

# Bi-Annual Report

2016



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Shia Rights Watch (SRW), established in 2011, SRW is the world's first independent organization dedicated to define and protect the rights of Shia Muslims around the world. SRW is a non-governmental, not-for-profit research entity and advocacy group headquartered in Washington D.C. U.S.A. Shia Rights Watch holds a 501(c) status, as well as a Special Consultation Status (ECOSOC) with the United Nations. Shia Rights Watch aims to draw international attention to countries where Shia rights are violated. The aim is to give a voice to the oppressed and hold oppressors accountable for their crimes. SRW achieves its objectives through strategic investigations supported by targeted advocacy in order to bring about informed action.



## SRW's Six Month Accomplishments

Dear Shia Rights Watchers,

While you were busy supporting us, we were working hard defending Shia minority rights. This summary is to thank you for your help, hard work and support. Because of you, SRW has been able to defend Shia rights through various advocacy methods, research based reports, and presentations in Geneva and the New York UN and other human rights committees. The following shows only some of our accomplishments.

### Advocacy at United Nations-Geneva and New York

- SRW participated in an Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Internally Displaced Persons and the Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary executions under Item 3- Clustered ID at the United Nations in Geneva in June 2016,
- SRW attended and participated in interactive dialogue with candidates for the Presidency of the 71st General Assembly in New York UN that was hosted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations,
- SRW took part in the sixty-sixth Department of Public Information (DPI)/Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Conference hosted by South Korea in Gyeongju in May 2016. The conference is held under the theme "Education for Global Citizenship: Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Your SRW Representative to the United Nations attended series of moderated debates for candidate Member States running for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council in order to highlight Shia rights violations in May 2016.
- SRW New York representative Mr. Akhwand attended 66th Session of UN DPI/NGO to emphasize on the importance of education and its availability and accessibility for Shia children who have lost their right to education, in March 2016.
- Shia Rights Watch's UN representative Mr. Akhwand with cooperation from the Freemuslim Association participated in an item 3 Interactive Dialogue on Minority Issue regarding discrimination against Shia Muslims in Malaysia at the 31st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. Oral and written statements of the NGO were presented in the meeting and published on the UN website in five languages.
- The NGO advocated for the rights of Saudi, Malaysian, and Azerbaijani Shia through oral and

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- written statements presented at UN Human Rights Council- 31st Session.
- SRW presented its concern regarding the misuse of the term, “terrorism” by many governments and urged the UN to adopt a universal definition for terror and terrorism at UN Human Rights Council- 31st Session.
  - The SRW Women’s Rights Wing has hosted a Women’s Empowerment; A Major Step in Peace, Reconciliation & Capacity Building seminar at UN to advocate for Shia women and their struggles.
  - SRW’s Saudi Arabia expert participated in an item 3 Interactive Dialogue on Freedom of Religion or Belief, addressing GCC discrimination toward Shia Muslims at the 31st session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva

## Expert Presentations;

- SRW’s Executive Director, Mustafa Akhwand presented as an expert on Bahraini Shia rights violations at “Persecution of Shia in Bahrain”, a two day summit in Brussels. The summit was organized by SALAM for human rights and justice and No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), to promote and protect human rights and democracy in the Middle East and in Bahrain in particular.
- SRW’s expert in de-radicalization, Mr. Akhwand, actively participated in a roundtable debate focusing on Prevention of Violent Extremism through Education in the Trusteeship Council Chamber in New York as part of The UNSG Global Education First Initiative (GEFI) advocates global citizenship education (GCED).
- SRW Women’s Rights Wing has hosted a side event at the UN to highlight specific struggles of Shia women under the topic of Women’s Empowerment: A Major Step in Peace, Reconciliation & Capacity Building.
- On 6/12 SRW volunteers and members celebrated International Shia Day by hosting flower and peace message distribution in Washington DC, launched <http://internationalshiaday.com> and also took pledge to stand for Shia rights through a pledge page on the official website, using hashtags #612 and # 612ShiaDay.
- Also, Watch videos of International Shia Day here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0YcrzIDiBU>.

