

**2024**

**SALAM DHR  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**

**ACTION UNDER  
ADVERSITY**



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# Summary

Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR) produced its highest quality research and fielded its most impactful advocacy projects under conditions of war and unrest in the MENA region. Amidst mass protests and arrests in Bahrain and war in Lebanon, the SALAM DHR team published four major reports, the largest of which was a survey and study on Bahrain's Parliament and public perceptions of MPs, finding that Bahraini citizens currently feel marginalised by public affairs and state governance, and advising that public participation minimises the risks of human rights violations and provides justice and accountability. It also published "My Mother, My Nationality" which examined the impact of gender-based discrimination on Bahraini women and their children, using Bahraini women's inability to transmit citizenship to their children and how it can result in the statelessness of children when the father is foreign or stateless. The report's interviews provide a voice for Bahraini women and children who have been affected by this institutionalised form of discrimination. The SALAM DHR team engaged in global advocacy, attending trainings on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Tbilisi, Georgia, and Kisumu, Kenya, which developed into the "Demonstrating is Our Right" campaign and report. SALAM DHR continued its advocacy against statelessness throughout the year, attending the Global Alliance to End Statelessness Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Additionally, SALAM DHR Chairman Jawad Fairouz gave a lecture on his experience as a survivor of citizenship stripping and statelessness at the Statelessness Awareness Forum in Alicante, Spain. Additionally, the SALAM DHR team travelled to Geneva, Switzerland to meet with UNHCR for the 57th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC57), to discuss recent mass arrests, torture and ill-treatment of prisoners in Bahrain, and ongoing civil and political issues in Bahrain, along with the ongoing problem of Bahraini women being unable to transmit their nationality, which causes statelessness among children.

SALAM DHR took part in five webinars throughout 2024, covering citizen representation in the Gulf, options for democratic advocacy and ongoing threats to human rights in the region, such as the death penalty, citizenship revocation, and gender-based oppression. It also attended the Alternative Human Rights Expo in November 2024, with two dozen partner organisations, the event called for the release of human rights defenders (HRDs), women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and activists persecuted across the MENA region. It also showcased the resilience of detained HRDs, artists, poets, writers, and musicians, highlighting their work despite ongoing repression.

**Outputs remain constant, with SALAM DHR publishing seven articles and five press releases. Additionally, we recruited and trained 17 interns from universities across the planet. SALAM DHR has worked under tremendous adversity, with its members supporting each other to engage in professional human rights monitoring, research and advocacy. Its mission will continue in 2025, developing projects to the highest standard in the sector.**

# Introduction

2024 was a tumultuous year across the MENA/WANA region. Positive developments occurred in Bahrain, namely the release of 3,482 prisoners, including over 800 prisoners of conscience, many held for exercising their rights to political participation and peaceful free expression. Some prisoners were granted amnesty by King Hamad Isa bin Khalifa, while others are now serving alternative sentences outside of prison. SALAM DHR welcomes this development from the Government of Bahrain (GoB). However, 340 prisoners of conscience remain incarcerated, many of which were arrested for non-violent offences international observers consider to be trumped-up charges, convictions rendered from unfair trials, and inordinately long sentences. Peaceful protests calling for the release of key figures such as Sheikh Ali Salman, Hasan Mushaima, Abudjalil Al-Singace, and Abulnabi Al-Khawaja continued throughout the year, often resulting in police summons for protesters. Additionally, the GoB has not commuted the death sentences of the 26 individuals who remain on death row and made no effort to introduce a moratorium on the death penalty.

Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon and Yemen all endured mass destruction, killing thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands. In Bahrain, mass demonstrations in solidarity with Gaza and Lebanon resulted in a systematic crackdown from security forces. Throughout the year, hundreds were arrested for publicly condemning the normalisation of relations between Bahrain and Israel. An unprecedented number of imams, reciters, religious scholars and other clerics from Bahrain's Shi'a community were subjected to police summons, arrests and travel bans for exercising their rights to freedom of speech, expression and peaceful assembly.

Freedom of speech continued to be suppressed. On 25 March, activist and former leader of Wa'ad, Ebrahim Sharif, was arrested for criticising the GoB's decision to take full ownership of the McLaren Group on social media.

