Majeed Abdulla Hasan and Hadi Sayed Alawi were detained after raiding to their his houses. Two clerics, Al-Shaala and Sheikh Hani Al-Bazaz, are sentenced to 6-month jail for their pro-democracy activities. Cleric Mohiuddin al-Mishal was sentenced to one year in prison.

Those arrested, such as Maher Al-Khabaz, have reported extreme torture inside the prison.

Activists are also concerned over the health status of Sheikh Isa Qassim. He has been under home arrest and threatened with deportation after the revocation of his Bahraini citizenship.

Some activists such as Zainab al-Khamees was prevented from traveling to the Iraqi city of Karbala to take part in the annual Arba'een pilgrimage.

Pakistan

Targeted killings and violations toward Pakistani Shia have always contributed to creating an insecure environment for this population. In November targeted killing claimed the life of Aqeel Hussain Naumi and Samar Abbas as they were shot and killed in Dera Ismail Khan by unknown men. In another incident, shooters opened fire on Muhammad Elias, a Shia officer, his wife, and minor child in their car. An attack on a Shia mosque in Islamabad killed Haidar Shah and Ain Zaidi and wounded four others.

Pakistani Shia also has a limited right to movement. Pakistani pilgrims traveling to Iraq have reportedly been questioned and searched in discriminatory manners. A protest was organized as a response to such actions of the border guards.

India

Indian Shia has faced discrimination in their country. A Shia cleric, Seyed Hasan, was prevented from traveling due to Indian government's refusal to renew his passport. It is believed such action was to limit his movement as a Shia cleric.

Nigeria

Nigeria is home to one of the fastest growing Shia communities in Africa and

therefore growing Shia rights violations have been reported from that area. Governmental forces have repeatedly raid Shia gatherings during Muharram.

A leader of the Shia Muslim identified as Sunusi Abdulkadir and an unidentified female member of the community, have been killed by mobile policemen in Kano state during Arbaeen rituals.

Lastly, there is no update on the status of Sheik Ibraheem Zakzaky and his wife, Hajia Zinah Zakzaky. The couple were arrested on December 14, 2015. Although the local judge ordered their release, they are still under arrest.

Algeria

More than 400 Shia Algerian pilgrims were investigated at the airport during two weeks window as they returned from Iraq to their country. Pilgrims reported harsh investigations, long waits, discriminatory treatment by the airport security forces. Shia returning from Iraq visit stated their Shia specific books, prayer materials, and even attire were seized by the troops and had not be returned to them yet.

Such behavior has not been reported in Algeria in the past and is concerning the human right NGOs.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi security forces arrested two young Shia in the town of Tarot in Qatif. The detainees Mohammed Saeed Salman al-Abdalal and Mustafa Ali Saleh al-Sabiti were shot while attempting to escape arrest.

A Saudi court sentenced the activist Naima Al-Matarud to six years in prison and a ban on traveling for the same period on charges related to her role in the movement of contractors in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, which began in 2011.

The Saudi authorities have arrested and accused activists of assisting, providing medicines and medical equipment for the treatment of people injured in peaceful marches in Qatif.

Syria

Although lack of security has limited media's access to affected areas, the targeting of Shia majority areas of Syria continues. At least one civilian was killed and another ten were wounded when rebels attacked the Shia towns of Al-Zahra'a and Nubl in the northwestern countryside of Aleppo.

Egypt

Security authorities detained eight men and four women of Saudi Shia pilgrims and banned their entry to the Egypt. Pilgrims reported being humiliated, insulted and prevented from eating and drinking throughout the detention that lasted for hours.

Iraq

A number of roadside bombs claimed lives of Iraqi Shia in different areas of Iraq: in addition to Tuzkurmatu, Saba al-Bur, Latifiya, Radwaniyah, Doura, Zoba, Diyala, Suweib Yusufiya are the most affected areas of Baghdad.

At least 12 roadside explosions were reported in November killing 34 and wounding 91 people.

Iraqi forces foiled two suicide bombings in the Radwaniyah, one in Alwa Al-Rashid and one near Essaouira bridge.

Conclusion

Shia Muslims continue to live in fear as they are ostracized in their home nations, and arrests of Shia activists and scholars proceed in the Gulf states and the surrounding countries.

Activists and humanitarians who are standing up to the injustice are facing the backlash from governments and other principal actors.