Shia Rights Watch staff would like to thank you all for making Shia rights watch possible with your support. Stay in touch

This Bi-Annual report is based on analysis of monthly reports conducted by Shia Rights Watch. The report summarizes human rights violations toward Shia people in 10 countries beginning in January and ending in June 2016.

Included in this report is a list of countries who have participated, whether actively or passively, in human rights violations against the Shia minority. We have focused on the following violations: casualties, passport revocation, deportation, arrests, increased sentencing, fines, and denial of basic civil liberties. This report gives strong evidence that the Shia are clearly being discriminated against. Although we are not measuring all acts of human rights violations, this report presents undeniably the atrocities happening daily to Shia communities.

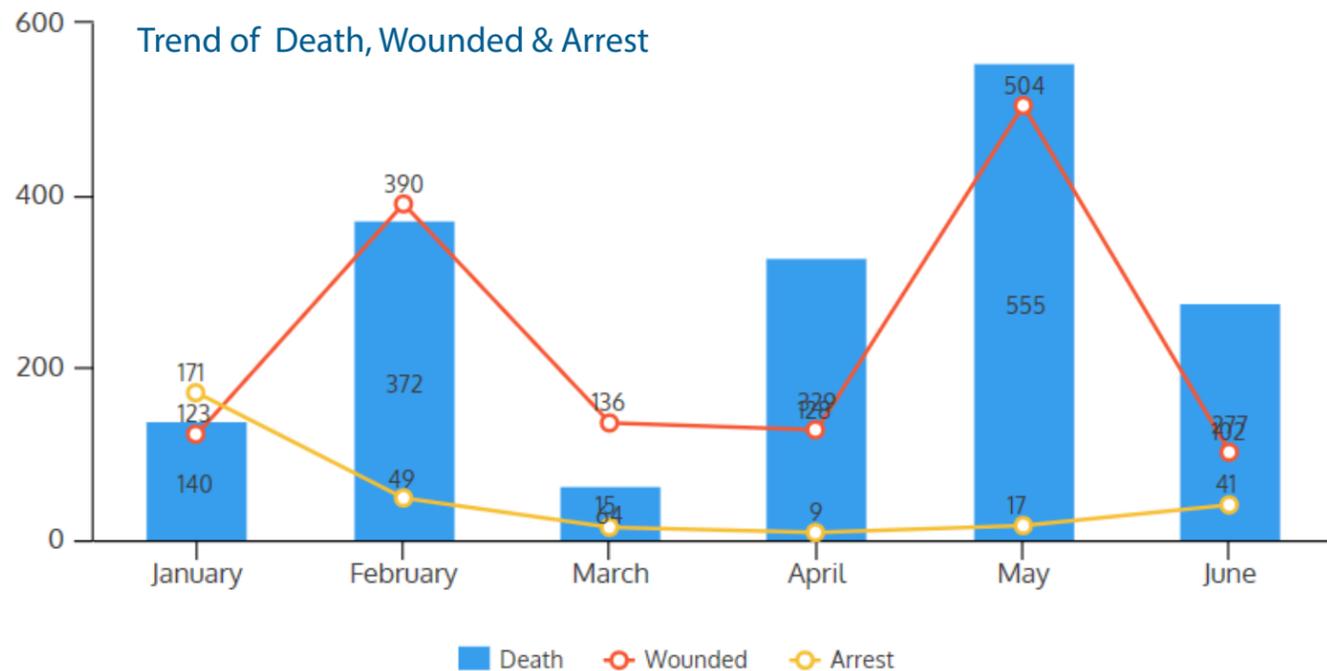
It must be noted that Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Kuwait, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Syria are members of the United Nations. This is important because these

countries have all violated the International Bill of Human Rights. Within this bill, citizens of member states pledge to uphold the following rights for all of their citizens: all humans are born free in dignity and in rights, everyone has the freedom to exercise their opinion, expression, thought, conscience, and religion. All people have the right to education, participation in government, and the right to assemble. And finally, all people have the right to leave any country and return, a right to a nationality, and a right to a fair trial if arrested or detained.

