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SRW Shia Rights Watch
Defending Justice and Rights

SAUDI SHIA MUSLIM VICTIMS OF SECTARIAN ISOLATIONISM

Part 2 *2013*

Shia in Saudi Arabia: Target of Inhumane Treatment

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Chapter 1

Background

In This Chapter:

1.1 Saudi Arabia Background

1.2 Background of Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia



1.1 Saudi Arabia Background

Saudi Arabia, located in the Middle East, borders the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, Yemen, Oman, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. It is largest state in Western Asia by land area, the second largest in the Arab world, after Algeria.

As one of the most powerful monarchies in the world, the kingdom is an absolute monarchy. Founded by Abdul-Aziz bin Saud, the country is under a continuing rule by one of Saud's male descendants, as required by the country's 1992 Basic Law, after a 30-year campaign to unify most of the Arabian Peninsula. The current ruler, King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz, ascended to the throne in 2005. Its majority and official religion of Saudi Arabia is Islam. Saudi Arabia is the birthplace of Islam and home to Islam's two holiest shrines in Mecca and Medina.

The population of the country is approximately 28.5 million, including 5.8 million foreigners. It the world's second largest oil reserves and is the world's second largest oil exporter. The country remains a leading producer of oil and natural gas and holds about 17% of the world's proven oil reserves. Saudi Arabia has an oil-based economy with strong government controls over major economic activities ¹.

Saudi Arabian Shia Muslims share Saudi Arabian citizen's ethnic Arab background and Arabic language, but they have separate and distinct religious beliefs from the majority, Wahhabi Muslims. Shia Muslims are the largest minority group in Saudi Arabia, ranging between 15 and 20 percent of the total population. ¹ Saudi Arabian Shia Muslims belongs to the sect of the Twelvers, the same sect to which the Shia Muslims of Iran, Iraq and Bahrain, Azerbaijan and Lebanon belong to.

1.2 Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia

Islamic practice in Saudi Arabia is generally limited to those that reflect the government's interpretation of Islam, known as Wahhabi. This school of thought was originally interpreted by Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab, an 18th century Arab religious leader. From a theological perspective, relations between the Shia Muslims and the Wahhabi Sunni Muslims are inherently strained from the long history of the Wahhabis considering the rituals of the Shia Muslims to be the epitome of shirk (polytheism; literally "association"). ² Shia Muslims have maintained a strong presence, religiously, in Saudi Arabia, despite rulers and the majority being Sunni Muslims. Clerics and followers have kept alive important religious institutions, such as mosques, Shia Muslim Islamic Centers and, until the advent of Saudi Arabia rule, the observation of annual rituals such as the public mourning processions in honor of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, a holiday known as Ashura. Similarly, until the mid-twentieth century, those pursuing religious learning studied in local hawzas, or centers of learning, overseen by senior clerics and funded by the local khums

(religious title).

Ties also were retained to Shia Muslim communities abroad, as students and aspiring clerics regularly travelled to Iraq to complete religious training. Underscoring the historical connection to that country, Qatif's hawza was known as little Najaf until the 1940s³.

After the 1940s, restrictions heightened, including injunctions against publicly broadcasting calls to prayer, a ban on publishing and distributing religious texts, limits on mosque construction, the destruction of shrines, the dismantling of centers of religious learning, and even persecution of those observing Shia Muslim rituals, including Ashura and grave visitation. The net effect, beginning with the founding of modern Saudi Arabia and accelerating with the building of the state, was to seriously weaken Shia Muslims institutions.

The second large Shia Muslim group in Saudi Arabia is the Ismailis. Saudi Arabia's Ismailis are a group estimated to be larger than one million, mostly living in the southwestern Najran province, a remote area which was the House of Saud's last territorial conquest in 1934. Ismailis have been living in Najran for over a millennium; they were one of many strands of belief that existed in early Islam. The Ismaili community is a subset of the country's Shia Muslim minority. Discrimination against Ismailis is also a part of the pattern of discrimination against the wider Shia Muslims community⁴.