SRW believes the sudden decline in Shia news and violation coverage is another systematic discrimination and must be addressed.

Shia Rights Watch calls for governments across the region to increase protections for Shia and other religious minorities and to reverse and stop all ill-treatment of these populations.

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in October, 2017

The month of October stood witness to the continued restriction of religious expression for Shia Muslims. Anti-Shiism spanned the East and West as Shia Muslims faced attacks to their livelihood.

This month, incidents of anti-Shiism reached 278. The majority of attacks occurred in the Gulf region, specifically in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Over 44% of attacks were in the form of arrests.

Although 27% has reduced death count. This reduction is due to decreased reporting in Iraq and a shift in violence measures in Bahrain. Although deaths counts have been cut, it must be noted that discrimination of Shia Muslims continues all over the world. Shia Muslims are limited in expression and congregation.

Bahrain

Arrests continue in Bahrain as human rights defenders stay active in the struggle for freedom of expression.

The Shia population in Diraz remain limited in their religious expression as the al-Sadiq Mosque remains under seizure by army forces. In late October, the ban on Friday prayers and congregation in the mosque enters its 67th week. Peaceful protest has been met with extreme violence. Forces used tear gas and pellets to disperse protesters, causing irreparable injury and harm.

Across Bahrain, religious leaders and prominent members of the community are arrested and detained, many times without due cause. Those detained include Sayed Ali al-Mosawi, Ali Abdullah Jomaa, Jassem Abdul Jalil Hassan, Ali Hussain Abdullah, Hussein Ali, Mahmoud Zoheir, Ali Mohammad Jaafar al Motghawi and Mahdi Fattah Mahfouz.

The month of October stood witness to an all-time high in the arrest of minors.

Issam Hadi Jassim, 15, was detained in the village of Karrana in the early morning, Although his whereabouts are unknown, sources report he was taken to the criminal investigation building. Six other people were detained with Jassim.

Those arrested face maltreatment on a record extend. Sources report physical, sexual and mental abuse as a result of torture. The deteriorating conditions of the detainment centers led to an outbreak of one of the most significant hunger strikes in modern history. SRW activists report fast failing health of hunger strikers.

Afghanistan

Despite promises to increase security in Shia populated areas of Afghanistan, recent Taliban attacks display a need for the development of substantial security measures. In mid-October, the Valley of Mirza Olang was seized by Taliban forces as Afghan forces withdrew their troops from the region. Mirza Olang was home to attacks in August, which lead to the death of over 50 villagers. It must be noted that Shia populated areas of Afghanistan, including Mirza Olang, are areas that have been, and continue to be, tactically used against foreign intrusion. Further, these are areas are home to abundant natural resources.

Pakistan

Terror organizations target Shia dominant areas of Pakistan. In mid- October, suicide bombs and shooters killed over 25 civilians and injured 37 others. The attacks occurred in the Jhal magsi district of Baluchistan and aimed at Hazara populated areas of the country.

Despite the prevalence of attacks on the Hazara community, little has been done to protect this population. Despite increased international pressures, Pakistan has yet to implement adequate security plans against terrorism in this nation. In addition to the failure of prevention, Pakistan has failed to carry out prosecution of hate-promoting agents.

Malaysia

Raids in the Ulu Titram area of Malaysia has led to the arrest of 21 people. Shia teachings, books, a Moharram banner and Karbala stone, were seized; “they were arrested for an offense under Section 9 of the Syariah Criminal Offences

Enactment 1997 and could face a fine of not more than RM3,000, or imprisonment for up to two years.”

In recent years, anti-Shiism has propagated all over Malaysia. Anti-Shia agents in the government take to target Shia homes and limit their expression and congregation. Items seized in the raid are not political but purely forms of religious expression.

Nigeria

Nigerian police have disrupted Muharram ceremonies in the northern city of Sokoto, arresting at least six of the participants.

Nigeria is home to one of the fastest growing Shia communities in Africa. In early 2016, clashes with the Nigerian army led to the killing of over 300 Shia Muslims. Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky was arrested in the clashes. His whereabouts remain unknown.