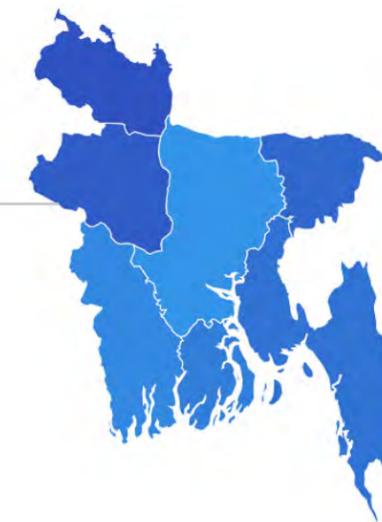
## Summary of Key Findings:

1. Shia Muslims are targeted and unsafe in many countries throughout the world, this report only highlights the top 10 most alarming regions.
2. Shia are oppressed regardless of whether they are the minority or majority in population.
3. Shia are targeted by both terrorist groups and governments alike.
4. Shia Muslims face discrimination in the forms of limited speech, religion, and travel, as well as brutal misconduct including arrests, injuries and death.

# Country Reports



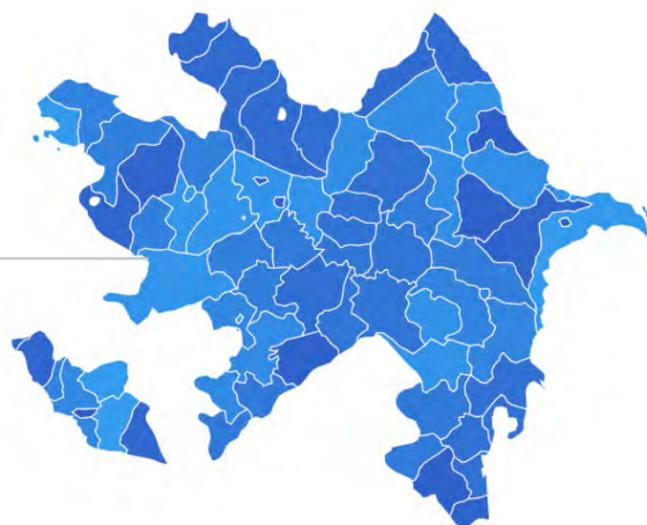
## BANGLADESH



The country of Bangladesh is a very densely populated country that is home to Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists. Because of the instability of the government, hate groups have moved in and are targeting minority populations. The growing presence of the Islamic State in Bangladesh has resulted in one incident of Anti Shi'ism in Dhaka this past year. Alleged ISIS members attacked a Shia preacher in southwestern Bangladesh. His body was found with stab wounds in the head and chest. Police have been skeptical about the assailants' connections to ISIS, and have

also displayed a lack of ability to bring those at large to justice.

## AZERBAIJAN



Although Azerbaijan has a majority Shia population of 85 percent, the country does not tolerate any actions pertaining to freedom of speech or religion. The government sees these acts as a criticism of its institution. Following this, there have been two reported incidents of anti-Shi'ism in Azerbaijan this past year. On the 22nd of May 2016, Azerbaijani authorities destroyed a Shia seminary for the purpose of expanding roads, but the seminary was located in a street alley out of the way. Secondly, the government of Azerbaijan banned the import of 732 religious books and disallowed the publishing of five. The Republic of Azerbaijan is likely to engage in more violations of human rights as the country controls its own media; therefore staying under the radar.