Today, the majority of the Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia live in the Eastern province of the country, where they constitute the majority of the population there. Most Shia Muslims in the Eastern province live in the urban areas, such as Al-Qatif and Hasa. However, there are Shia Muslims living in Medina, Riyadh, Najran and other cities, where they are the obvious minority in the local population.

From Saudi Arabia's establishment in 1932, its minority Shia Muslim population has been subjected to discrimination and sectarian incitement. Shia Muslims, including the Twelvers and Ismailis, remain unrepresented in official positions, jobs in the police and military are rare, and promotion prospects and obstacles are still in place towards the free and open observance of their faith. This type of discrimination is classified under Anti-Shi'ism, or the discrimination of Shia Muslims because of their religion.

There are five categories that Anti-Shi'ism that can be observed:

1. Freedom of religion
2. Right to education
3. Employment discrimination
4. Health violations and oil production
5. Lack of economic freedom

Chapter 2

Anti-Shi'ism in Saudi Arabia

In This Chapter:

- 2.1 Freedom of Religion.
- 2.2 Right to Education
- 2.3 Employment Discrimination
- 2.4 Lack of Economic Freedom
- 2.5 Health Violations and Oil Production

Anti-Shi'ism in Saudi Arabia

The term "Anti-Shi'ism" means prejudice against or hatred of Shia Muslims.

The term was first introduced by Shia Rights Watch in 2011. The act of Anti-Shi'ism, however, has a long history⁵ and different forms in Saudi Arabia.

Following chapters are some examples of ongoing Anti-Shi'ism in Saudi Arabia

2.1 Freedom of Religion

The Saudi government has destroyed many Shia mosques, detained Shia Muslims during their private ritual practices and closed private schools. Cleansing history of Shia Muslims are the most recent violation that the government is committing.

As reported in the 2012 report done by Shia Rights Watch, “Saudi Shia Muslim, Victims of Sectarian Isolation,” the demolition of the al-Baqi’s shrine, by King Ibn Saud of



Saudi Arabia in May 1, 1925, is one of the worst examples of religious discrimination, an act that has yet to be corrected by the current government in place. The al-Baqi shrine is a cemetery in Medina located to the southeast of the Masjid al-Nabawi (Prophet of Islam’s grave). It was the grave site of many of Prophet Muhammad’s relatives, such as his wife, grandfather, and close family friends. The cemetery therefore holds much significance of historic and religious context. Among those buried in the al-Baqi shrine are four grandsons of Prophet Muhammad, who are also four Imams of the Shia Muslim tradition. The Wahhabis believed that visiting the graves and the shrines of the Prophets, the Imams, or the saints was a form of idolatry and un-Islamic. They entered Medina to desecrate al-Baqi’s shrine, as well as every mosque they came across on the way. An attempt was even made to demolish the Prophet’s tomb, but the idea was abandoned⁶.

Even after 98 years, many protests and demonstrations still take place. Many protesters gather on the anniversary of the demolition of the al- Baqi shrine. On the 8th of Shawwal, Shia Muslims come together in front of Saudi Arabian embassies in all different countries around the world to demand the Saudi Arabian government to restore the shrines that are so important to their religion⁷. Shia Muslims have sent many requests to the government for permission to rebuild Al-Baqi, yet the government ignores their request and even prohibits their visit to the site during annual hajj pilgrimage.

Beside Al-Baqi, demolition of Shia Islamic centers and mosques continue.

“Freedom in Shackles”, a report published by Adala Center states:

“On 3 April 2012, Saudi authorities demolished a mosque belonging to the Ismaili sect in the Thoqba neighborhood of Khobar city in the Eastern Province. Although, the mosque was built four decades ago, the authorities have now claimed that it lacks a building license. The demolition of the mosque is unjustifiable because Saudi authorities refuse to give permission for building any mosque for Twelver Shia or Ismailis outside Hasa, Qatif and Najran. This is with the exception of one case in which the authorities gave permission to build a Shia mosque in Dammam. However, Shias are not allowed to practice their rituals outside these areas, which forces them to buy or rent places which are then used as places of worship.”