Shia in Nigeria continues to be prosecuted for their beliefs. Their religious expression is limited and prosecuted. More information about Shia in Nigeria can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org

UK

Outside the Idaara Maarif - e- Islam Mosque Syed Hassan Abbas Bokhari al-Naqvi was stabbed and left for dead. Al-Naqvi, a minor, was left in critical condition and was found by his father who had gone to park the family car. The Birmingham Mail reports, ““It happened on the pavement. By the time the dad parked his car his son was on the floor. There was a young man who was brutally beating the boy with a knife. There was blood everywhere; he was hitting the boy’s neck and head. Then the attacker ran off and got into a car.” Al-Naqvi’s was one of the numerous attacks in the UK.

Syria

Targeting of Shia majority areas of Syria continues. Early this month, two rocket shells were fired in the residential neighborhoods of al-Zahraa. The attack resulted in the material damage of homes and buildings. While no casualties have been reported, the attacks severely reduced public service resources.

Iraq

As the event of Arbaeen approaches, SRW invites increased security measures. Arbaeen has been noted as the second largest peaceful congregation in recent history. In continued commemoration of Hussain, Mohammed's grandson, Shia Muslims gather in unison. During this ritual, Shia Muslims from all over the world walk on foot towards the city of Karbala, many of them traveling distances as long as Gulf countries.

Sources report a halt in all transportation inside the main city bounds of Karbala with the aims of regulating human traffic. On average, over 10 - 20 million pilgrims travel to Karbala for Arbaeen. In addition to limiting vehicle in the city, SRW proposes increased security checkpoint and implementation of a well planned pedestrian guidance. Further SRW warns pilgrims to be on the lookout for strange behavior and suggests communication methods found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia continues to limit known human rights activists in travel and speech. In mid-October, 22 arrested were over social media postings; another 24 were detained in the ha-il district for "exploiting social networking sites to promote lies and exaggerations" with the goal of provoking "sedition and tribal tensions." A Qatari citizen was among arrested. Saudi Arabia refuses to acknowledge the ongoing violence and targeting of Shia Muslims by government forces. Demands for rights are seen as means of "tribal tension."

India

On the 10th day of Moharram, authorities arrested six people. Officers attacked a congregation of mourners with batons, injuring them. The attacks were a means of restricting mourning processions.

Conclusion

Limitations of Shia expression continue all over the world. It must be noted that Shia rights violations are not limited to those presented in this paper. In fear or persecution or social isolation, Shia Muslims do not report incidents of anti-Shiism. More information on Shia Muslims can be found at ShiaRightsWatch.org.