## INDIA



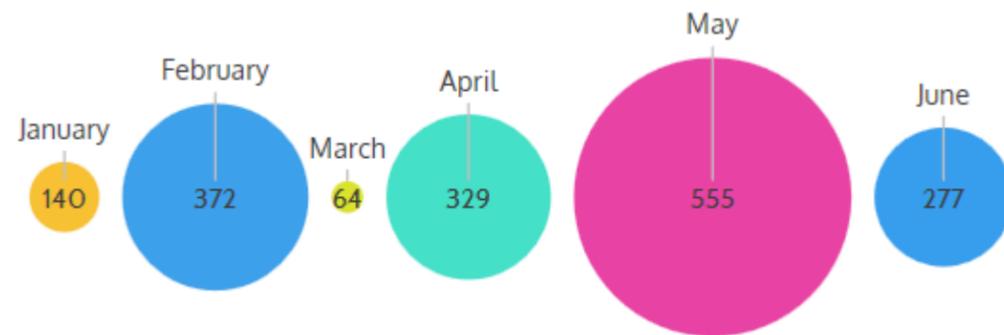
India is a very populated and diverse country with many religious groups. As a rule, religious freedom is tolerated in this country in most areas. However, on 1 April, 2016, Indian authorities in the district of Lucknow told Shia cleric Kalbe Jawad that he must hand in his passport within the following ten days. According to police, there are many charges against him, but when he asked whether other people with such charges had their passports taken away, he was not given an answer. This leads many to believe that this was an act of anti-Shiism. In a statement, Jawad says, "A revenge is being taken against me as I have been raising my voice against anomalies committed by the district administration in the Hussainabad Trust." Moreover, the cases in which the police are charging him were resolved back in 2013, as the cleric states, "Regional Passport Office (RPO) in connivance with district administration is trying to harass me. The cases against me mentioned in the letter sent by RPO were withdrawn in 2013 and the then District Magistrate Anurag Yadav's letter on 23 April, 2013 mentioned that." Three years later he should not still be punished for crimes previously withdrawn, making this seem more like an excuse to condemn him and his religious beliefs.

## KUWAIT

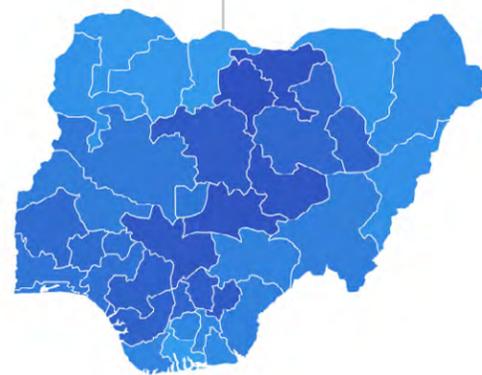


Kuwait has a Shia population of 30 to 40 percent. In the past, this country has shown tolerance to the Shia minority population. However, in March of 2016, the Kuwaiti government deported 74 people for alleged extremist ties. A prominent activist, whose name has not been disclosed for safety reasons, has also had his visa taken away. The presence of the Islamic State in the region is not helping matters.

Number of Shia Muslims killed in 6 month



## NIGERIA



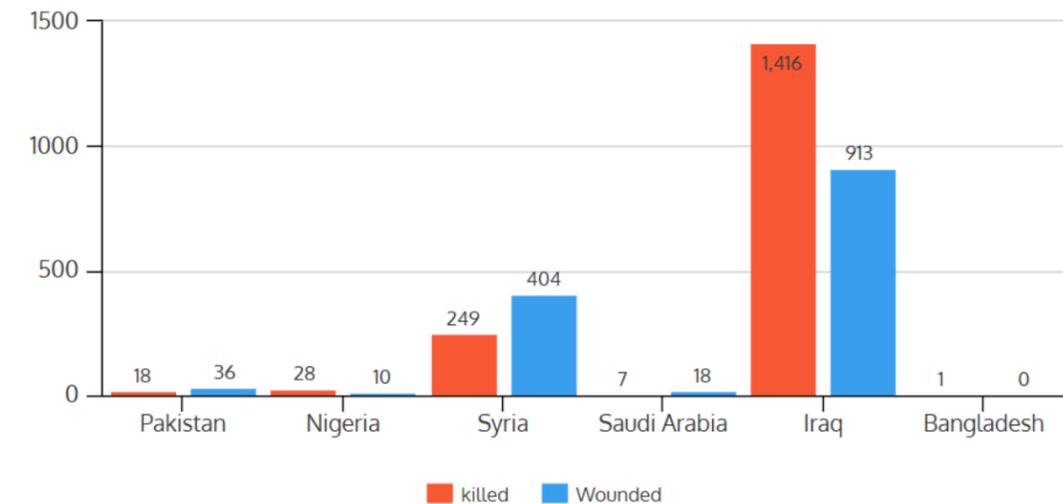
Nigeria's current instability and conflict have resulted in human rights atrocities by a variety of actors and in numerous forms. While Muslims represent a one third religious minority, the Shia sect represents only 5 percent of the Muslim community and has the fastest growing population in the country. The estimated 1,000 lives lost in December of 2015 set a precedent for the 2016 acts of Anti-Shi'ism, with a released list of 705 missing or killed persons in January. In the same month, a suicide bomber killed 10 civilians. In March, an armed security force halted a Shia procession led by the Islamic Movement. On May 3rd, the government also administered a death sentence to a Shia Muslim. Gunfire in June also resulted in the death of 18 and left 10 wounded.