2.2 Right to Education

Education is one of the key components of a working society. Illiteracy is at a staggering high and the Saudi Arabian government is legally obligation, under the constitution, to work towards a strong foundation in education. In the Saudi Arabian constitution, Article 30 states:

“The State shall provide public education and commit itself to the eradication of illiteracy.”

In school, Shia Muslims are obliged to learn Islamic education not according to their own sect of religion, considered heretical and profane in school textbooks. These textbooks even call upon believers to abandon Shia Muslim beliefs and practices. These policies have strengthened obstacles in the way of their effective integration in their home nation and do not stop at the highest level of public education.

Once in school, the lessons openly taught are centered on intolerance towards non-Wahhabi Muslims.

Children that go to school are given textbooks that teach and encourage the hatred and resistance of non-Wahhabi believers, even if they are a sect of the same religion. Post-September 11 issues were made to revise these school textbooks and change the context to a tolerable lesson, but research shows that the dialogue in these textbooks still teaches Anti-Shi'ism and other religious discrimination⁸.

These teachings in school make it incredibly difficult for Saudi Arabian children to understand tolerance and freedom at an age that is crucial to development. Learning terrorist behavior, intolerance, and specific hatred towards others also comes from watching Wahhabi teachers and professors display prejudice and hostility towards Shia Muslim students. These instructors use terms such as kuffar, or infidels, mushrikin, or polytheists, and rafida, another derogatory name, towards Shia Muslims students in the classrooms, giving these students no right to express their opinions or beliefs in class.

When it comes to roles in administration and teaching, Shia Muslims are hardly represented, especially in the Eastern Province, despite constituting for the overwhelming majority. Until 2012, there was not a single Shia Muslim principal in any of the region's girls' schools. Shia Muslim teachers at schools around the Eastern Province's prevalence are warned to keep their faith private, with heavy penalties for violations while Wahhabism is emphasized throughout the curriculum.

After high school, they have to leave their province for higher education, as the government has not built any in their region, and those close by are insufficient either in subjects or in student capacity⁹.

For more than fifteen (15) years, the people of Qatif have sent an upwards of thousands of letters and petitions to kings of Saudi Arabia demanding a university be established in their region. Although there are about a million citizens in the Qatif region, there has still been no response in regard to the rapid mail requesting high

education.

The recent figure for establishing universities has increased to 81 Saudi Riyals, coming to about \$21,570 billion. The officials nominating the regions in which these universities will be built are in other regions other than Qatif, even though those region's populations are much less. The people of Qatif, the Shia populated area, have to attend other region's universities, causing physical and financial difficulties for the students¹⁰. Qatif is one of the only places that does not have a local community college.

2.3 Employment Discrimination

Shia Muslims are deprived of important jobs, regardless of their qualifications. Discrimination is not limited to senior positions, but rather includes mid-level jobs. The locals are banned from occupying positions like the directors of the agricultural bank in Qatif, its central hospital, high court, bureau of education and learning in both Qatif and Safwa, the mayor of Safwa, the provincial governors of Qatif and Safwa, the director of Qatif's prison, the headmasters of all four levels in girls' schools and many other positions. They also cannot occupy mid-level positions whose influence or jurisdiction is limited to their own region¹¹. Shia Muslims make up a high majority of the top students in Saudi Arabia and an unreasonably low percentage of the work force.

The Saudi Arabian government, according to Article 28 of the constitution, is to:

“...facilitate job opportunities for every able person, and enact laws to protect the worker and the employer.”

It is also stated in the International Bill of Human Rights, under Article 23 subsection 23, that:

“Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and protection against unemployment”

The Government also restricts employment of Shia Muslims in the oil and petrochemical industries, the largest industry in Saudi Arabia and the industry that controls the Eastern Province, an area where Shia Muslims are the majority in the country. Shia Muslims are also unable to work in the police force or in the military.