In 2024, the month of Muharram witnessed a previously unprecedented crackdown on Shi'a figures, with extensive travel bans instated to prevent foreign clerics from entering Bahrain, along with the shuddering of husseiniyas and dozens of arrests against imams, Islamic scholars, and laypersons using Muharram and Ashura to criticise normalisation.



SALAM DHR members training with other activists on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Kisumu, Kenya.

# Introduction

Arrests and police summons have only intensified since September 2024. On 11 October, Shi'a cleric and head of Bahrain's Ulema Council, Majeed Al-Mashaal, was summoned for a criminal investigation. Other Shi'a leaders, such as Sheikh Fadel Al-Zaki and Sheikh Ali Al-Mutaghawi were also detained.

On 18 October, following two weeks of clashes between police and Shi'a worshippers Al Sadiq Mosque, in Diraz, security forces closed all entrances to Al Sadiq Mosque, the largest Shi'a mosque in Bahrain, to prevent worshippers from entering. The mosque remains shuttered. That same day, security forces entered the Shi'a-majority town of Sanabis, reportedly after news spread that Shi'a imam, Sheikh Muhammad Sanqour, was praying at a nearby mosque.

The Government of Bahrain (GoB) continues to silence dissident voices from all persuasions. In April 2024, Mohammed Al-Husseini, an MP and Sunni Salafist, called upon the GoB to release all political prisoners, specifically Sheikh Ali Salman, one of Bahrain's most prominent Shi'a clerics and activists, as well as the leader of Al-Wafaq. Soon after, Al-Husseini's position as MP was revoked by the Court of Cassation on the grounds that he is a dual citizen of Bahrain and Pakistan. In August 2024, his Bahraini citizenship was revoked, and he was arrested and deported to Pakistan. His children, whose citizenships were also revoked, had their Bahraini nationalities restored after Al-Husseini's wife publicly pleaded with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa for clemency, which spared them deportation. Bahraini media did not cover Al-Husseini's de-selection, arrest or deportation. He is currently stateless in Pakistan.



A protest held outside of Manama, 2024

# Introduction

SALAM DHR itself worked under tremendous strain this past year, with members of its Lebanon office often in danger of physical harm or displacement. Numerous staff were affected by the terrible toll of war, having lost friends, family and homes. Under these conditions, despite everything, SALAM DHR's team composed its highest quality research and fielded its most impactful advocacy projects to date. Those milestones can only be credited to the talent, tenacity and compassion of the SALAM DHR team, which has dedicated its mission to looking after one another, while continuing to advocate for Bahrainis, in extraordinarily difficult times. Those values kept us strong, grounded and committed to our mission of promoting democracy, human rights and peace in 2024.



*Arrest of human rights activist Ali Husain al-Hajee, 3 May 2024. al-Hajee was arrested for engaging in a sit-in, protesting a travel ban against him.*



# SALAM DHR Activities & Metrics – 2024

ACTIVITY	METRIC
Official Statements Published	7
Major Projects and Reports	4
Press Releases Published	7
Articles Published	5
Films Made	3
Events Held	11
Roundtable Consultations	6
Human Rights Council Sessions Attended	2
Interns Recruited	17



# Major Projects and Reports of 2024

## Taking Action – SALAM DHR 2023 Annual Report

Reviewing 2023 activities and developments, SALAM DHR set out its milestones in research and activism. SALAM DHR's monitoring finds that although protests in Bahrain have increased dramatically over the past year due to the war in Gaza, popular discontent is driven by systematic issues, such as a longstanding lack of religious freedom and representation for the country's Shi'a Muslim community, hundreds of prisoners of conscience and nationals forced into exile since 2011, and opposition to the Bahraini government normalising its relations with Israel, via the Abraham Accords, in 2020. These separate developments have coalesced into open opposition to state policies from civilians in Bahrain.