## PAKISTAN



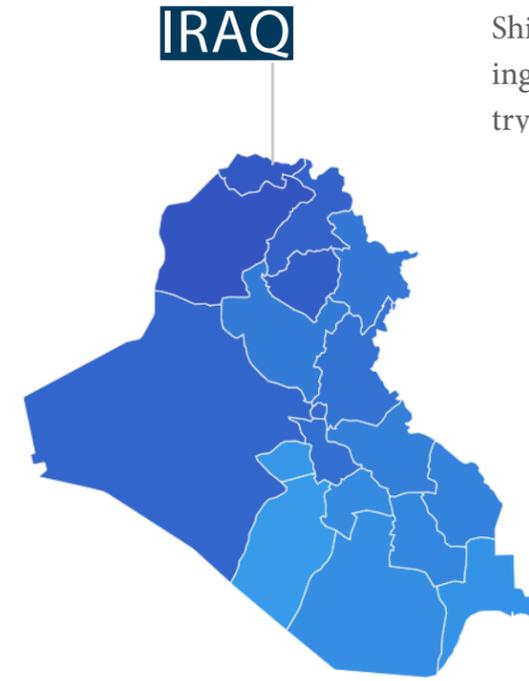
Pakistan is a Sunni Muslim majority country in which the Shia make up a large minority population of about 20% of the country. Since January, 18 people have been killed and 36 wounded. None of the assailants have been identified in any of the killings. One of the victims was a religious scholar of Shia school of thought named Allama Imdad Hussan Jafri who was slaughtered in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Unknown armed terrorists illegally entered the scholar's home and killed him. On 27 June, a bomb was planted on a bicycle near a mall- 3 people were killed and 32 injured in this incident. One man has been sentenced to 13 years in prison for a facebook post deemed religiously offensive. This incident brings the total to 9 people who have been jailed. Police are still not giving any reason for the imprisonment. The Islamic Republic of Pakistan is a democratic parliamentary federal republic that recognizes Islam as its official faith. However, Muslim populations have been under extreme scrutiny, especially the Shia minority.