In the 2012 Report, “Saudi Shia Muslim, Victims of Sectarian Isolationism” Shia Rights Watch investigator interviewed Maha, a Saudi Arabian citizen who moved to USA looking for job opportunities. Maha says she has a degree in computer science, but cannot work in her town in al-Qatif, claiming that most companies are owned by Wahhabi Muslims and they do not hire those in the Shia Muslim faith. When asked how employers would know if you are Shia Muslims or not, she answered “They recognize us by our names or our city of birth.” Despite missing her home and family, Maha needs a source of income that she does not have in Saudi Arabia.

Since the interview contrasted in 2012, the unemployment crisis in Saudi Arabia has not been resolved. More and more Shia Muslims in the country are facing hardships due to the employment discriminations, resulting in poverty and difficult living conditions.

2.4 Lack of Economic Freedom

Most Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia are living in poverty and cannot climb the economic ladder. The people are monetarily suffocated by the government because the government sees the Shia Muslims as a security prism, especially within the borders of Qatif and the rest of the Eastern Province, which is how they justify the laws and regulations on the book that keep the Shia Muslims under economic discrimination.



There are no hotels in Qatif, a Shia Muslim populated city, which makes it the only heavily population area in Saudi Arabia that does not have housing got visitors and guests. Not only does not having a hotel in the area not allow for outside citizens and guests to visit and see the violence and discrimination happening in the area, that also takes away a number of jobs that would open up for the people of the area. Also, none of the buildings in Qatif are allowed to be more than three (3) stories tall, unless the building is being used for government services where Shia Muslims are not working. This includes basements, which are also not allowed in the area. Homes, community centers, mosques, and businesses must keep under the height limit and cannot have a floor underground, another means of security, according to the Saudi Arabian government. Even if a Shia Muslim wants to build a new store or home, it is nearly impossible for Shia Muslims to get a hold of government contracts. Various obstacles must be gone through to get the contracts and permits needed, which can include long travels, expansive fees, and an extensive process and verification time. Once a Shia Muslim can get the government documentations to build, there is the struggle of actually building and maintain the building. Local resources or either limited or gone, resulting in shack-like houses and building that are barely livable. Even within the top 500 of the wealthiest people in Saudi Arabia, not a single person is a Shia Muslim. Shia Muslims are not allowed to pass a certain level of wealth within the country, making it increasingly more difficult to call for help from these Human Rights violations¹².

2.5 Health Violations and Oil Production Freedom to Education

The Qatif Producing Plants Program, based in Qatif, a city whose population is composed of primarily Shia Muslims, was completed in October 2004. The plant's was built to produce, process, and transport 500,000 bpd (barrels per day) of blended Arabian Light crude oil from the Qatif field and 300,000 bpd of Arabian Medium crude oil from the offshore Abu Sa'fah field, plus 370 million standard cubic feet per day of associated gas¹³. This means that the oil-rich city of Qatif alone produces more than 800,000 barrels a day of light crude oil¹⁴.

The building of the plant included three new gas-oil separation plants (GOSPs), five new and 10 upgraded offshore platforms, expansion of the Berri Gas Plant, 34 drilling islands, more than 1,000 kilometers of pipelines and other support facilities¹⁵.

Oil and natural gas production facilities emit pollutants such as hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) and volatile organic compounds (VOC). These different pollutants can contribute to health problems that may affect facility employees and the community surrounding the plant. Oil and natural gas production emits three terribly hazardous chemicals: benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, and xylenes (BTEX).