Incidents of Anti-Shiism in September , 2017

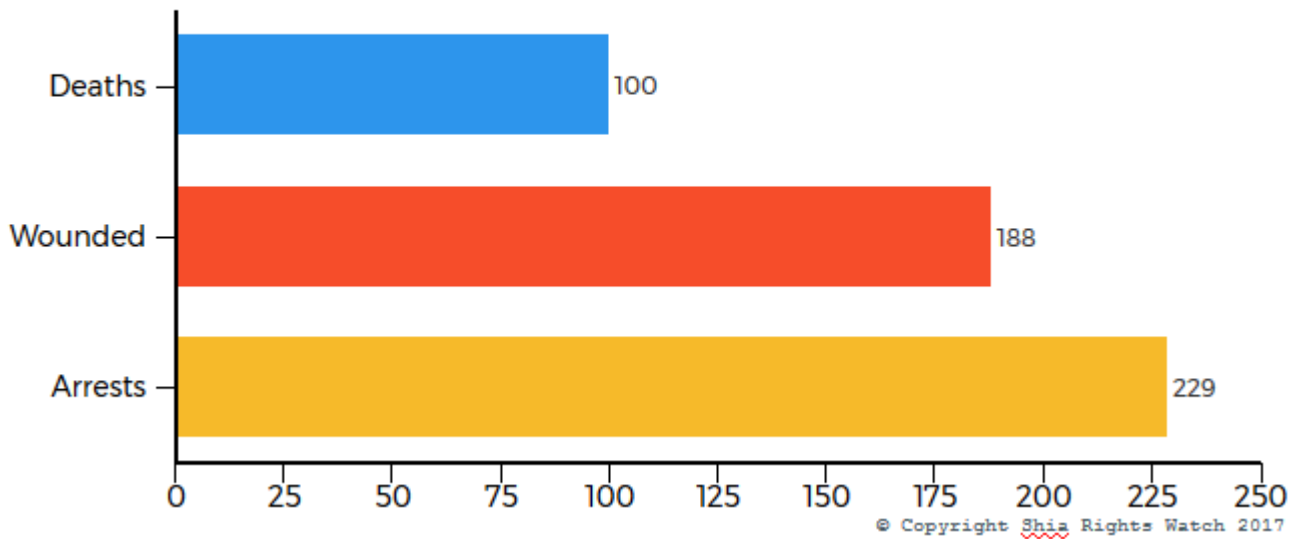
September Monthly Analysis

Shia Muslims all over the world began their commemoration of the holy month of Muharram late September. Shia religious expression is augmented in the beginning in early Moharram thus making them susceptible to targeting by anti-Shia groups. SRW Muharram safety advisory and more information on Shia and Moharram can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org.

In Gulf nations such that of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain a fresh wave of arrests and travel bans have been issued. This recent increase in crackdowns correlates with the 2017 United Nations Human Rights Council meeting. The analyst believes restrictions are in an attempt to limit reports of anti-Shiism in the meeting.

Overall, 517 cases of anti-Shiism have been seen in the month of September-100 deaths, 188 injuries, and 229 arrests. Trends of anti-Shiism are nation-specific. Gulf-nations, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain have had Shia arrests, detainments and travel bans. Iraq and Afghanistan are home to the targeting of Shia dominated routes of travels as well as well-known religious sites.

Cases of Anti-Shiism



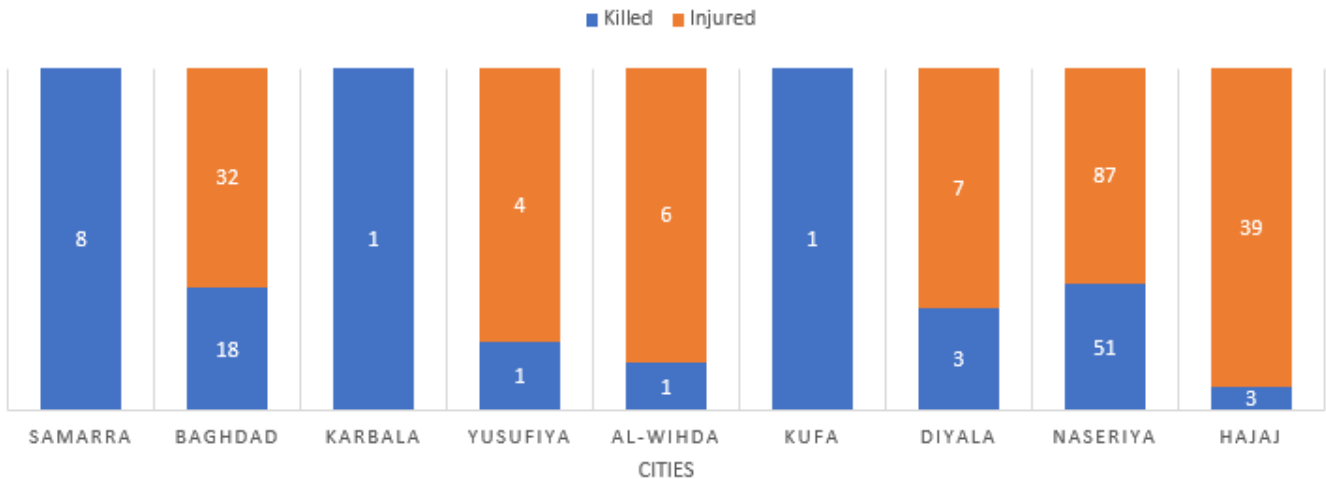
Iraq

Trends in anti-Shiism have been perpetrated by ISIS extremists. However, in addition to targeting Shia populated areas, incidents in September display a shift in targets. Twin blasts in Hajaj, Salahedin province, targeted a restaurant frequented by Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a prominently Shia anti-ISIS group. A third assailant was shot before the detonation of his suicide belt.

Recent attacks target Popular Mobilization force members and their families. Even when not on duty, members of the PMF are followed and killed. While ISIS killings have been, and continue to be bombs that target a large mass, there exists a recent shift towards individual assassinations by firearm.

Shia Rights Watch requests a report on new security measures taken up to meet new shifts in violence.

