



August 31st 2022

UPR Pre-Session Statement on **Arbitrary Judicial Rulings** and **Freedom of Assembly** in Bahrain

Organization: Bahrain Forum for Human Rights

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Situation 1 - Arbitrary Judicial Rulings:

In the 2017 UPR cycle on Bahrain, 19 recommendations were issued regarding arbitrary sentences, including recommendations issued by 19 countries specifically regarding death penalties, calling for the abolition or suspension of executions.

Since 2017, the Bahraini authorities have carried out 5 arbitrary executions against PoCs, whose rulings were based on confessions extracted under torture.

Today, 22 PoCs are sentenced to death penalty also based on confessions extracted under torture. 12 of them have exhausted all the stages of litigation, and only a signature from the king of Bahrain remains for their executions to be carried out.

In addition to death penalties, the Bahraini authorities are distinguished by issuing sentences of revoking the citizenship of political opponents and human rights activists. The most prominent of which was against the leader of the political opposition, Ayatollah Sheikh Issa Qassem. The number of arbitrary citizenship revocation rulings has reached 800 cases at least. 627 of them were issued since 2018 i.e. after the previous UPR cycle, even though 4 countries issued recommendations calling for an end to the practice of revoking citizenship.

The Bahraini authorities are also issuing other arbitrary sentences, such as financial fines and imprisonments that amount to life sentences, against PoCs. The most prominent politician PoC, is the head of the opposition association 'Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society' Sheikh Ali Salman, who was arbitrarily sentenced to life imprisonment based on his political stance. The final judicial ruling against him was issued in 2019, i.e. after the last UPR cycle. The total number of arbitrary life imprisonment sentences reached 332 rulings, while other prison sentences reached 1895 rulings, from January 2018 to July 2022.



Situation 2 - Freedom of Assembly

In the 2017 UPR cycle, 12 recommendations were issued regarding the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, issued by 10 countries. Some of those recommendations were associated with the arbitrary rulings attributed to the suppression of the practice of the right to peaceful assembly and association, and 3 of them called for the immediate and unconditional release of PoCs who were tried and imprisoned for practicing their right to peaceful assembly or belonging to independent political associations.

Despite the issuance of all those recommendations, the Bahraini authorities still prevented the formation of independent political and human rights associations, and did not annul their decision to dissolve prominent associations such as 'Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society' and 'Waad Association'.

It also still does not permit for peaceful protest marches, and confronts them with repression through its security forces.

The number of peaceful demonstrations suppressed since May 2017, i.e. after the last UPR cycle, has reached 1,018 cases, resulting in many injuries and 6 fatalities among protesters.

Recommendations:

We thank all states' delegations that issued recommendations about arbitrary rulings and about the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the 2017 UPR cycle, but we inform them that, unfortunately, the government of Bahrain did not take their recommendations into account as it did not implement them, and therefore we ask all countries via states' delegations in the upcoming UPR cycle to intensify the demand and pressure on the government of Bahrain to take the following measures:

- Put a definitive and effective end to arbitrary judicial rulings of all kinds, especially the death penalty, the revocation of citizenship and life imprisonment, which are based on political stances against PoCs.
- Release all PoCs immediately and without conditions.
- Practically protect the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly in accordance with Bahrain's international obligations, especially those stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- Stop dissolving political associations and civil society organizations
- Annul the decisions to dissolve associations, especially 'Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society', 'Waad Association' and 'Amal Association'.