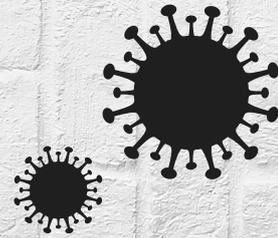


Bahrain: The deployment of the Covid-19 measures for religious persecution

A report on Ashura 2020



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Introduction:

Since 2011, the Bahraini government has persisted in its transformation Ashura – and, in a more general manner, the months of Muharram and Safar of the Islamic hijri year – into an occasion where it can exercise its policy of collective punishment on Shiite citizens through the methodical restraint of religious expression and practice of religious rites.

Violations have thus far have been wide and varied. These include severe restrictions on prisoners from exercising their religious rites, obstruction of religious displays such as signs or any public display of grief; that is, making it hard to participate in the external dress – whether of items or people – in the black of mourning. Several reciters (*ruwadeed*) and administrators of Hussainiyat were arrested and investigated by security forces regarding the content of their speeches and elegies. In an attempt to prevent mass prayers on the night of Ashura in Manama, many preachers had their speeches censored. Some had their sermons contested and criminalized due to a lack of consensus on fact relating to Islamic history. Several funeral processions were also attacked with teargas and rubber bullets. What remains a constant element underlying all these instances is their intentionality: they are borne out of a deliberate state-sanctioned political statement that is part of an institution.

Violations continued this year: attempts were made to prevent the opening of Hussainiyat, threats were made to block the funeral processions, public signage of Ashura was removed, and successive summons were made by the police to the preachers, reciters, and chanters of the Ashura lamentations. Hussainiyat administrators were also summoned, amongst receiving several threatening calls. Finally, there was the closure of some mosques and several of the Hussainiyat, with plans to close more.

It is here, already following a set of several security measures taken prior to the event and coinciding with security measures in place for the remembrance of Ashura, that the Bahraini authorities took advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic to tighten their grip on exercising religious freedom with regards to the commemoration. On the 3rd of August, a statement was release by Bahrain's Shiite theologians, stating to the Shiite populace that:

After careful consideration and consultation with experts and following worldwide measures also adopted in our beloved country with respect to careful coexistence with the pandemic, with the relatively long experience the people have sustained thus far

and our confidence in the knowledge gained from this span of time on how to deal with it: we find it prudent that the men's Hussainiyat are opened, along with the revival of religious rites during Ashura according to regulations and strict health precautions that, according to shariah, should not be transgressed nor be treated negligibly.

Despite the fact the aforementioned call was to exercise religious freedom according to strict safety measures, Hussainiyat and mosques were not opened on the 6th of August as Ashura approached, whilst gyms, outdoor fields, and swimming pools were included in the reopening plans. Prior to that date, many sectors and organizations were opening up, and, soon after, the commercial sector was included. On the 15th of August, the Head of the Supreme Council of Health (SCH) Mohamed Bin Abdullah Al Khalifa announced the reduction of the sermon's length and to perform the rites and mourning remotely. Hussainiyat were also allowed only a limited number of staff working on the live broadcasting in accordance to the precautionary measure. The Head of the SCH also regulated the duration of the live sermon to 20 minutes only, as well as preventing funeral processions, visitations, and banquet spreads, though people were allowed to engage in direct food deliveries to houses. The Jaffaria Waqf Directorate (JWD) called on people to stay committed to publicly displaying and dressing in mourning, clarifying that the speakers playing the sermon should start and end according to the duration of the broadcast.

On the 16th of August, the religious leader of the Shiite citizens of Bahrain Ayatollah Shaikh Eissa Ahmed Al Qassim issued a statement, commenting that "no place in the country is to be re-opened with specific [health] regulations regarding mass gatherings without the procession of the funeral opening up first. The commemoration is not an afterthought, but at the forefront."