1. Benzene: exposure to benzene may cause irritation of the skin, eyes, and upper respiratory tract as well as blisters on the skin. Exposure over a long period of time may cause blood disorders, reproductive and developmental disorders, and cancer.
2. Toluene: exposure to toluene over a long time may cause nervous system effects, irritation of the skin, eyes, and respiratory tract, dizziness, headaches, difficulty with sleep, birth defects.
3. Mixed Xylenes: short-term exposure to high levels of mixed xylenes may cause irritation of the nose and throat, nausea, vomiting, gastric irritation, mild transient eye irritation, and neurological effects. Long-term exposure to high levels of xylene may impact the nervous system¹⁶.

With all of these terrible side effects happening to the province of Qatif, the Saudi Arabian government has only provided one hospital, 26 year old, with a total 360 beds¹⁷. It is the responsibility of the Saudi Arabian government to protect citizens of every province, regardless of their religion, against environmental hazards. In the Saudi Arabian constitution states, under Article 32:

“The State shall work towards the preservation, protection and improvement of the environment, as well as prevent pollution. “

It is also a social norm that governments care for those in the country who cannot care for the health of themselves. In the International Bill of Human Rights, Article 25, subsection 1 states:

“Everyone has the rights to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of

himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.”

In the year 2012, the sector of health and social affairs was awarded a 26 percent rise in its budget, to SR86.5 billion with seventeen new hospitals to be started into addition to the 130 under construction. None of these constructions were done in the Qatif area, an area that is in obvious need for health construction.

Along with the health sector budget increase, water, agriculture and (related) infrastructure spending is budgeted at SR57.5 billion, an increase of 13 percent. Much of the budget has been set aside for new projects in the industrial cities, not including Qatif, in addition to enhancing water supply and improving the water and water treatment networks¹⁸.

Drilling and producing oil is known to cause the injection of known toxic chemical into or close to drinking water supplies in the region of the drilling¹⁹.

There are three major water sanitation and purification sites in Saudi Arabia, none of which are in the area of Qatif²⁰. Two plants are in the city of Al Khubar, only 46.3 kilometers away, about a 30 minute commute if you took a vehicle²³. The third plant's closest site is in Riyadh, 426 kilometers away²¹.

In between these sites, purified, safe, and clean drinking water is not sent to Qatif, where there is high level of health violations and pollution from the plant. that the government makes (at \$105 per barrel at 800,000 barrels per day) \$84 million a day, topping at \$30.24 billion a year²².

Chapter 3

Case studies

In this chapter:

3.1 Governmental Attitude Regarding Investigations of Alleged Violations

3.2 Societal Abuse

3.3 Violations against Civil Liberties

3.4 Security Violations

3.1 Governmental Attitude Regarding Investigation of alleged Violations

It comes as no surprise to learn that most violations happening to Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia go either unreported or not investigated. Most attacks that happen, especially in the city of Qatif or in the Eastern Province, are still awaiting an official statement from the Interior of Ministry or a Saudi Arabian government official. When attacks or violations occur and the family of the victim goes to the area's police station, they are often not given any information or pushed away degradingly.

Contrary to the violations occurring, according to the Saudi Arabian constitution, "the State shall provide security for all citizens and residents on its territories. No-one may be confined, arrested or imprisoned without reference to the law.

Not only are the arbitrary arrests against the Saudi Arabian constitution, but also against the International Bill of Human Rights. Article 9 states:

"No one shall be subject to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

It follows in Article 10:

"Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing,"

Article 11 reinforces in subsection 2 that:

"No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed."

Human Rights violations happening in Saudi Arabia to the minority Shia Muslims are not always lethal, but include illegal arrests against the State's constitution and the IBHR, and these attacks can result in deaths that do not get reported or investigation by government officials.

In the case of young Ahmad Al Matar (18 years old) a confrontation with police in the Shia

Muslim populated Qatif resulted in his death and another six (6) injured. On this 27 December

2012 conflict, around midnight, a security patrol on regular duty spotted several riot-instigators burning tires in front of the police station, according to the spokesman of Eastern Province Police, Ziyad Al Ruqaiti.