### Shia Casualties: January - June 2016



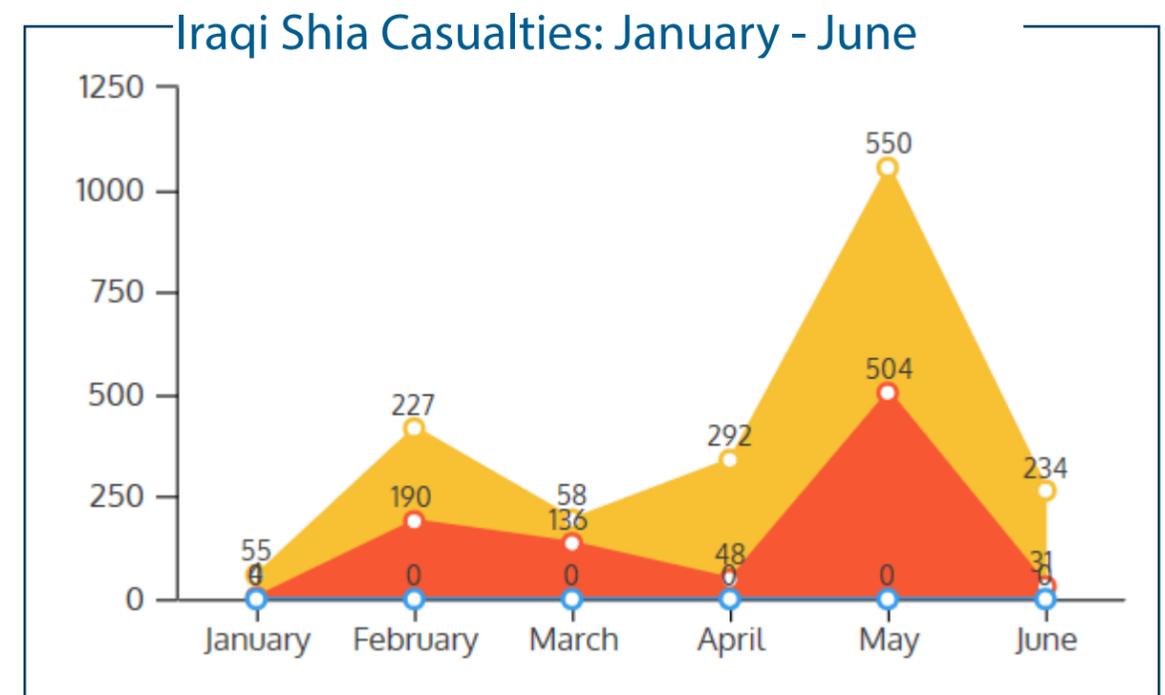
The figure above shows the accumulated number of Shia casualties between the months of January to June 2016. Syria and Iraq have the highest number of casualties as a result of insecurity created by the war against ISIS. Shia deaths from January to June totaled 1,737 with 1,383 wounded. The figure shows a clear lack of safety for the Shia population with regional instability and extremism being the main contributions to Shia civilian deaths.

Human rights violations are very common in the Shia majority, Sunni led country of Bahrain. The government has been trying to limit the freedom of speech, gathering, and religion of the Shia population. It is impossible to hold any one person accountable as these incidents are government led. In the first six months of 2016, one Bahraini Shia has been killed during non-violent protesting by police. The government has arrested 231 Bahraini Shia for unjust reasons. Many Shia have been accused and charged of “terrorist activities” and are jailed under the false pretence of national security. These arrests occurred during Shia led peaceful protests. Jail sentences range from 3 years to life. In addition, 58 people have received increased sentencing on current prison terms. Eight Shia civilians have been forcibly deported based on faulty accusations. It is documented that 30 citizens have had their citizenship revoked and fined including prominent Shia leaders. Human rights activist Nabeel Rajab has recently been detained and is still being held. Moreover, on 19 June, the Al- Khalifa regime announced the regulation of “khoms,” or Shia religious tax. The Council of Shia scholars has strongly condemned the government announcement. Bahrain holds the highest amount of human rights violations than other countries. The government is working to change the demographics of the nation and phase the Shia people out by revoking citizenships, deportation, and extensive prison sentences.



Shia in Iraq make up a two thirds majority of the population, showing that the religion has a significant presence in shaping the country's culture. Iraq has had the largest number of Shia deaths and injuries in the world; thus far 2016 has brought an estimated 1416 deaths and 913 injuries. This trend has been true for the past two years as reported by Shia Rights Watch. The violence typically occurs in the city of Baghdad, which has had a documented 92 incidents this year. Other locations such as Karbala, Muqdadiah, Madaen, Mahmudiya, and Kadhimiya have also seen multiple attacks on Shia. Thus far, May has held the highest number of casualties. Typical causes of these deaths are a result from car bombings or improvised explosive devices by non-state actors, resulting from the ongoing war. This is troubling news as Iraq is home to many Shia shrines which in turn draws millions of Shia visitors every year. The attacks and deaths in June have decreased greatly, as Iraqi security increases during holy times. With June as the month of Ramadan this year, more Shia are protected along with other Muslims. Nevertheless, these acts of hatred and violence should not fluctuate or be allowed to go on regardless of the time of the year.