In a meeting held by the Chairman of the JWD, Yousif bin Saleh Al Saleh, on the 16th of August via remote broadcasting with representatives from the funerary services and Hussainiyat on one end and two representatives from the Bahraini Ministry of Defense, Al Saleh remarked that "the JWD is merely an executive body affiliated with the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Waqf. [The JWD] works within a framework of government agencies and is bound by its decisions, especially those concerning the medical authorities and with what the world is currently undergoing with the Covid-19 pandemic".¹

The statement was an official acknowledgement of the non-independence of the JWD from the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Waqf, a violation of Articles 17 and 18 of the Bahraini Civil Law and of Islamic judgements specific to the Shiite citizens. The JWD also sought to cause clashes between the citizens and the administrators of the Hussainiyat with a statement it released on the 21st of August titled 'The Formation of an Organizing Committee from each Funerary Ser-

1 <http://bahrainmirror.com/news/58352.html>

vice to Structure the Reading of Hussain's Elegies to Prevent Mass Gatherings'. The statement came at a time when the Bahraini authorities were limiting and tightening space for freely performing religious rites.²

On the 26th of August, the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs announced the gradual return of services in mosques, mass worship, and religious gatherings in the foreseeable future, taking into account the necessary precautions and health measures, as well as the health recommendations of the specialized medical authorities, provided that a coordinated plan with the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs, and Waqf is drafted. With that being said, harassment over exercise to freely practice religious rites did not cease after the aforementioned announcement.

The State's Legal Obligation in the Protection of Religious Rites:

The practice of religious rites is an inherent right to individuals, religious groups, and religious sects who possess the freedom to choose. The Shiite civilians who subscribe to the Ja'fari sect have their own specific manifestations of the religious rites, which the state must provide protection and guarantee such an exercise from any external forces who might want to infringe upon this right, hitherto enshrined in the Bahraini Constitution, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as several other international, regional, and Islamic-country conventions. The nature of this right goes beyond the individual: as in the commemoration of Ashura, the exercise of these rights can be performed in a mass setting. Occurrences of exceptional circumstances regarding the commemoration should be handled accordingly with the parties concerned, such as the practitioners of the sect, to set appropriate measures moving forward. With the exceptional circumstance of the Covid-19 pandemic, the nature of the situation requires a coordinated effort between the state and the Shiite theologians.

When the state's response to such a situation is through the imposition of excessive measures or through an attempt to prohibit public commemoration rites, an individual's right to perform religious practices is infringed upon. As such, the state bears a legal obligation on two ends: firstly, through the recognition of the religious

² <https://www.jwd.gov.bh/ar/latest/news/4054/>

sect's right to perform the commemorative rites of Ashura and through the acknowledgement of the Shiite theologians as the appropriate delegation to coordinate the matter, and secondly, not only to consult with the proper organizers of the event, but to make sure that no provocation or harassment of mourners occurs at their sites of commemoration. This is a legal responsibility befallen on the state per Article 22 of the Bahraini Constitution, which states that:

Freedom of conscience is absolute. The State guarantees the inviolability of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites and hold religious parades and meetings in accordance with the customs observed in the country.³

Field-monitoring of Ashura Violations:

The practice of religious rites is an inherent right of individuals, religious groups, or religious sects who possess the freedom in choosing the appropriate way of exercising this right. The Shiite civilians who subscribe to the Ja'fari sect have their own specific manifestations of the religious rites, to which the state must provide protection and guarantee of such an exercise from any external forces who might want to infringe upon this right, hitherto enshrined in the Bahraini Constitution, Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as several other international, regional, and Islamic-country conventions. The nature of the right goes beyond the individual: as in the commemoration of Ashura, the exercise of this rights can be performed in a mass setting. Occurrences of exceptional circumstances regarding the commemoration should be handled accordingly with the parties concerned, such as the practitioners of the sect, to set appropriate measures moving forward. With the exceptional circumstance of the Covid-19 pandemic, the nature of the situation requires coordinated effort between the state and the Shiite theologians.

The violations first began this year on the 9th of August, specifically in Jaw and Hidd prison, where numerous inmates went on hunger strikes, demanding their right to perform the Hussainiya rites of Ashura. Consequently, 5 inmates of Jaw prison were transferred from Building 14 to Ward 1 in the solitary confinement Building 15. The transfer was:

A punitive measure, after they were accused by the prison administration of having incited the detainees in building 14 to start a hunger strike due to demands related to the right to receive treatment and to practice religious rites on August 9. [The details of the report on the Bahrain for Human Rights forum linked below]⁴

3 <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/bh/bh020en.pdf>

4 <https://bfhr.org/english/article.php?id=976&cid=148&st=prison>

The Dissemination of Harassment and the Myriad Manifestations of Violations:

Summonses:

- The Heads and members of the funerary service of the Sitra area were summoned and threatened in the event that they were engaged in funerary activities or organizing Hussainiya mourning operations for Ashura.
- The Heads of the funerary services in the Al Musalla area were summoned to investigate the issue of their raising a flag bearing the name of Imam Al Hussein.
- Summoning of the cleric of the Al Na'eem area (20/08/2020).
- Summonses were issued to several house in the Northern Governorate that displayed Ashura banners (21/08/2020).
- The Head of funerary services in Eskin Al 'Aali was summoned and directed to shut off external speakers.
- The organizers of the funerary service and procession were summoned in the state's capital city of Manama, where they were subjected to a long arduous investigation and threats of revocation of their civil rights as nationals.
- The organizers of a funerary service in Al Na'aeem are were summoned to the police station for several charges, one of which was the use speakers (21/08/2020).
- Citizens of the Northern Governorate were summoned by the area's police, and, as the summonses were being distributed, were instructed to take down the black banners they were displaying, hand them over to the police, and sign a pledge not not commit it again (22/08/2020).
- The administrative team of the mosques of Hamad Town were summoned by the police station in 17 Ring Road and told to stop all activities related to the reading and recitation of the Hussainiya elegies and other private activities performed on the 10th of Muharram. Mosques that were engaged in broadcasting programs from external sources on their social media accounts were also told to stop. The

organizers were forced to sign pledges to not participate in reciting elegies, broadcasting activities, or engaging in other Ashura rites.

- The organizers of funerary operations at the Al Zahra Congregational Mosque in Hamad Town, 10 Ring Road were summoned and told to stop all events related to Hussainiya elegies.
- The organizers of funerary operations at Al Sayed Majid, in the Al Qurayyah area, were summoned to the police station in Budaiya.
- The organizers of funerary operations at Al Sanabis, and some of the reciters there, were summoned to the exhibition centre in Manama.
- In the Al Dair area, one civilian was summoned to the Samaheej police station and forced to sign a pledge prohibiting him from organizing Ashura funerary processions and threatened with arrest if he continues to do so.
- Mohammed Al Haiki from the Al Muharraq area was summoned for raising a black Ashura banner over his house's rooftop.
- The organizers of funerary operations from the Al Qurayyah area were summoned to the police station in Budaiya.
- Several citizens in the Manama area were summoned.
- Dr. Wesam Khaleel was summoned and detained over his reading of the "Visit of Ashura" in one of the Hussainiyat.
- Several citizens of the Karrana area were summoned for displaying black banners on their houses.
- The organizers of funerary operations in Al Sammakeen, in Manama, were summoned.
- The administrators of the Abu Saiba Hussainiya were summoned.
- Administrators of several funerary operations in the Al Muharraq area were summoned and forced to sign pledges prohibiting them from carrying out funerary processions.
- Many Shiite theologians and preachers were summoned.
-

The Arbitrary Detention of Several Citizens, namely:

- Cleric of Al Zahra Congregational Mosque, in Hamad Town, 10 Ring Road, was arrested for displaying two Ashura banners and released upon their removal.
- The detainment of Sheikh Ibrahim Al Ansari [upon writing this report, he is still detained].
- The civilian Abd Al Nabi Al Sammak.
- The civilian Nasser Ali Nasser.

Arrest:

- 7 civilians were arrested in the Dar Kulaib area for hanging Ashura flags and banners. They were released after being forcibly made to sign a pledge.
-

Security Orders for the Closure of Funerary Services and Mosques, totaling 5 Cases:

- The funerary service of the Martyrs of Al Taff in the Al Na'eem area.
- The Mosque of Sayidda Khadeija in Hamad Town.
- The Al Zahra'a Mosque in Hamad Town, 4 Ring Road.
- The Al-Zahra'a Congregational Mosque in Hamad Town, 10 Ring Road; the locks were changed by the Ministry of Interior.
- The Imam Hasan Congregational Mosque and Centre in the Sadad area.
- Cases of Obstruction to Prevent Gatherings and Funerary Processions:
 - Prohibition on using loudspeakers during a funerary service in Al Sanabis.
 - Prohibition on using loudspeakers during funerary services in Al Qassab and Zubr, as well as several funerary services in towns of Manama.

- Prohibition on using loudspeakers in Al Qaem ('Aj) funerary service in the Eskan Al 'Aali area.
- Request to remove chairs set out for the congregation outside of the funerary service of Imam Ali (AS) in the Al Dair area.
- Issuing a warning against the funerary service in the Malikiya area from carrying out central funerary processions on the 9th day of Muharram.
- Issuing a warning to the funerary service in the Ansar 'Adala in the Diraz area from carrying out central funerary processions on the 10th day of Muharram.
- Prohibiting one of the clerics of the Hamad Town mosque from broadcasting their Hussaini gathering on the mosque's official social media account.
- Issuing warnings to civilians in the Karzakkan area regarding their annual convoy procession to the Malikiya area and informing them of the JWD's limitation to the vicinity of the funerary service.

It is worth noting that 5 of the obstruction cases aforementioned were regarding broadcasting via speakers, despite the fact that the JWD permitted the use of speakers, provided that the broadcast duration did not extend over 20 minutes.

Cases of Ashura Flag and Banner Removals:

- Ras Rumman
- South Sehla
- Samaheej
- Karzakkan
- 6 incidents in the Al Dair area
- Sitra – Al Kharijiya and Sitra – Wadiyan following a call from the mayor of the capital to the Hussainiyat, demanding the removal of the black banner and flags.
- Hamad Town, 10 Ring Road.
- Dar Kulaib

Additionally, public displays of Ashura and mourning near the mosque in the Bilad Al Qadeem area were vandalized.

Hate Speech:

On social media platforms, around 410 media messages were reported, all involving the incitement of hatred towards Shiite citizens, chiefly due to their participation in official social media campaigns of online performances of Ashura religious rites via anonymous accounts. Furthermore, on the 23rd of August, the editor-in-chief of the Gulf News newspaper Abd AlMun'im Ibrahim released an instigative article titled "In times of sickness, animals socially distance...yet humans are foolhardy!".

Violations on the Commemoration of the Arba'eeniya of CE2020/AH1442:

There were many instances of arrests and summonses on the commemoration of Imam Hussein's Arba'eeniya, which was dated this year on the 8th of October. The violations incurred by the security forces on the right to exercise religious rites, however, began before the commemoration event, where security authorities summoned human rights activists, warning them not to partake in the events.

On the eve of the commemoration – that is, on the 7th of October – Shiite citizens across many regions and areas throughout Bahrain were taking part in the remembrance, an exercise of religious rites that was not free from provocations and instigations by security forces. The authorities invoked the Covid-19 pandemic as reason to prevent the Hussainiya gatherings, yet, on the same night, did nothing to stop the throngs of people going out to celebrate the win of a football team. The revelers took no heed to the Covid-19 public health measures, such as staying a safe distance apart, and many were not wearing medical face masks,⁵ a sight vastly different to the one in Hussaniya gatherings, where there was a strict adherence to the preventive measures.

Some of the violations occurring on the commemoration of the Arba'eeniya against its practitioners have been indexed; they include 36 cases of summonses, 32 cases of arbitrary arrest, and 2 cases of arbitrary arrest on the grounds of commemorating Prophet Muhammad's death on the 16th of October.

⁵ The following is a video on a social media site which shows the lack of adherence to preventive health measures with no interference from the security forces, as opposed to the instances of intervention on people safely exercising religious rites; <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGDkr2QhHul/>

Acts of Provocation to Limit Practice of Ashura Rites		
Area	Date	Description
Al Muharraq	7-Oct-2020	Placement of security personnel outside a funerary service to prevent people from entering and taking part in commemoration rites.
Eskan Al 'Aali	7-Oct-2020	Quarrel between security forces and mourners amidst a congregation for the commemoration of the Arba'eeniya.
Karzakkan	7-Oct-2020	Confiscation of loudspeakers and dispersal of gatherers at a funerary service in southern Karzakkan.
Bani Jamra	7-Oct-2020	Members of security forces took footage of a funerary service and the numbers of houses surrounding it.
Al Qurayyah	7-Oct-2020	Plain clothed members of security forces took photographs of gatherers [to identify later] and their license plates at Hussainiya on the commemoration of the Arba'eeniya.

Summonses				
	Name	Area	Description	Date
1	Ali Al Muhana	Al Daih	Second summons to the Sitra police station within a week, on the charge for calling .against normalizing with Israel	4-Oct-2020
2	Ali Al Muhana	Al Daih	Third summons to the Sitra police station .within a week	6-Oct-2020
3	Hajj Abdul Majeed Abdullah	Ras Ruman	Summoned to the Al Khamees police station	6-Oct-2020

4	Sayyid Sa'eed 'Eisa Hussein	Sitra – Al Kharijiya	---	6-Oct-2020
5	Muneer 'Mushaimei	---	Summoned to the police station at the exhibitions center for the second time	6-Oct-2020
6	Ali Al Jaziri	Al Daih	---	6-Oct-2020
7	Reciter Ahmed Al Majid	Karzakkan	---	6-Oct-2020
8	Reciter Habeeb Al Mehdi	Karzakkan	---	6-Oct-2020
9	Reciter Mehdi Sahwan	Manama	.Summoned to Al Hoorra police station	6-Oct-2020
10	Reciter Abdulamir Al Biladi	---	---	6-Oct-2020
11	Ali Al Mughanna	Al Daih	Fourth summons to the Sitra police station within one week to confirm that he is adhering to the pledges he signed from previous visits	7-Oct-2020
12	Faisal Al Shamrookh	Al Sanabis	Director of the funerary service at Al Sanabis, summoned to the police station at Al Hoorra	8-Oct-2020
13	Reciter Al Sayyid Hussein Al Malki	Al Malikiya	Summoned to the police station at Al Hoorra on the charge of participating in the commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020

14	Mehdi Hussein Al Ali	Maqaba	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
15	Reciter Mehdi Sahwan	Manama	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
16	Ali Al Hulabi	---	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
17	Ahmed Abbas Ali	Karzakkan	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
18	Hussein Saleh Al Qattan	Karzakkan	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
19	Ahmed Said Khatem	Karzakkan	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
20	Ahmed Jawad Ahmed	Karzakkan	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
21	Abbas Muhammed Mehdi Al Ghasrah	Bani Jamra	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
22	Al Sayyid 'Adel Hamza	Manama	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020
23	Reciter Qasim Marhoun	---	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	8-Oct-2020

24	Reciter Sadiq Mut-tar Fateel	Sitra - Ma-haza	.Summoned to the Sitra police station	8-Oct-2020
25	Ahmed Nasser	Al Markh	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	9-Oct-2020
26	Hussein Al 'Sumai	Al Sanabis	.'Brother of the martyr Abbas Al Sumai	12-Oct-2020
27	Reciter Mahmoud Al Fardan	Karzakkan	.Summoned to the police station number 17	12-Oct-2020
28	Muneer 'Mushaimei	Al Sanabis	'Brother of the martyr Sami Mushaimei	12-Oct-2020
29	Muhammed Abbas	Al Sanabis	---	12-Oct-2020
30	Reciter Hussein Gambar	---	.Summoned to Al Hooraa police station	12-Oct-2020
31	Director of the Al Ja'af-ariya funer-ary service	Al Daih	.Summoned to Al Khamees police station	12-Oct-2020
32	Faisal Al Shamrookh	Al Sanabis	Director of the funerary service at Al Sana-bis, summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	Oct-2020-1۳
33	Ja'afer Al Shamrookh	Al Sanabis	Summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in the .commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	Oct-2020-1۳
34	Hassan Al Mu'alma	Al Sanabis	Chairman of the funerary service at Al Sanabis, summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in .the commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	Oct-2020-1۳

35	Hani Yusef Al Kareem	Al Sanabis	Vice chairman of the funerary service at Al Sanabis, summoned to the police station at Al Hooraa on the charge of participating in .the commemoration of Al Arba'eeniya	Oct-2020-1 ³
36	Reciter Al Sayyid Ahmed Hashem 'Alawi	Al Sanabis	.Summoned to Al Hooraa police station	Oct-2020-1 ⁴

Arbitrary Arrests

Number	Name	Area	Date of Arrest	Date of Release	Method of Arrest	Release Conditions
1	Ali Al Muhana	Daih	4-Oct-2020	5-Oct-2020	Summons note	Unconditional release
2	Habeeb Al Mehdi	Karzakkan	6-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
3	Ahmed Al Majed	Karzakkan	6-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
4	Reciter Al Sayyid Hussein Al Malki	Al Malikiya	8-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
5	Reciter Qasim Marhoun	---	8-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
6	Mehdi Hussein Al Ali	Maqaba	8-Oct-2020	11-Oct-2020	Summons note	Unconditional release
7	Reciter Mehdi Sahwan	Manama	8-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
8	Ali Al Hulaibi	---	8-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
9	Ahmed Abbas Ali	Karzakkan	8-Oct-2020	10-Oct-2020	Summons note	Release on bail of 300 dinars
10	Hussein Saleh Al Qattan	Karzakkan	8-Oct-2020	10-Oct-2020	Summons note	Release on bail of 300 dinars
11	Ahmed Said Khatem	Karzakkan	8-Oct-2020	10-Oct-2020	Summons note	Release on bail of 300 dinars

12	Ahmed Jawad Ahmed	Karzakkan	8-Oct-2020	10-Oct-2020	Summons note	Release on bail of 300 dinars
13	Abbas Muhammed Mehdi Al Ghasrah	Bani Jamra	8-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
14	Al Sayyid 'Adel Hamza	Manama	Oct--^ 2020	Not released	Summons note	
15	Reciter Sadiq Muttar Fateel	Sitra - Mahazza	Oct--^ 2020	Not released	Summons note	
16	Ahmed Nasser	Al Markh	9-Oct-2020	11-Oct-2020	Summons note	Release on bail of 300 dinars
17	Ahmed Gambar	Al Nuwaidrat	10-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
18	Abdullah Khatem	Al Nuwaidrat	10-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
19	Hussein Gambar	Al Nuwaidrat	10-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
20	Ali Jum'aa	Al Nuwaidrat	10-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
21	Reciter Ja'afar Sahwan	Al Sanabis	11-Oct-2020	Not released	House raid	
22	Sayyid Hussein Hashim Al Deeri	Al Sanabis	11-Oct-2020	Not released	In front of house	
23	Sayyid Hussein Hadi	Al Malikiya	11-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
24	Sayyid Abdullah Hassan	---	11-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
25	Yusef Ali Al Malki	Al Malikiya	11-Oct-2020	Not released	King Fahad bridge	
26	Reciter Ja'afar Fathal	Karranah	12-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
27	Reciter Mahmood Al Fardan	Karzakkan	12-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
28	Hussein Al 'Samei	Al Sanabis	12-Oct-2020	Not released	Summons note	
29	Reciter Kameel Al 'Ashoor	---	12-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	
30	Mohammed Abbas Kareem (secretary of the funerary service at Al (Sanabis	Al Sanabis	12-Oct-2020	Not released	Unidentified	