IRAQ: CASES OF ANTI-SHIISM



Bahrain

The prevalence of restrictions on religious expression and congregation in Bahrain sets this report apart from previous reports. Beginning early September, Bahraini officials called upon religious scholars and centers ordering limitations in visibility and restriction of religious expression to inside religious centers. The ministry of interior furthered that failure to meet the new guidelines will result in detention and torture. Days following the threats, security forces raided numerous Shia villages, namely Shahrakan, Jid Ali, Malkiya, Ekr, Abu Saiba, Shakhura, Sitr, and Karzakan, removing visible banners, posters, and flags that mark the commemoration of Muharram. Also, any and all civil services such that of food and drink donations have been placed under scrutiny. Shia Rights Watch sources report forces ripping down Muharram symbols (flags and banners) in different towns, even arresting people who displayed the symbols. Some of those arrested were released after forced agreements to stop displaying Moharram symbols.

In the town of Diraz, in addition to tearing down commemoration signs, forces stopped commemorators from attending Imam al- Sadiq mosque. It must be mentioned that Shia in Diraz remains banned from holding Friday prayers.

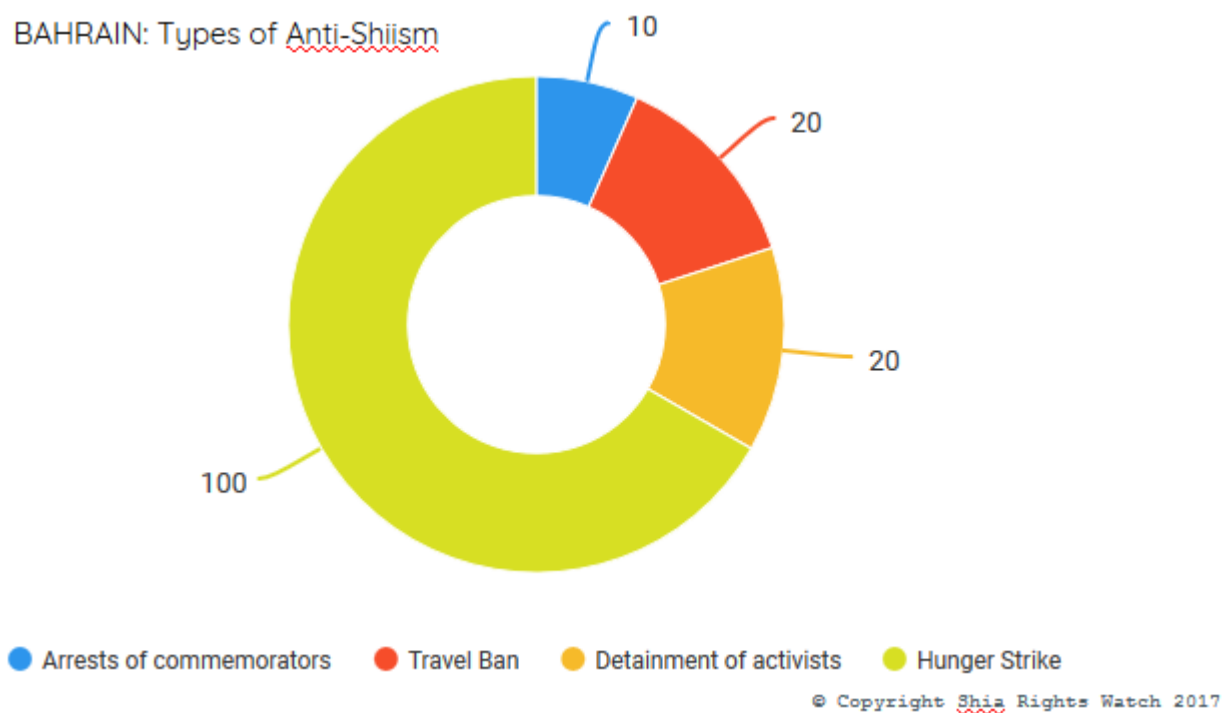
Prominent activist like (but not limited to) Farida Ghulam, Jalila al-Salman, Mohammad Issa Al-Tajer, Fatimah al-Halwaji and Hussain Radhi has been placed on travel limitations and summoned for questioning by the Bahraini public

prosecutor. In addition to activists themselves, a family of activists has been used as leverage against activists. On numerous account were family members of human rights activists called upon in local and national police stations.