This is a **TEAR GAS CANISTER**  
I breath this in every day

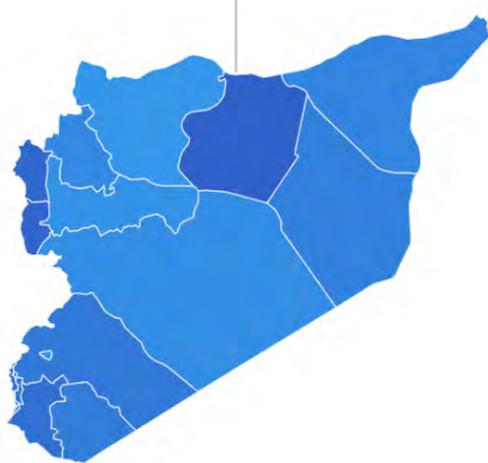


## SAUDI ARABIA



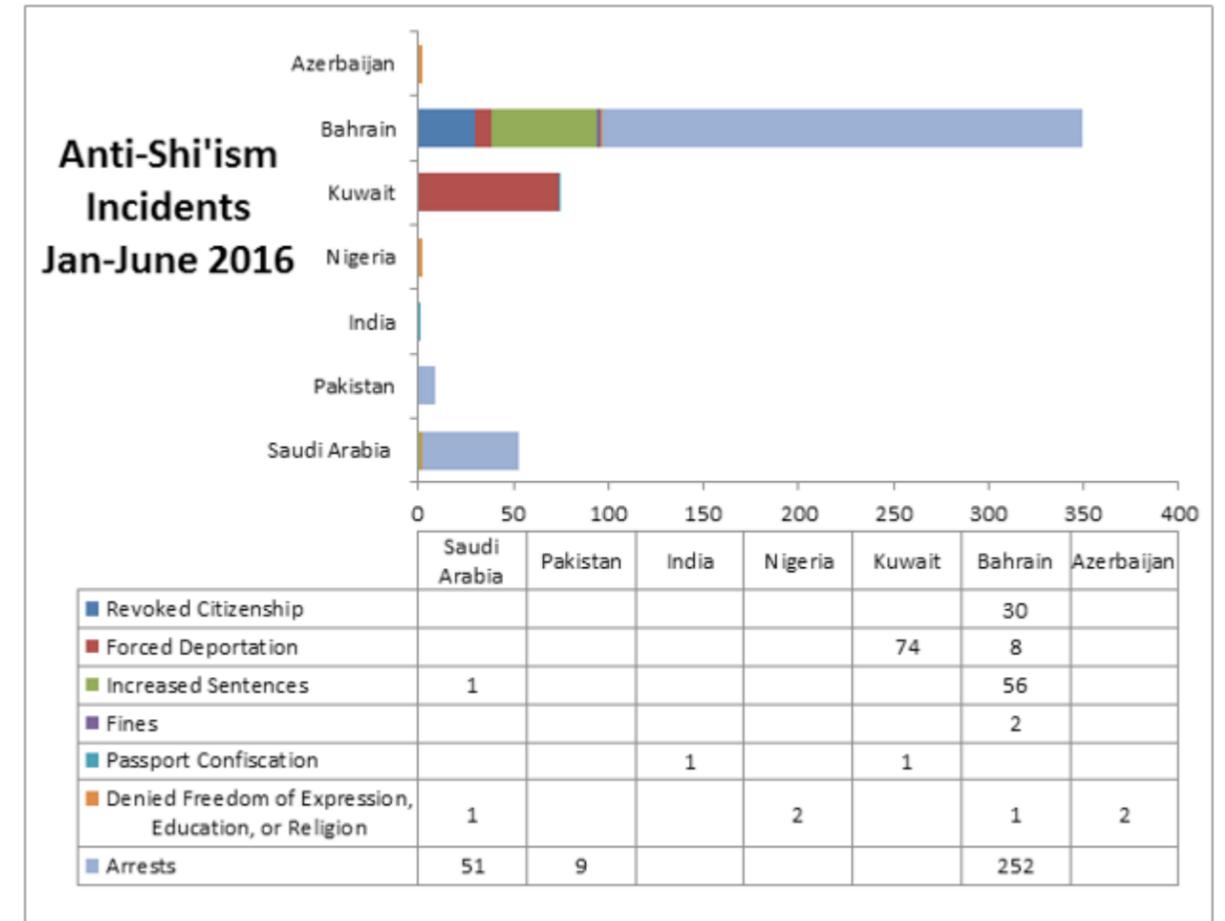
It is no secret that Saudi Arabia has a long standing history with human rights violations. These past months have been no different. On Sunday April 22nd, the Saudi government sentenced Issa al-Hamid, an activist, to 9 years in jail for protesting for his human rights. He is also banned from foreign travel through this period. Al-Hamid is a senior member of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights (HASEM). The court found him guilty of instigating people to violate public order, insulting the judiciary, defaming a number of senior religious figures and establishing an unlicensed organization. Monday April 23rd, Saudi Arabia approved the death sentence for Shia activist Yusof al-Mosheykhas, in the city of Awwamiyah in the eastern region of Qatif. He was arrested in January 2014 after attending anti-government protests and charged with an act of terrorism. In June, 14 Shia Muslims were sentenced to death by Saudi officials. Nine others were given sentences of 3 to 15 years. Later that month, Saudi security forces apprehended top Shia cleric Sheikh Jafar Sweileh on political grounds in Qatif. Activists say that the cleric has been arrested for his writings in defense of freedom of expression. Later that month, a Saudi man has been shot dead during a police raid in the country's predominantly Shia east. An interior ministry spokesman said Abdul Rahim al-Faraj was suspected of killing security forces personnel, however, there is no proof of these allegations. Illegal arrests are regular and frequent in this country.

