



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
23 August 2019

English only

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## Human Rights Council

Forty-second session

9–27 September 2019

Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain Inc., a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2019]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## ADHRB unequivocally condemns the attack on Photojournalist by Bahraini Embassy in London

On the occasion of the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council (HRC), Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) would like to raise concerns about allegations that officials at the Embassy of Bahrain in London beat and threatened to kill Bahraini expatriate dissident photojournalist Moosa Mohammed (aka, Moosa Abdali). ADHRB condemns Mohammed's treatment and would like to raise broader concerns regarding the treatment of journalists in the Gulf, and impunity, as well as efforts by Gulf states like Bahrain to silence dissent even outside their borders.

On 26 July 2019, Bahraini photojournalist Moosa Mohammed scaled the Bahraini Embassy in London in protest of the impending executions of torture victims Ali AlArab and Ahmed AlMalali. He urged the Bahraini government to halt the executions, echoing calls made by the UN Special Procedures, international governments and parliamentarians, and international non-governmental organizations. In response to Mohammed's peaceful protest, the staff at the Bahraini Embassy reacted with violence – allegedly beating him and threatening to throw him off the roof of the embassy.

Ahmed AlMalali was arrested on 9 February 2017, by officers from the General Directorate for Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science, the Special Security Force Command, and the National Security Agency.<sup>1</sup> During his arrest, AlMalali was reportedly struck by two bullets in his right hand that were only removed 23 days later. AlMalali was taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID), where he was coerced into signing a confession while blindfolded. Following the arrest, officers held Ahmed *incommunicado* for a month at the CID, where he was tortured, including forced standing, exposure to cold, beatings, including blows to the genitals, and electric shock.

Ali AlArab was arrested in a separate operation on 9 February 2017 by security agents of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and he was taken to the CID, where he was held until 7 March 2017. During this time he was coerced into signing a confession while blindfolded. On 7 March, officers transferred AlArab to Dry Dock Detention Center. He arrived there bearing clear signs of torture, including having all of his toenails removed. On the same day that he arrived at Dry Dock, the guards beat him for refusing to kiss one of the guards' boots.<sup>2</sup>

AlArab and AlMalali had been convicted and sentenced to death in a mass trial alongside 58 other individuals on 31 January 2018. Ahead of the trial, they were denied access to an attorney and their confessions under torture were used against them. Despite this, on 28 January 2019, the High Court of Appeals confirmed their death sentences.<sup>3</sup> On 6 May 2019, the Court of Cassation – Bahrain's court of last resort – upheld their sentence.<sup>4</sup> On 26 July 2019, the night before the executions the families of AlArab and AlMalali received a phone call for a "special visit." According to Article 330 of Bahrain's Criminal Procedure Code, relatives of persons scheduled for execution will be permitted a final visit "on the date fixed for the execution," before the sentence is carried out. The next morning they were executed. A third individual<sup>5</sup> from Bangladesh was also executed.

<sup>1</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain Ministry of Interior, MOI issues statement on Feb. 9 operations. 9 February 2017. <http://www.policemc.gov.bh/en/news/ministry/60161>.

<sup>2</sup> "ADHRB Strongly Condemns Bahrain's Unjust Execution of Ali AlArab and Ahmed AlMalali," ADHRB, 29 July 2019, <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/07/adhrb-strongly-condemns-bahrain-unjust-execution-of-ali-alarab-and-ahmed-almalali/>.

<sup>3</sup> "High Appeals Court rules in terror group case," Bahrain New Agency, 28 January 2019, <https://www.bna.bh/en/HighAppealsCourtrulesinterrorgroupcase.aspx?cms=q8FmFJgiscL2fwIzON1%2bDq8XDazp6OgeQDjjRbY4gM8%3d>.

<sup>4</sup> Bahrain Public Prosecution Instagram post, 6 May 2019, [https://www.instagram.com/p/BxHltoSFX8H/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_native\\_share](https://www.instagram.com/p/BxHltoSFX8H/?utm_source=ig_web_button_native_share).

<sup>5</sup> "Bahrain Public Prosecution on Instagram" *Instagram*, [www.instagram.com/p/BOZ\\_HmWAJsS/](http://www.instagram.com/p/BOZ_HmWAJsS/).

Following news that AlArab and AlMalali's families had received a phone call for a "special visit," Mohammed scaled the roof of the Bahraini Embassy in London. Like AlArab and AlMalali, Mohammed had been subjected to abuse at the hands of Bahraini authorities. He fled Bahrain in 2006 after being detained and tortured, and was granted asylum in the United Kingdom, where he resides and works as a photojournalist. On top of the embassy, Mohammed unfurled a banner reading "I am risking my life to save 2 men about to be executed..." in hopes that he could draw more attention to their cases and stop the executions from occurring.

Mohammed was approached by Embassy staff as police and firefighters gathered to assess the situation from the ground. He alleges<sup>6</sup> that the Embassy staff beat him with a wooden stick as he straddled the ledge of the building, and that they pushed him and threatened to throw him off the building. He was dragged off the ledge and disappeared from the view of individuals watching from the street. Protesters shouted<sup>7</sup> that the Bahraini government was going to kill Mohammed like Khashoggi<sup>8</sup> – referencing the journalist who was murdered in a Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Mohammed claims that the Bahraini authorities kicked him, tied his hands, and placed a wet shirt over his face, making it difficult to breathe.

### Attacks on dissidents outside Bahrain and Saudi's Border

The Embassy staff's attack on Moosa Mohammed is not the first time that Bahraini government officials have targeted activists outside of the country due to their activism.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, the Director of Advocacy for the London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) has faced a number of reprisals due to his human rights work. Bahraini authorities have repeatedly targeted his family members who remain in Bahrain with arbitrary judicial harassment in an attempt to suppress his human rights work.

In October 2017, Bahrain convicted<sup>9</sup> three members of Sayed Ahmed's family in an unfair trial: Hajer Mansoor Hassan his mother-in-law, Sayed Nizar Alwadaei his brother-in-law, and Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor his cousin. The government charged them with placing a "fake bomb" on a public road. The three received three-year prison terms under Bahrain's anti-terrorism law, while Mahmood received an additional six-week sentence and 100 Bahraini Dinar fine for allegedly possessing a dagger. While in custody, Sayed Ahmed's family members were subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

In November 2017, Bahrain sentenced Sayed Nizar to an additional three years in prison in a separate trial based on charges of planting a fake bomb. On 26 March 2018, Bahrain's Fourth High Criminal Court sentenced Sayed Nizar to an additional seven years in prison for allegedly setting fire to a Ministry of Interior vehicle with Molotov cocktails.

Bahraini authorities have also targeted Sayed Ahmed's wife, Duaa Alwadaei. On 21 March 2018, a Bahraini court convicted<sup>10</sup> and sentenced Duaa *in absentia* to two months in prison for allegedly insulting a police officer. The trial followed Duaa's arbitrary detention and

<sup>6</sup> Sabbagh, Dan. "Bahraini Dissident Feared Being Thrown off London Embassy Roof." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 7 Aug. 2019, [www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/bahraini-dissident-feared-being-thrown-from-london-embassy-roof](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/aug/07/bahraini-dissident-feared-being-thrown-from-london-embassy-roof).

<sup>7</sup> News, Channel 4. "Police Break down Door of Bahrain Embassy in UK after Roof Protester 'Threatened.'" *YouTube*, YouTube, 7 Aug. 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcRhAHVCHOU&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcRhAHVCHOU&feature=youtu.be).

<sup>8</sup> "Khashoggi Killing: UN Human Rights Expert Says Saudi Arabia Is Responsible for 'Premeditated Execution.'" *OHCHR*, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24713&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=24713&LangID=E).

<sup>9</sup> "Family Members of BIRD's Director of Advocacy Sentenced to 3 Years in Prison as Reprisal Trial Concludes." *ADHRB*, 31 Oct. 2017, [www.adhrb.org/2017/10/family-members-of-birds-director-of-advocacy-sentenced-to-3-years-in-prison-as-reprisal-trial-concludes/](http://www.adhrb.org/2017/10/family-members-of-birds-director-of-advocacy-sentenced-to-3-years-in-prison-as-reprisal-trial-concludes/).

<sup>10</sup> "Bahrain: Wife of UK-Based Bahraini Human Rights Defender Convicted as Reprisals Escalate." Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, 21 Mar. 2018, [birdbh.org/2018/03/bahrain-wife-of-uk-based-bahraini-human-rights-defender-convicted-as-reprisals-escalate/](http://birdbh.org/2018/03/bahrain-wife-of-uk-based-bahraini-human-rights-defender-convicted-as-reprisals-escalate/).

interrogation at Bahrain International Airport in October 2016, along with her young son, Sayed Yousif, in retaliation for Sayed Ahmed's participation in a protest in London.

The government has also targeted expatriate dissidents for their social media activity. On 20 May 2019, the Director-General of the Ministry of Interior's General-Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Economic and Electronic Security (GDAEES) announced<sup>11</sup> a campaign to criminalize dissent via social media, specifically targeting activists' accounts. The campaign follows an "investigation" into social media accounts that "encourage sedition and harm civil peace, social fabric and stability." The GDAEES also claimed these accounts were involved in "executing a systematic plan to tarnish the image of Bahrain and its people."

The announcement specifically named activist Sayed Yousif AlMuhafdha<sup>12</sup> as one of the "fugitives." He is currently exiled in Germany. The announcement also named Hassan Abdulnabi AlSatri, who currently resides in Australia. Both are well-known activists and human rights defenders.

## Conclusion

ADHRB condemns the alleged attempt on Moosa Mohammed's life and the continued campaign by the Government of Bahrain to suppress fundamental freedoms. ADHRB calls on Bahrain to:

- Halt all pending executions and establish an official moratorium on the death penalty;
- Halt all campaigns to target asylum seekers and activists who reside outside Bahrain;
- Investigate allegations of torture and ill treatment, with a view to holding perpetrators responsible

Further, ADHRB calls on the international community and particularly HRC Member States to raise these and other cases with Bahrain, and to hold Bahrain accountable for human rights violations.

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<sup>11</sup> MOI, "Anti-Bahrain Social Media Accounts Being Run from Iran, Qatar, Iraq." [www.policemc.gov.bh/en/news/ministry/92021](http://www.policemc.gov.bh/en/news/ministry/92021).

<sup>12</sup> "Case History: Sayed Yousif Al-Muhafdha." Front Line Defenders, 14 Feb. 2016, [www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-sayed-yousif-al-muhafdha](http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/case-history-sayed-yousif-al-muhafdha).