Sources from the Al Matar family contradict the official statement, confirming that young Ahmad had never been involved in previous rebel-rousing activities. They also confirmed that when they had arrived



to the Police Department in Dammam a neighboring city, they were inspected, insulted, and then later dismissed without any provided information about their son. Later, they reported that Al Matar was shot in the leg and was left bleeding in the police vehicle for an unknown amount of time. He was later taken to Armed Forces Hospital in Dhahran where he died before he had to the chance to receive the necessary medical care to his gunshot wound. There have still been no reports made on an official investigation and the Al Matar family is calling for private investigations because the Saudi Arabian government will not look into the violent attack²³.

3.2 Social Abuse

Shia Muslims, now more than ever, have a hard time containing a sense of national unity when their country, government, and fellow citizens are stripping them of their basic rights; life, liberty, and the freedom of religion. It is illegal to bring upon partition or division among any groups in the country under Article 5 of the Saudi Arabian constitution, stating:

“Consolidation of the national unity is a duty. The State shall forbid al activities that may lead to division, disorder and partition.”

This may be the excuse the Saudi Arabian government uses to arrest and kill those who are Shia Muslims demanding their basic civil rights, but the Saudi Arabian government does nothing to those who uses acts of violence or injustice to make the Shia Muslims feel more and more disconnected with the rest of the country.

An example of societal abuse and encouragement of division can be seen by Sultan bin Zahim, the Chairman of Lawyers Committee in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Madinah, through his account on Twitter. He claimed that Shia Muslims are not children of their fathers and of unknown descents which is one of the most degrading accusations in the Islamic belief. The 15 April 2012 “tweet” is stated as follows:

“I believe that if tests were carried out on Shiite people, we won’t find them related to their fathers except few of them; which means they are of unknown descents; children of adultery”.



His claims set a wildfire of responses amongst Shia Muslims and moderate Sunni Muslims, leading many of them to demand bringing him to trial, in which they are still waiting²⁴.

Not only is this a violation of Article 12, but also Article 39:

“Mass media and all other vehicles of expression shall employ civil and polite language, contribute towards the education of the nation and strengthen unity. It is prohibited to commit acts leading to disorder and division, affecting the security of the state and its public relations, or undermining human dignity and rights...”

It is also against the International Bill of Human Rights, under Article 7, that:

“All are equal under that law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.”

Along with the claims and disputes happening in new social media, behind closed doors of the homes of Shia Muslims are feeling the pressure of sectarian discrimination. Shia Muslim citizens of Saudi Arabia claim that Saudi Arabian authorities had cut off the electrical power to a prayer place in Al-Jissr district, Khobar. This electoral cut-off happened during the day without any prior warning. Even though there was no electricity, the Shia Muslims continued performing prayers in the enclosed prayer place led by Sayyed Mohammad Baqir Al-Nasir in dark, hot room. The mentioned prayer place is attached to the house of Abdullah Al-Muhana, a prominent Shia Muslim public figure. The electricity being shut off 6 February 2012 did not just affect the prayer place, but also included the whole house where Al-Muhana’s family resides and are still waiting for an official explanation²⁵.

3.3 Violations against Civil Liberties

With the rise of sectarian violence, there comes a rise in violations against civil liberties, and the right to life is certainly not forgotten within the works of the Saudi Arabian constitution. There are several cases reported that go against the constitutional laws and societal norms.

Saudi security forces killed a protestor when the forces opened fire on a march in the Eastern Province, home to a large number Shia Muslim minority.

Zuhair al-Said, 21, was killed by security forces attempting to disrupt a protest on Friday against the death of another Shia Muslim demonstrator the previous day of the 12 February 2012 attack²⁶.

Article 27 of the Saudi Arabian constitution states:

“The State shall guarantee the rights of the citizens and their families in cases of emergency,



illness, disability and old age. The State shall support the Social Insurance Law and encourage organization and individuals to participate in philanthropic activities.”

The International Bill of Human Rights Article 18 states:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

Al-Said was killed for expressing his thoughts and beliefs, with complete disregard to his rights as a citizen.

