


# KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

## FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

BAHRAIN  
MARCH 2025

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# WHAT IS FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY?

Freedom of peaceful assembly is a fundamental human right that allows individuals to gather, protest, or demonstrate in a peaceful manner. It is protected under international law.

## INTERNATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORK

### UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

#### Article 20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

### INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS

#### Article 21

The right to peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in accordance with the law and that are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety, public order, the protection of public health or morals, or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

## DOMESTIC LEGAL FRAMEWORK

THE 2002 CONSTITUTION OF BAHRAIN  
RECOGNIZES THIS RIGHT.  
ARTICLE 28 STATES:

- a. Individuals have the right to hold private meetings without the need for prior permission or notification, and no member of the public security forces may attend their private meetings.
- b. Public meetings, marches, and gatherings are permitted in accordance with the conditions and regulations set by the law, provided that the purpose and means of the gathering are peaceful and do not violate public morals.



## WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLIES AND PROTESTS?

- 1 You have the right to organize and participate in peaceful protests, marches, and gatherings.
- 2 Authorities must respect and facilitate peaceful assemblies.
- 3 In many countries, prior permission is not required, but in Bahrain, notification is mandatory.
- 4 You have the right to express your opinions during assemblies, including through banners, chants, and speeches.
- 5 The police must not use excessive force against peaceful protesters.
- 6 Counter-demonstrations are allowed but must not obstruct peaceful gatherings.
- 7 Assemblies can take various forms, including demonstrations, protests, meetings, marches, parades, spontaneous protests, and online demonstrations.







**WHAT BEHAVIORS MIGHT PUT THE RIGHT TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AT RISK? AND HOW CAN GATHERINGS BE ORGANIZED SAFELY AND PEACEFULLY?**

- Any form of violence or actions that may cause harm to public or private property or endanger individuals can put the right to peaceful assembly at risk.
- Maintain good organization and respectful behavior toward the rights of others during the gathering.
- Participants in peaceful assemblies should ensure that their message is clear and does not contain any calls for violence or threats.
- Signs, slogans and other peaceful tools can be used to express opinions.







Although the right to peaceful assembly is a fundamental right, it is subject to certain restrictions, such as maintaining public order and national security. Authorities may impose specific limitations on location, timing or method, but these restrictions must be clearly defined and reasonable.

Being aware of these restrictions is essential for your safety.



## RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY IN BAHRAIN

- ❌ Prior notification to the Public Security Chief is mandatory at least three days before any gathering.
- ❌ Organizers must meet good conduct and residency requirements.
- ❌ Security authorities have the power to change the location and time of gatherings or prohibit them altogether.
- ❌ Demonstrations and marches are banned in the capital, Manama.
- ❌ Penalties, including imprisonment and fines, may be imposed on anyone who remains assembled after an official dispersal order is issued by a public authority or who gathers with the intent of disturbing public security.

# LAWS RESTRICTING AND CRIMINALIZING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY IN BAHRAIN

## LAW

### Decree-Law No. (18) of 1973 on Public Meetings, Processions, and Gatherings

## ARTICLE

### Article 2

Organizers must notify the Chief of Public Security at least three days in advance before holding a public meeting.

### Article 3

- The organizer must be from the city or area where the meeting will be held (Article 3/1).
- They must reside in that city or village or be well-known for good reputation (Article 3/2).
- They must enjoy full civil and political rights (Article 3/3), meaning those whose rights have not been restricted by the state—such as those barred from running for office or voting due to past political participation.
- The notification must include the names, occupations, and addresses of the signatories (Article 3/4).
- If any of these conditions are not met, the notification is considered void, and the request to hold the meeting will not be accepted.

### Article 4

The Chief of Public Security has the authority to change the time and place of a meeting or ban any public gathering deemed a threat to "public order."

### Article 8

Any meeting held in a public or private place open to individuals without personal invitations is considered a public meeting.  
A meeting may also be deemed public by the Chief of Public Security based on its topic, the number of invitations, or other factors.  
Religious gatherings and meetings held by commercial companies are not considered public meetings.

# LAWS RESTRICTING AND CRIMINALIZING PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY IN BAHRAIN

## LAW

## ARTICLE

## PROVISION

**DECREE-LAW NO.  
(22) OF 2013  
AMENDING  
ARTICLE 11 OF  
DECREE-LAW NO.  
(18) OF 1973**

**Article 11**

**Prohibits demonstrations and processions in the capital, Manama.**

**Bans protests, marches, gatherings, or sit-ins before sunrise or after sunset unless a special written permit is obtained from the Chief of Public Security.**

**Prohibits demonstrations near hospitals, airports, shopping centers, or security-sensitive locations, as determined and announced by the Minister of Interior.**

**Prohibits the use of vehicles in any protest, march, or gathering without special written permission from the Chief of Public Security or their representative.**

**DECREE-LAW NO.  
(18) OF 1973 ON  
PUBLIC MEETINGS,  
PROCESSIONS,  
AND GATHERINGS**

**Article 13**

**Illegal protests punishable by:**

**Up to 3 months in jail or a fine (100 BHD) for organizers of unapproved protests.**

**Up to 6 months in jail or a fine (100 BHD) for continuing a protest after a ban.**

**Up to 1 month in jail or a fine (20 BHD) for participating in a banned protest.**

**Up to 15 days in jail or a fine (15 BHD) for other violations of the law.**

**BAHRAIN  
PENAL CODE**

**Article 178**

**Gathering of 5 or more people is punishable if it aims to commit crimes or disturb public security (even if the goal is lawful). Penalty: Fine or up to 2 years in prison.**

**Article 180**

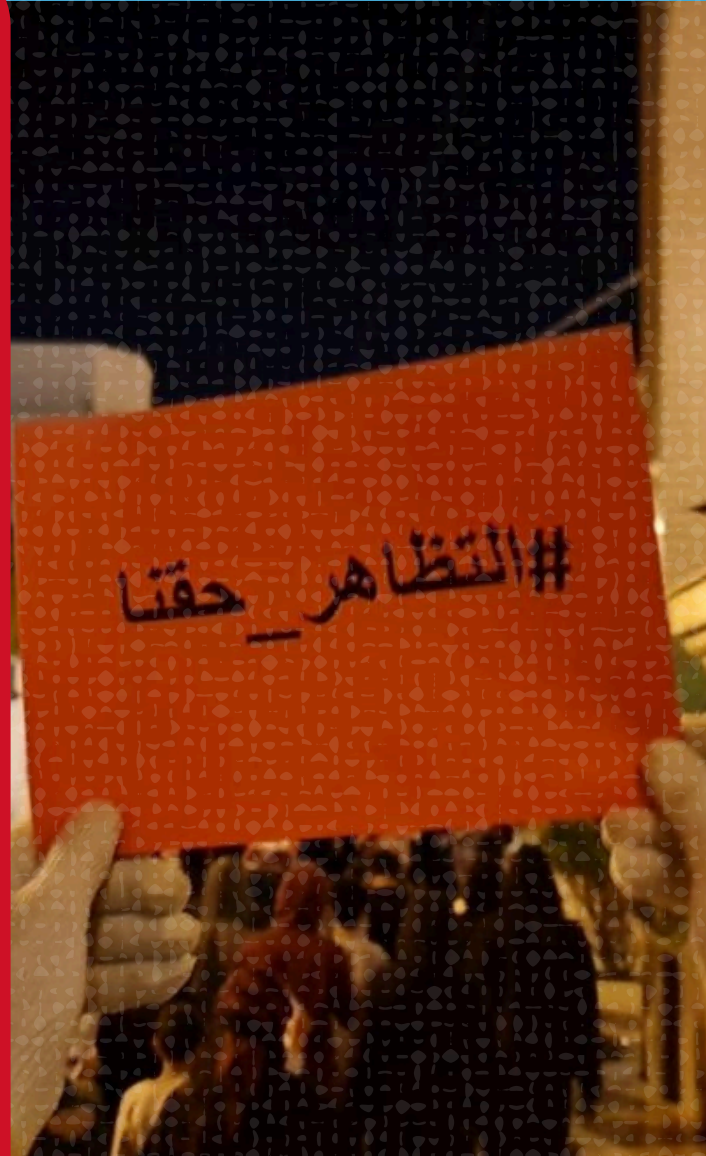
**Remaining in a gathering after being ordered to disperse. Penalty: Unlimited jail time and a fine of up to 300 BHD**





## WHAT ARE THE ILLEGAL PRACTICES AGAINST PROTESTERS?

- ✗ Excessive use of force and violence against peaceful demonstrators.
- ✗ Arbitrary arrests, detaining protesters without clear charges or for prolonged periods without a fair trial.
- ✗ Restrictions on freedom of expression, including banning slogans, confiscating banners, or cutting off the internet and social media.
- ✗ Arbitrary criminalization, fabricating charges such as "disturbing public security" or "inciting sedition" to punish participants.
- ✗ Surveillance of activists, including wiretapping their calls or monitoring social media to identify protest participants.
- ✗ Excessive restrictions on demonstrations, imposing laws that prohibit or severely limit protests to reduce participation.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED?

### Stay calm and document everything

Record videos, take photos, and note down badge numbers of officials.

### Seek legal assistance

Contact a lawyer for support or reach out to human rights organizations.

### Report violations

File a complaint with national institutions like the National Institution for Human Rights or with international bodies such as UN Special Procedures.

Reach out to the press and international human rights organizations to expose repression and pressure authorities.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM ARRESTED?

If you are arrested, try to:

- Stay calm and follow police instructions.
- Make sure someone knows which police station you are being taken to.
- Keep the name and phone number of a trusted lawyer with you.
- Before interrogation or signing any statement ensure you have the opportunity to speak with a lawyer.

### TIPS

#### ESSENTIAL SAFETY TIPS FOR PROTESTS AND GATHERINGS

1. Know the local laws regarding protests and assemblies.
2. Keep emergency numbers written down including legal aid contacts.
3. Carry essential supplies, such as water, a fully charged phone and protective gear if needed.
4. Stay with a group and designate a meeting point in case of separation.
5. Be aware of your surroundings and exit routes.
6. Avoid using materials or signs that could be considered provocative or illegal.
7. Do not carry sharp objects or items that could be perceived as weapons.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BAHRAINI GOVERNMENT



**Amend local laws to align with international human rights standards.**

**Ensure that security authorities do not arbitrarily misuse their powers against peaceful assemblies**

**Protect activists and protest participants from arbitrary detention.**

**Lift restrictions on organizing demonstrations in Manama.**

**Strengthen the role of independent bodies in monitoring protests and protecting human rights.**

## RESOURCES & SUPPORT

UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org))

Legal Aid Organizations (<https://salam-dhr.org/language/ar/>)

Bahrain National Institution for Human Rights ([www.nihr.org.bh](http://www.nihr.org.bh))

Amnesty International ([www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org))

Human Rights Watch ([www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org))



[www.salam-dhr.org](http://www.salam-dhr.org)

Email: [info@salam-dhr.org](mailto:info@salam-dhr.org)



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