Despite immense attempts by the Bahraini government to limit Shia presentation at the United Nations Human Rights Council held this month, human rights activists were still able to deliver oral statements, reporting discrimination and systemic targeting of the Shia majority in this nation.

Despite the prevalence of arrests and torture, morale remains high among inmates and activist. In mid-September, over 1500 detainees announced hunger-strikes in protests to the ongoing torture and ill-conditions of detainment centers and prisons in Bahrain. The current hunger strike in Bahrain is the biggest mass hunger-strike in recent history.

BAHRAIN: Types of Anti-Shiism



Saudi Arabia

September in Saudi Arabia has been especially dangerous as fresh waves of arrests have taken place. On the one hand, Shia in this nation continues to be prosecuted based on their religious expression. Government forces restrict religious practices by prohibiting congregation.

In correlation to the United Nations Human Rights Council dates, activists have been detained and imprisoned. Members of the Civil and Political Rights

Association (ACPRA), Abdulaziz al-Shubaily and Issa al-Hamid were arrested late September. Sources report their arrest linked to convictions as recently as early 2016, suggesting the recent arrests as a means of restricting the activists from engaging with activists presenting in the United Nations Human Rights Council in aims to shed light on anti-Shiism in the kingdom.

A 62-page report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) sheds light on the propagation of hate-crime of Saudi clerics. The report notes the labeling of Shia as “rejectionists” and “brothers of Satan,” as well as denouncing of systemic discrimination of this population. Lastly, HRW traces hate-crime by terror organization such that of al-Qaeda to the kingdoms propagation of hate.

Pakistan

Sources report negligence on the part of regional governments to meet a need for the seasonal increase in activity. Shia Muslims feel their operations have been “impeded” by lack of procedural security measures and basic access to electricity and local management.

Cases of prosecution due to allegedly “blasphemous” social media posts continue in this nation. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom reports that 40 people are on life-sentences, some on death row, on charges of “blasphemy.” Trends of increased religious and ethnic minorities charged on the grounds of this law show that this law is used as a means of limiting expression and speech in the nation.

Targeting of minority groups by extremist groups continues to rise. Shia Rights Watch demands a re-evaluation of Pakistan’s anti-terror efforts as they are misdirected and ineffective.

Malaysia

Government forces arrested 200 Iraqi Shia residents for attending Muharram commemoration. All arrestees are university students in Kuala Lumpur. They were released after Iraqi government pressured and criticized Malaysian authorities. Historically Shia in Malaysia has been under pressure by the government as all Shia practices, publications and educational materials are

banned in this country.

Afghanistan

An explosion in Kandahar kills six civilians on September 18. The nature of the crime points to Taliban insurgency. Another explosion killed 10 and wounded 16 on September 29th as Shia prepared for Ashura commemoration in Kabul.

Shia in Afghanistan continue to be treated as second-class citizens as prosecution for anti-Shia groups are yet to take place. Shia frequently reports a systemic discrimination in hate-crime cases.

Shia Rights Watch demands a report on Afghan government's efforts to reduce anti-Shiism and targeting of religious minorities as they remain ineffective.

India

Shia in India report feeling limited as government resources promised to them has been delayed. SRW sources report feelings of anger as people feel cheated for state services, particularly as they have kept will meet all government requirements and have respected local laws.

Moharram processions are a multicultural and multi-religious activities in India.

Egypt

The Religious Endowment Ministry closed the tomb of Imam Hussein on Saturday, to prevent any Shia Muharram commemorations. This center has been subject to closure before by the authorities in the past. Information on Shia in Egypt and the nation's history of anti-Shiism can be found on ShiaRightsWatch.org

Conclusion

The month of September stood witness to at least 517 cases of anti-Shiism. Shia Muslims continue to live in fear as they are ostracized in their home nations, and arrests of Shia activists and scholars proceed in the Gulf states and the surrounding countries.

Violations are expected to increase in October and November as Shia Muslims participate in Muharram commemorations. Activists and humanitarians who are

standing up to the injustice are facing the backlash from governments and other principal actors. Shia Rights Watch calls for governments across the region to increase protections for Shia and other religious minorities and to reverse and stop all ill-treatment of these populations.

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 11th.
- 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 8th 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