At another protest urging the Saudi Arabian government to release political prisoners and calling for an end of religious discrimination, Issam Muhammad Ali Abu Abdullah, age 22, was shot dead by Saudi Arabian forces while three others were reported to be wounded at the 13 January 2012 protest in the town Awwamiya.

Political prisoners, in itself, are against several constitutional laws and societal norms, but for those who disagree with political prisoners are protected under the International Bill of Human Rights, Article 19:

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

The official report by the Ministry of Interior said that the death was caused by an exchange of gunfire between Saudi Arabian security forces and individuals who had attacked them with



Molotov cocktails. Eye-witness accounts told Amnesty International that Abdullah was killed by several bullet wounds fired by the security forces. The account says that riot police opened fire on protesters.

Though there were promises of investigations, no actions on the side of the Saudi Arabian government suggest so. Abdullah’s family has called for an independent investigation²⁷

Munir al-Medani, 21, died of his wounds after being shot by security forces in the Al-Shwaika neighborhood of Qatif. Munir al-Medani was one of several activists fighting minority rights in the area. Witnesses said that Medani's death came when security forces opened fire on a Shia Muslim procession on the streets to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Mohammed, a celebration forbidden in Saudi Arabia²⁸.



The freedom to celebrate religious practices safely is protected in the International Bill of Human Rights Article 2 states:

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

Article 23 of the Saudi Arabian constitution states:

“The state shall protect the Islamic Creed, apply the Sharia, encourage good and discourage evil, and undertake its duty regarding the Propagation of Islam.”

This discriminatory shooting are by no means encouraging good.

In another example, Al-Labbad was an activist that was involved in several peaceful protests in Qatif, a Shia Muslim populated area of Saudi Arabia, protesting for the elimination of discrimination of minority religions in Saudi Arabia. For being a part of these protests, 23 wanted people, including Al-Labbad, were listed by Saudi authorities which alleges that those twenty-three are outlaws for being riot-instigators and “executors of foreign agendas.”

Even if wanted by forces, shooting and killing citizens directly violations Article 27: “The State shall guarantee the rights of the citizens and their families in cases of emergency, illness, disability and old age. The State shall support the Social Insurance Law and encourage organization and individuals to participate in philanthropic activities.”

International Bill of Human Rights Article 1 states:

“All human being are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

Mansour Al-Turki, Spokesman of the Saudi Ministry of Interior, went on recorded stating that when the security forces proceeded to arrest him after being observed in a house in the region on September 26, 2012. Al-Labbad and a sixteen-year old boy, Mohammad Habib Al-Manasif, were killed as well as several citizens among them were injured²⁹.

3.4 Security Rights Violations

The Saudi Arabian government and their constitution claims that there is safety and security throughout the country and it is even granted in the Saudi Arabian constitution; Article 36 states:

“The State shall provide security for all citizens and residents on its territories. No-one may be confined, arrested or imprisoned without reference to the Law.”

Regardless of the written law providing security for all Saudi Arabian citizens, there is evidence that not all security forces and guards are following these state-mandated procedures and shooting before they aim in Shia Muslim populated crowds while the government turns away and refuses investigations into the claims.

30 men, 23 women, and 6 children were detained by Saudi Arabian security forces on 29 November 2012 after staging a peaceful protest outside of a human rights group's office in Riyadh to call for the release of jailed relatives.

The Saudi Arabian government says that the prisoners are being held on security grounds. Several activists say that some prisoners are being held for purely political reasons and have yet to be charged. The Interior Ministry spokesman did not immediately comment on the arrest⁴⁰. Another horrifying report of an eye-witness account claims that eighteen year old Husain Yousif AlQallaf was thrown off his bike while passing a shooting that was taking place in Qatif, a Shia Muslim populated area of Saudi Arabia.