The annual report explores these thematic issues individually. In 2023 alone, SALAM DHR:

- Composed 10 reports
- Made 10 public statements
- Held 4 events
- Engaged with 3 human rights bodies
- Trained 12 interns





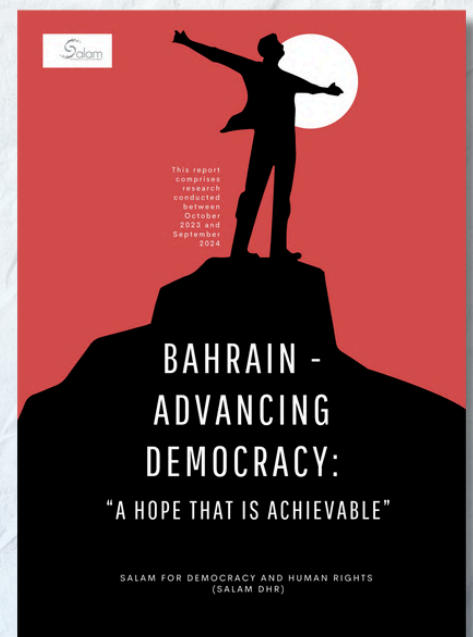
# Major Projects and Reports of 2024

## Bahrain – Advancing Democracy “A Hope that is Achievable”

Published in October 2024, SALAM DHR’s largest, most resource-intensive report to date compiles research from October 2023 to September 2024 examining citizens’ participation in public life within Bahrain. This report comes during a period of what the Government of Bahrain (GoB) promotes as calm and good governance with the belief that its 2011 conflicts have been recovered and learnt from. The report however finds a growing relapse into the silencing and marginalising of citizens from public affairs and state governance, advising that through public participation states foster a governance structure that minimises the risks of human rights violations and provides justice and accountability to prevent recurrence.

### The project:

- Contributes to promoting democracy more widely in Bahrain, which will decrease human rights abuses and increase accountability and justice within the state;
- Outlines how the GoB has continued under a guise that the 2011 conflicts have been recovered and learned from however a slipping back into high autocracy is seen;
- Growing unrest towards the governing institutions in Bahrain again;
- Focuses on democratic promotion intertwined with how it can mitigate conflict and prevent relapse into regime abuse;
- SALAM DHR’s research promotes stability and accountability from institutions for human rights abuses.



# Major Projects and Reports of 2024

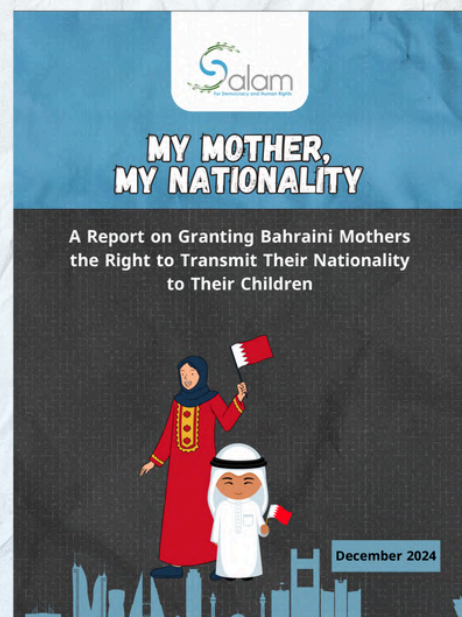
## “My Mother, My Nationality” – Gendered Citizenship Transmission and Statelessness in Bahrain



Throughout the Gulf Cooperation Council, women are unable to transmit their nationality to their children, a form of systematic gender discrimination. In Bahrain, which has stripped thousands of their citizenship over the past decade, children born to stateless men frequently have no route to citizenship, despite their mothers being Bahraini. The consequences can be devastating for children, who risk being excluded from essential services, leaving them extremely marginalised. Moreover, parents are often helpless to remedy the situation as their children are excluded from almost every opportunity dimming their hopes for a better future. For parents, this is a unique form of anguish no one should suffer.

### **SALAM DHR’s research and campaign:**

- Focused on the impact gender-based discrimination has on Bahraini women and their children. A particular focus on statelessness as women cannot grant nationality to their offspring, often resulting in the statelessness of children when the father is foreign or stateless.
- Gave a voice to the affected and bring awareness to this issue.
- Highlights the institutionalised inequality and role of statelessness in these regions. It also highlights again the inconsistency between legislation and what the GoB actively takes part in the Bahraini Constitution and the National Action Charter, both affirm gender equality, however, the Bahraini nationality law continues this form of discrimination.
- Includes testimonies from individuals directly affected by Bahrain’s discriminatory nationality law, who continue to experience social and economic marginalization.
- SALAM DHR works to amplify the voices of the marginalized and draw attention to these issues which continue to have major implications for human rights and the promotion of justice and equality.



# Major Projects and Reports of 2024

## “Demonstrating is Our Right” – Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Bahrain

SALAM DHR embarked on a year-long campaign to empower civil society in Bahrain. The campaign examined the state of freedom and peaceful assembly (FoPA) in Bahrain and worked with civil society actors to promote its legal practice in the country. These activities are critical to protecting activists in Bahrain and enlarging civil society there.

### SALAM DHR’s report and campaign:

- Examines the differences between laws, practice and governance through freedom of peaceful assembly that is banned and marginalised under other acting laws.
- How the GoB technically accepts peaceful protest is allowed however its ruling, and continuance of various inflicting laws prove otherwise.
- The GoB currently does not allow protests on domestic issues such as torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests or the existence of prisoners of conscience. Protests on these topics are typically silenced.
- The GoB has shown itself cognisant and capable of adhering to international standards. The fact that it is not doing so reflects a political decision.



# Roundtable Consultations

Throughout 2024, SALAM DHR collaborated with NGOs, academics, lawmakers and assorted experts on human rights and civil society projects.

## Roundtable Discussion: Participation in Bahraini Public Affairs

SALAM DHR held the 7 February 2024, first Roundtable Discussion on Participation in Public Affairs in Bahrain, via Zoom, under “Chatham House Rules”.

Participants evaluated the role of the National Assembly’s House of Representatives (HoR), the elected chamber and examined the efficacy of the HoR in:

- Representing the interests of Bahraini citizens
- Its engagement with the public
- The reality of its oversight capabilities
- The current state of its transparency and accountability
- The dynamics of the relationship between the GoB and HoR

The discussion had 20 participants from various backgrounds and viewpoints, who shared their insights, experiences, and perspectives on improving effective governance in Bahrain. They included former HoR representatives, lawyers, politicians, NGO representatives, human rights defenders, and social media activists.

### Key Discussion points:

#### *1. Role of the House of Representatives in Governance*

Participants critically assessed the HoR’s legislative and oversight functions and evaluated the extent of its representation of Bahraini citizens’ interests. They expressed concern over the actual engagement between representatives and the electorate. Participants also questioned the House’s oversight capabilities, highlighting the need for reforms to enhance the HoR’s legislative role and public accountability.

#### *2. Transparency and Accountability*

Participants assessed the current state of transparency and accountability within the HoR. Some focused on the lack of mechanisms in place to ensure effective governance. The dialogue provided insight into the current challenges to achieving transparency and the HoR’s current inability to hold the government to account. Participants also explored the potential role of civil society in the future in fostering a more accountable and effective HoR.

# Roundtable Consultations

## Roundtable Discussion: Evaluating Government Performance in Bahrain

Participants at the 17 March 2024, online dialogue session via Zoom evaluated governmental performance related to the 2030 Economic Vision.

### Key Discussion points:

#### *Government Performance Evaluation*

##### 1) *Evaluation of the 2030 Economic Vision for the Government's 2023–2026 Action Plan:*

Participants critiqued the performance of the government and the HoR, highlighting the significant gap between citizens' aspirations and government performance, particularly falling living standards and enhancing support. The lack of two-way, public-government and/or public-parliamentarian communication was seen as a missing element in this regard, creating an avoidable expectations gap.

Participants emphasised that there is a discernible disconnect between the government's priorities and the aspirations and expectations of citizens. They cited unemployment as evidence of this, as a basic social aspiration or demand. A balanced government budget, expected in 2022, hasn't been achieved due to rising government expenditure.

Participants agreed on the necessity of citizen involvement, believing true citizenship can only be achieved through their discernible engagement in the implementation of policies and oversight. They also stressed the need for reforms to enhance the legislative role of the HoR, public accountability, and transparency.

##### 2) *Economic Vision*

Participants compared Vision 2030 with the new Vision 2050, criticising the lack of an implementation plan and the absence of ministry involvement in planning, along with any indication of alignment between the Visions. They highlighted a lack of governmental reform, criticised the negative role of the HoR, and cited the issues of corruption and significant public debt, despite Gulf-funded infrastructure projects. They agreed there is a pressing need for a genuine assessment of Vision 2030 to rectify issues in Vision 2050, which was announced as an extension of the previous project.

# Roundtable Consultations

## Roundtable Discussion: Evaluating Government Performance in Bahrain

Based on the dialogue and analysis conducted, participants set out a small number of recommendations to improve governance and enhance the economic vision in Bahrain, notably to:

- Strengthen the role of civil society
- Endeavour to balance gross domestic expenditures
- Empower and enhance the role of the HoR
- Improve government transparency and public participation
- Achieve sustainable development



# Roundtable Consultations

## Roundtable Discussion: Role of Civil Society Organisations in Public Affairs Issues in Bahrain

SALAM DHR organized the third roundtable discussion on engagement in public affairs in Bahrain on 15 April 2024, via Zoom. This discussion focused on the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in public affairs. This meeting provided a platform for stakeholders from various sectors to exchange ideas and assess the current landscape of CSOs in Bahrain. The goal was to highlight and evaluate their freedom to operate and their effectiveness and discuss potential reforms to enhance their role in public affairs.

Participants assessed the status of CSOs' engagement in public affairs in Bahrain, including the challenges they face. The discussion had 18 participants from various backgrounds and viewpoints. They included representatives of Civil Society Organizations, lawyers, youth activists, NGO representatives, human rights defenders, former members of parliament and social media activists.

### Solutions Proposed:

- Specialists and lawyers should challenge restrictive laws such as the isolation laws through legal complaints
- Recruit personalities with experience to rejuvenate and lead CSOs
- Establish a higher committee for voluntary work
- Form a union of CSOs
- Some voices suggest that no solutions can be implemented amid current tensions without broader political reforms
- Others believe that any change in Bahrain must originate from the top if there is a genuine desire for reform

# Roundtable Consultations

## **Roundtable Discussion: "Peaceful Assembly and the Right to Protest in the Gulf Between Reality and Hope"**

On 17 April, SALAM DHR and Muwatin Media Network hosted an event titled "Peaceful Assembly and the Right to Protest in the Gulf between Reality and Hope." This virtual meeting on space on X was part of the WeRise project's awareness-raising campaign by SALAM DHR and Muwatin. 1500 people tuned in for the event.

Jawad Fairouz, the director of SALAM-DHR was chairing the discussions and Ebtisam El Saegh, the monitoring officer of SALAM-DHR participated as a speaker.

The event aimed to explore the dichotomy between the right to peaceful assembly as stipulated by international laws, specifically Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the practical restrictions imposed in the Gulf countries. This right is often curtailed by local Gulf authorities through various restrictions and security measures.

The event highlighted the critical challenges facing the right to peaceful assembly in the Gulf and Bahrain in particular. It fostered a dialogue about the discrepancies between international human rights norms and the realities on the ground. The panellists shared about the current state of the right to peaceful assembly in their countries and offered hopeful solutions aimed at improving the protection and practice of peaceful assembly rights in the region.



# Roundtable Consultations

## **Roundtable Discussion: Recommendations of the Fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for 2022**

On 25 May, SALAM DHR held a closed roundtable discussion on the recommendations of the UPR on Bahrain for 2022. It has been attended by 17 activists and human rights defenders from various organizations in the Bahraini civil society.

Several NGOs presented the main recommendations issued by states during the review which Bahrain accepted. These include 172 recommendations such as amending the Press Law, legislative reform, protecting human rights, empowering civil society, removing restrictions on peaceful assembly, and improving prison conditions.

### **Several attending activists shared their opinions and recommendations, concluding:**

- Forming a good legal team to file a lawsuit with the judiciary against legislation that violates the Constitution and the National Charter, would create effective pressure
- Participating in dialogues, public events, forums, and discussions on human rights
- Communicating with relevant authorities like contacting officials and government institutions to demand the implementation of recommendations
- Supporting UN efforts to open an OHCHR office in Bahrain
- Forming a joint working team between associations and CSOs to communicate with the parliamentarians to discuss laws related to political rights and work on amending the Association's Law as well as reviewing requirements for peaceful assembly
- Proposing the preparation of a joint parallel report with CSOs for submission in the UPR
- Engaging with government entities to request cooperation and involve civil society in implementing and monitoring the recommendations

# Roundtable Consultations

## Roundtable Discussion – My Mother, My Nationality

SALAM DHR organised a closed online roundtable on Wednesday, July 25, 2024. The discussion lasted 1 hour and 45 minutes. The roundtable adhered to Chatham House rules, ensuring the privacy and security of the affected families. Eighteen participants attended, including two SALAM DHR team members who gave a brief presentation about the campaign, explaining the legal and rights dimensions of Bahraini mothers' right to pass their nationality to their children in Bahrain. Director Jawad Fairouz directed and chaired the meeting. Representatives from four families directly affected by gender discrimination in Bahrain's nationality law shared their stories, highlighting the diversity of cases.

- First case: Bahraini mother, Saudi father.
- Second case: Bahraini mother, stateless father in Bahrain.
- Third case: Bahraini mother, revoked Bahraini nationality father in UK.
- Fourth case: Bahraini mother, revoked Bahraini nationality father in Iran.
- Fifth case: Bahraini mother, revoked Bahraini nationality father in Germany.
- Sixth case: Bahraini mother, Bahraini father who cannot return to Bahrain due to lack of identification documentation, passport, and other legal papers.

The outcomes of the roundtable include the launch of the My Mother, My Nationality campaign, which continued through August and September 2024.

# Campaigns

## Participation in Public Affairs Campaign

The SALAM DHR team launched an online advocacy campaign on participation in public affairs by raising awareness on citizens' rights and the role of the elected House of Representatives and its current functions.

SALAM DHR used the hashtag #ParticipationMatters\_Bahrain.

**LIFTING RESTRICTIONS ON VOTING AND RUNNING FOR OFFICE IS A CRUCIAL STEP TOWARDS PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY IN BAHRAIN, AS PROMISED IN THE THIRD OBJECTIVE OF THE NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN. EVERY CITIZEN DESERVES A VOICE IN SHAPING THEIR COUNTRY.**

#المشاركة\_في\_الشؤون\_العامة\_حقنا\_البحرين  
#ParticipationMatters\_Bahrain



**EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS, A CORE ELEMENT OF DEMOCRACY. IT'S ABOUT MORE THAN VOTING; IT'S ABOUT ENGAGING IN DECISION-MAKING THAT SHAPES OUR SOCIETIES.**

#المشاركة\_في\_الشؤون\_العامة\_حقنا\_البحرين  
#ParticipationMatters\_Bahrain



**PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY REQUIRES CONTINUOUS ENGAGEMENT BY ITS CITIZENS. IN BAHRAIN, ENSURING THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ENGAGES WITH THE PUBLIC AND IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE ARE CRUCIAL STEPS TOWARD GREATER GOVERNANCE. WHAT ARE YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH YOUR REPRESENTATIVES?**