## SYRIA



Violence toward Shia Muslims has grown more severe alongside the current war in Syria, as civilian Shia are associated politically, despite having no international ties. The Shia population in Syria is approximately 13 percent, with Alawites being the leading majority. This past year, 249 civilians have been killed and 404 wounded in several incidents, primarily from suicide bombings and ongoing airstrikes. The city of Sayyida Zeinab witnessed 71 Shia killed and 100 wounded in January, followed by a suicide bombing in Damascus resulting in 143 dead and 200 injured. In June, Damascus lost 20 lives and saw dozens injured.

## Other Shia Rights Violations January - June 2016



The figure above shows total number of Shia human rights violations between the months of January and June 2016. In the country of Bahrain, Shia are the majority. Meaning in all other countries listed above, this group is a minority. Bahrain has the highest amount of human rights violations. This is due to its government attempting to keep the Shia oppressed and phased out of the country altogether following the 2011 protests that have continued since. The current power struggle has only led to more instability, and is creating a current cycle that calls for greater attention from the International community. Examples of violence are deportation, revocation of citizenship, and arrests. Human rights violations between January and June totaled 481. These violations include unlawful citizenship revocation, forced deportation, increased prison sentences, and fines. The Shia people are also denied freedom of expression, the practice of religion, and denied proper education.

# Conclusion

Shia Muslims are the largest minority group in the Middle East. Their population is growing quickly. Despite the Shias proven peaceful demeanor, they are targets of everyday conflict.

Shia Rights Watch believes the Shia people, as anyone are entitled to basic human rights. These basic rights include but are not limited to: the rights to education, employment, freedom of expression, and freedom of religious practice.

The ongoing conflict in Iraq and Syria are big factors in the slaying and oppression of Shia minorities. Terror groups such as ISIS are targeting minority groups, such as Shia, and massacring them. Consequently, once ISIS is involved, it is hard to measure the atrocities enacted among minority groups because government agencies stop intervening. Over 3,000 Shia have been killed and wounded in the first 5 months of 2016.

Moreover, close to 500 human rights violations have occurred in the first few months of the year. Most violations were in countries other than Syria and Iraq. Governments in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain fail to see the significance of minorities and seek to diminish the population altogether.

It is important to bring light to these violations and raise awareness of all minority oppression; not just Shia. By doing so, we can bring peace and safety to people's lives. Moreover, this will stabilize war torn countries and hinder terror groups in the region.



Shia Children in Refugee Camp, Zakho Iraq

# HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL

**IDENTITY  
EDUCATION  
HEALTHCARE  
FREEDOM**



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