31	Mahmood Ja'afer Thaif	Sitra – Al Kharijiya	13-Oct- 2020	Not re- leased	House raid	
32	Sayyid Mo'ayid Mohammed	Al Markh	13-Oct- 2020	Not re- leased	House raid	
33	Sayyid Mazen Al'Alawi	Al Dair	Oct--1st 2020	Not re- leased	Unidentified	
34	Sayyid Wa'il Al'Alawi	--	Oct--1st 2020	Not re- leased	Unidentified	

The Lack of Religious Tolerance:

Following political unrest in 2011, the authorities in Bahrain have been purposeful and persistent in their efforts to narrow Shiites citizens' freedom to exercise their religious beliefs, effectively undermining religious tolerance. This sectarian prosecution is easily identified in the violations occurring within the season of Ashura commemoration. The Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, adopted by UNESCO in the General Conference on the November 16th, 1995, states Article 2, paragraph 4, that "Intolerance may take the form of marginalization of vulnerable groups and their exclusion from social and political participation, as well as violence and discrimination against them".⁶ The reality of the marginalization and exclusion of Shiite citizens in Bahrain has been well-documented in reports by international human rights bodies and institutions.

Instead of fostering an environment of religious tolerance and coexistence through ending manifestations of sectarian oppression, the Bahraini authorities have created tools that chip away at religious tolerance on one hand, and, on the other, passes it off as an olive branch of peace and tolerance as it builds organizations and holds events that promote the image of the religious tolerance in the international community

Summary of Report:

Countless violations of the right to freedom of religion and religious practice have been inflicted upon Shiite citizens in their attempts to practice Ashura rites in Bahrain, ranging from summonses and arbitrary arrests, the closure of funerary services and mosques, the obstruction of holding gatherings and funeral processions, the confiscation or destruction of Ashura flags and banners, and acts of provocation committed by security forces in twenty-six areas of Bahrain.

Security forces have adopted a methodology for undermining religious freedom as a policy of collective punishment. This strategy bolsters the imposition of formal customs and traditions that criminalize religious practices and rights – as in the way Bahraini authorities have used their judiciary powers of investigation and prosecution as tools of intimidation

⁶ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13175&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

against Shiite preachers and religious reciters. These methods not only restrict the scope of religious freedom, but, more generally, affects freedom of expression: both rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights under articles 18 and 19.

Recommendations:

1. The Bahraini government must cease sectarian persecution and should not restrict the practice of religious and Husseiniya rites.
2. The government should draft and enact laws that criminalize the encroachment on religious rites, holding all those who violate these rights accountable.
3. The government should not interfere with affairs regarding funerary services and Husseiniyat, including the freedom to practice within public.
4. The government should allow the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief to visit Bahrain.
5. We hope that member states of the Human Rights Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights support Shiite citizens' right to exercise freedom of religion and belief in Bahrain without restrictions.
6. Those involved, including prison officials, should be held accountable for their violations on religious freedoms, especially those concerning the commemoration of Ashura.



Bahrain: The deployment of the Covid-19 measures for religious persecution



Countless violations of the right to freedom of religion and religious practice have been inflicted upon Shiite citizens in their attempts to practice Ashura rites in Bahrain, ranging from summonses and arbitrary arrests, the closure of funerary services and mosques, the obstruction of holding gatherings and funeral processions, the confiscation or destruction of Ashura flags and banners, and acts of provocation committed by security forces in twenty-six areas of Bahrain.

Security forces have adopted a methodology for undermining religious freedom as a policy of collective punishment. This strategy bolsters the imposition of formal customs and traditions that criminalize religious practices and rights – as in the way Bahraini authorities have used their judiciary powers of investigation and prosecution as tools of intimidation against Shiite preachers and religious reciters. These methods not only restrict the scope of religious freedom, but, more generally, affects freedom of expression: both rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights under articles 18 and 19.

