



6 September 2019

Nathan A. Sales
Acting Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Sales,

We at Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) have [previously notified](#) the United States (US) Department of State (DoS) of multiple individuals in Bahrain's Ministry of Interior (MOI) – including **Brigadier Abdulaziz Mayoof al Rumaihi, Brigadier Mubarak bin Huwail al-Merri, Colonel Bassam Mohammed al-Muraj, Lt. Fawaz al-Sameem, Lt. Col. Adnan Bahar, and Major Maryam Al-Bardouli** – who have been allegedly involved or complicit in gross violations of human rights (GVHR). We believe that the number of individuals at such high levels who are accused of GVHR within the MOI illustrates systemic impunity and as such, in light of the following information, we urge this Department to immediately cease the provision of assistance to these security forces under the Leahy Law.

Brigadier Abdulaziz Mayoof al-Rumaihi has been the Director-General of the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science (GDCIFS) since July 2016, and previously was director of the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID). He has been accused of human rights violations as early as 2010 and ADHRB has documented more than 60 cases of severe abuse directly linked to the GDCIFS since al-Rumaihi assumed command. He also was implicated in the February 2017 death of unarmed suspect Abdullah al-Ajooz, whose family and other observers believe was extrajudicially killed during an attempted arrest by MOI personnel. As Director-General, al-Rumaihi is responsible for the actions of his inferior officers. He is thus responsible for refusing to prevent and punish torture, ill treatment, and extrajudicial killings by his subordinates. As such, we believe there is credible evidence that he has been involved and/or complicit in GVHR and should be barred entry to the US.

Brigadier Mubarak bin Huwail al-Merri, currently the Security Attaché with Bahrain's Embassy in Riyadh, was Director-General of Southern Governorate Police Directorate from 2016 to 2018 and was the Director of Anti-Narcotics from 2011 to 2016. There is extensive evidence that he oversaw the torture of at least six medical personnel that were arbitrarily detained in retaliation for treating wounded pro-democracy protesters in 2011. Dr. Rula al-Saffar, who served as president of the Bahrain Nursing Society and assistant professor at the College of Health Science in Manama, named Mubarak bin Huwail as the "principal investigator" when she was summoned to the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) and blindfolded, beaten, threatened with rape, and subjected to electric shock. She reported that bin Huwail "humiliated, intimidated and degraded" her and the other detainees in order to extract false testimony. Because al-Merri was definitively identified as a perpetrator of torture, we believe there is credible evidence that he has been involved in GVHR and should be barred entry to the US.

Colonel Bassam Mohammed al-Muraj was appointed by the king to Director-General of General Directorate of Anti-Corruption, Economic, and Electronic Security (GDAEES) in 2013, despite evidence emerging that he had directly overseen torture at his previous position at the CID. An investigation conducted by Human Rights Watch found that between 2007 and 2010, al-Muraj was identified as one of four chief torturers at the CID, and that the government had taken no action to address complaints about their abusive behavior. Al-Muraj has reportedly continued to torture dissidents since assuming control of the GDAEES. Additionally, al-Muraj's subordinate, Lieutenant Fawaz al-Sameem, has been implicated in at least three instances of abuse, all of which were reprisal attacks against activists for expressing peaceful criticism of the government. In at least one case, Lt. al-Sameem allegedly oversaw the beating, electric shock, and sexual assault of the detainee. Because al-Muraj has been definitively identified by multiple victims of torture as one of the main perpetrators of torture across multiple units in the MOI, we believe there is credible evidence that he has committed GVHR, and should be barred entry to the US.



Torture and abuse do not just occur during arrests and interrogation but continue during incarceration. Bahrain's prison system is notorious for its poor living conditions, denial of adequate health care, and rampant abuse against inmates. **Lt. Col. Adnan Bahar** has been identified as a lead perpetrator of torture starting as early as 2005. In 2008, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture documented severe cases of torture and sexual violence overseen by Lt. Col. Bahar when he was still a sergeant, prior to his position as Acting Head of Jau Prison. **Major Maryam Al-Bardouli**, who is the commander of Isa Town Women's Prison, has also reportedly beaten and assaulted detainees.

In addition to these individuals who we have previously flagged to DoS, there are several others we have identified in our 2019 report, [Anatomy of a Police State](#), who have played a role in, or oversaw, severe rights abuses – including Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Tariq al-Hassan, Abdullah al-Zayed, Ebrahim Habib al-Ghaith, Abdulsalam Yousef al-Oraifi, Abdullah Khaifa al-Jairan, Sheikh Rashid bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, and Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa. With so many alleged perpetrators within the MOI, we believe that GVHR are rampant and systemic to the institution, rather than a case of a few “bad apples.”

The US has legally recognized a respect for and furtherance of human rights through the Leahy Laws and 22 U.S.C. § 2304. The Leahy Laws prohibit the Department of State from providing military assistance to foreign security forces that commit GVHR. Additionally, 22 U.S.C. § 2304 notes human rights as a principal goal of foreign policy, and prohibits the provision of security assistance to any government that engages in GVHR. These laws provide the basis for the United States to deny certain benefits to a nation based on their human rights record.

As codified in 22 U.S.C.S § 2378d, the Department of State has the legal authority to prohibit assistance to any unit of security forces from a foreign state if the Secretary of State has credible information that that unit is participating in GVHR. 22 U.S.C. § 2304 gives the Department of State the authority to prohibit security assistance to any state that engages in a consistent pattern of GVHRs, which are defined as torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, punishment, prolonged detention without charges or trial, forced disappearances, and other flagrant denials of the right to life, liberty, and security of person. The information on individual perpetrators provided previously, as well as ADHRB's extensive report on the MOI has provided sufficient credible information of these abuses to meet that threshold.

The specific officers previously identified as perpetrators of human rights abuses should be ineligible for entry into the United States due to their involvement in torture, religious denigration, arbitrary detention, and harassment. Additionally, the security forces that these individuals work for should not receive assistance from the United States. Bahrain clearly does not meet its human rights obligations. On the contrary, it systematically represses fundamental freedoms and political, civil, and human rights. The level and manner of this repression may pose a threat to US security and stability in the region.

For the above reasons, we ask that the Department of State enforce the Leahy Laws and 22 U.S.C. § 2304 against Bahrain's security forces by ceasing all assistance to security forces until the human rights situation is improved.

Sincerely,

Husain Abdulla
Executive Director
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain