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Political Reform in Bahrain since the 1990s: A Workshop on Political Parties and the Constitution

**11.11.21
1500-1800 GMT**

Following the Uprising of Dignity in Bahrain from 1994 to 1999, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa came into power. In 2001, he promulgated the National Action Charter of Bahrain which received overwhelming support by referendum. The Charter symbolized a new direction for Bahrain, a country divided along ethnic and sectarian lines and whose history was punctuated by dissent and calls for democracy. A year later, however, a top-down Constitution was put forth by the reigning King, unfavorably received by many citizens and curtailing their active political and social engagement in Bahrain. Demands were made for a democratic-based and contractual Constitution. Opposition political parties, mainly Al-Wefaq and the National Democratic Action Society (Al-Wa'ad), boycotted the 2002 elections as a result.

By 2002, the vision of Bahrain's future was fragmented into two parts: 1) The vision of the King and the ruling family; and 2) The vision that the opposition parties and the popular movements held on the other. Since the Bahrain Spring uprising in 2011, the political situation has worsened for those engaging in dissent. Independent media has been banned, political and human rights activists have had their citizenship revoked, sentences of life imprisonment have been handed down to activists, and some are even on death row. After banning Al-Wefaq and Al-Wa'ad in 2016 and 2017, respectively, the government has made it illegal for anyone who has ever been a member of those parties to run for political office.

Organized by SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights and SEPAD, this workshop interrogates ideas of at social and political reform in Bahrain since the 1990s, considering efforts by both the ruling class and dissenting citizens. It seeks contributions that reflect on the following themes:

1. The nature of political and social reform propagated by the current King, Crown Prince, and the ruling regime
2. Political and social reform from the perspective of the opposition political parties and other dissenters
3. A critical review of the 2002 Bahraini Constitution and prospects for a new Constitution
4. The challenges in and opportunities for achieving political and social reform in Bahrain

It will be structured in two main parts: the first is a roundtable discussion between invited speakers from across the political spectrum while the second takes the form of a panel discussion.

Please submit abstracts of no more than 250 words to Adam Caunt at a.caunt@salam-dhr.org by **17th October**. Successful applicants will be informed by the end of October.