#المشاركة\_في\_الشؤون\_العامة\_حقنا\_البحرين  
#ParticipationMatters\_Bahrain



# Campaigns

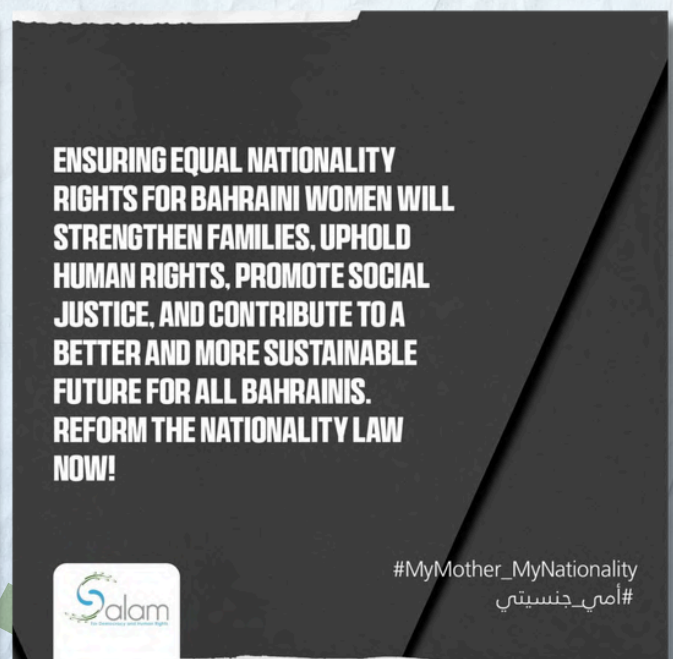
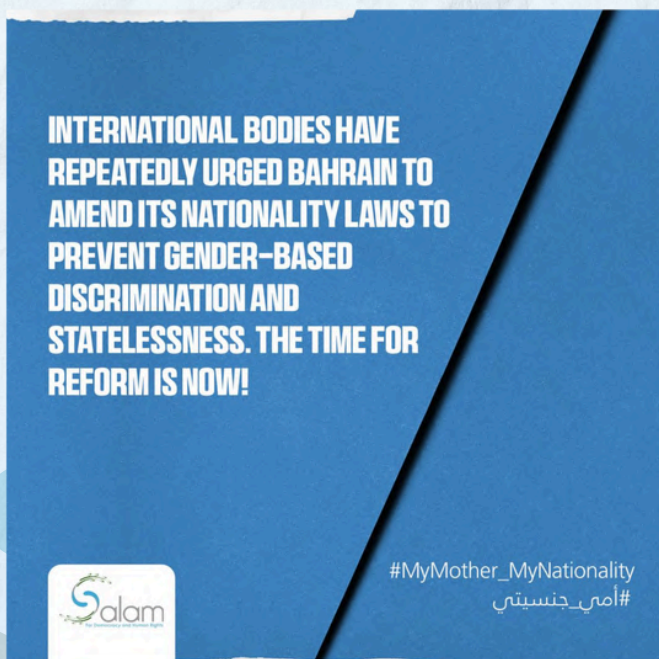
## My Mother, My Nationality Campaign

SALAM DHR launched an advocacy campaign on equal nationality rights. The advocacy team conducted advocacy efforts by raising awareness of equal nationality rights using previously extended research on Bahraini law, the constitution, and international treaty recommendations, including UPR, CRC, CEDAW, and CERT.

### The SALAM DHR team:

- Planned a hashtag campaign: #MyMother\_MyNationality.
- Designed posters in Arabic and English to be published on SALAM DHR's social media platforms.
- Released a series of tweets in both languages, highlighting the inability of women to pass on their nationality under Bahrain's nationality laws and the negative consequences of this discrimination.

On 19 August, SALAM DHR launched its campaign on X with a series of tweets in Arabic and English. These tweets highlighted gender discrimination in Bahrain's nationality law, the contradiction with Bahrain's treaty obligations, the harmful consequences of such discrimination on women and children, and recommendations from relevant international bodies.



# Campaigns



## Demonstrating is Our Right Campaign

SALAM DHR digital awareness campaign, , launched on December 26, 2024, with a series of branded posts on X (In Arabic and English). The posts featured designed backgrounds along with SALAM DHR and WeRise logos and the campaign hashtag #Demonstrating is Our Right.




Here are the posts in English among others:

Gatherings and protests shed light on a flawed reality that individuals and communities demand to change. Any restriction or suppression on the right to protest serves as evidence of a deliberate effort to maintain a particular wrongdoing, and indicates that this reality being protested against is both intentional and systematically enforced.

  #التظاهر\_حقنا  
#Demonstrating\_is\_Our\_Right

Demonstrating is a fundamental right of every citizen to express their opinions, and this right cannot be waived or restricted. Demonstrations can take various forms and methods, suited to both individuals and groups, and all are guaranteed within the framework of indivisible human rights.

  #التظاهر\_حقنا  
#Demonstrating\_is\_Our\_Right

# Films

## Short Film on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

SALAM DHR launched a short film on Freedom of peaceful assembly in Bahrain.