On that 7 August 2012, "one of the security vehicles was exposed to a heavy fire by four of the riot-instigators on their motorbikes at one of the intersections of Uhud Street in Qatif Region", spokesman of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Interior, Mansour AlTurki, reported. AlTurki goes on record saying AlQallaf was involved in these shooting, going against previously stated eye-witness accounts. Once again, security forces opening fire on innocent civilians while the government covers the stories with lies, justifying the unconstitutional act³⁰.

There are also cases that go against the Saudi Arabian Constitution and the International Bill of Human Rights regarding arbitrary arrests. Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was arrested in the Shia populated eastern province Sunni-ruled kingdom in his car on 8 June 2012. Hundreds of protesters gathered the streets that Sunday afternoon after the prominent Shia cleric was chased, shot and arrested. At least six (6) demonstrators were shot and killed in the protest that took the streets that evening. It is believed that the Saudi government was prompted by Sunni Wahhabis to put a greater pressure on the Shias demanding equal rights in the area. Nimr Al-Nimr is an independent Shia Sheikh in the Eastern Province in Saudi Arabia. He is a key proponent of the equal rights campaign for both Shia and Sunni Muslims that are being treated as second class citizens, as well as women's rights and minority rights. His progressive, pro-equality, pro-rights views makes him very popular among youth in the Eastern Province which makes him a target for the Saudi Arabia government³¹.

This type of arbitrary arrests and people in prison for political reasons goes against both the Saudi Arabian constitution that states in Article 36:

"... No-one may be confined, arrested or imprisoned without reference to the law"

Not only were the six (6) people that were killed not given the security granted in the constitution. According to the International Bill of Human Rights, Article 9:

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile."

Article 10 states:

"Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charges."

Article 11, subsection 2 states:

“No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time it was committed.”

Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr was arrested, but when he was shot and poorly mistreated, he was being treated as if he was guilty of the charges made up by the government before trial.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

In this chapter?

4.1 Conclusion

4.2 Recommendation

4.1 Conclusion

Regardless of the government's claim to decrease human right violations, Shia rights violations continue to be a concerning issue in Saudi Arabia. The government even increased the violations by arresting the peaceful demonstrators who demand their basic rights.

Shia Muslims have always been an "undesirable and heathen minority" through the eyes of ruling Wahhabis political and religious leaders. Saudi Arabian authorities, past and current governments, have clearly violated many articles of the International Bill of Human Rights and their own constitution.

Most humanitarian organizations and departments such as Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, Crisis Group, the US department of State, and the Red Cross agree that Saudi Arabia has gone too far in violating human rights, but we continue to see degrading violations happening every day.

4.2 Recommendation

Shia Rights Watch urges the United States government to take actions in support of the Shia Muslims in Saudi Arabia and hold the Saudi Arabian's government accountable for its violations of human rights.

We ask for the Saudi Arabian Government to:

1. Allow for greater transparency by
 - a. Allowing international human rights organizations to visit the provinces that Shia Muslims are the majority, such as the Eastern Province, and temporarily but consistently make record of the standard of living.
 - b. Immediately releasing all human rights activists currently detained in Saudi Arabia
2. Hold those responsible for violations accountable by
 - a. Sending the names of murderers and violent officers to the International Criminal Court (ICC)
 - b. Establishing independent and impartial bodies to investigate and punish those responsible for deaths, torture, and mistreatment
3. Begin to reconcile all parts of Saudi Arabia's society by
 - a. Stop providing financial aid and support to Anti-Shi terrorist groups around the world
 - b. Rebuilding all destroyed mosques and Islamic centers, including the al-Baqi Shrine
 - c. Creating a Human Rights Department within the Saudi Arabian government
 - d. Integrating members from all communities into the security forces and into the government, including the Human Right Department
 - e. Developing educational programs to promote tolerance, human rights, and the rule of law, including new textbooks approved by various international councils
 - f. Immediately release all prisoners of conscience
 - g. Recognize Shia Muslims and give them the freedom of religion and freedom to practice their faith.

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