### The short film included:

- A legal overview
- Interviews that SALAM-DHR held with multiple Bahraini activists on peaceful protesting;
- Protests scenes
- Restrictions and violations regarding peaceful protests
- Recommendations

The short film highlighted the urgent need for the Bahrain Government to adopt new measures that allow citizens to exercise the right to demonstrate without harassment and the urgent need to change legislation and laws that restrict this right. The short film states that it's time to correct previous mistakes and pave the way toward a nation where the citizens' voice is heard and the right to protest and demonstrate is guaranteed.



## Short Film on Public Participation

SALAM DHR published a short film, highlighting its initiative to assess the state of Bahraini citizens' participation in public affairs and the state of participatory democracy in Bahrain. The short film examined the state's conduct in accordance with Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bahrain is a party.



The short film assessed the current state of citizen and civil society participation in public affairs, the extent to which citizens' views are represented in political decisions, decrees, and proposals, and highlighted the challenges facing society.

# Films

## Short Film on My Mother, My Nationality



SALAM DHR produced a short film in Arabic with English subtitles to shed light on the reality of unequal citizenship transmission and statelessness in Bahrain. The film explained Bahrain's nationality law and the consequences of this discrimination, highlighting impactful messages from Bahrainis affected.

The film's primary goal was to raise international awareness and pressure the GoB to amend its discriminatory laws. The film was published on SALAM DHR's website, YouTube channel, and social media platforms.

# UK Advocacy

2024, SALAM DHR's UK team carried out a wide variety of initiatives, with a particular focus on advocacy in the UK Parliament. These ranged from cultivating relationships with members of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Bahrain and Gulf teams, to continued constructive engagement with a wide variety of MPs and other senior political stakeholders in Westminster. Such engagements took the form of private meetings, which led to ministers participating in events we planned and taking our concerns up with government officials. Salam's UK team also continued its engagement with a variety of partner organisations and began cultivating ties with several new organisations and think tanks

SALAM DHR also worked with parliamentary contacts to table a variety of written questions in the House of Commons, covering issues such as:

- Steps being taken to secure the release of high-profile prisoners of conscience in Bahrain
- Which specific human rights cases are being monitored by UK officials
- Human rights matters discussed between UK and Bahraini officials during official visits
- The efforts made by the UK to actively promote democracy across the Middle East

Similarly, the UK team also utilised other parliamentary mechanisms, notably using the Freedom of Information Act to access information held by public authorities, the end goal of which is to make government and public bodies more transparent and accountable. One example of such a request was an inquiry Salam made into what human rights considerations UK officials have made, and are making, in the context of UK-GCC trade negotiations. The responses to these requests have contributed to Salam's broader advocacy efforts running into 2025, as we have been able to use this information in meetings we have had with government ministers.

Prior to the UK general election, SALAM DHR's UK team launched an outreach campaign targeting UK MPs and UK-based Bahraini constituents. SALAM DHR also published a briefing document, which we subsequently distributed to prospective MPs. The document summarised human rights issues in the kingdom and urged the incoming government to use the close, longstanding UK-Bahrain relationship (details of which were also provided) more effectively to promote and protect human rights in the kingdom and hold the Bahraini authorities accountable for perpetrating systematic violations.



# Statements on Conditions in Bahrain 2024

SALAM DHR released seven major statements throughout 2024. Prison conditions, judicial fairness, and lack of accountability remain major human rights deficiencies in Bahrain. Despite positive steps, like the release of 3,482 prisoners, including over 800 prisoners of conscience. However, over 340 prisoners of conscience remain incarcerated in Jau Central Prison. Among those detained are civil leaders and activists such as Sheikh Ali Salman, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Abuljalil Al-Singace, and Hassan Mushaima. Al-Khawaja, Al-Singace, and Mushaima have all claimed to be victims of ill-treatment, such as medical neglect by Bahraini authorities. SALAM DHR continues to call upon the GoB to release all prisoners of conscience. Their ongoing incarceration and ill-treatment reflect ongoing, systematic problems within the state: lack of human rights, lack of security, and lack of engagement allowed with state decisions.



# Statements on Conditions in Bahrain 2024

13 February – “Denmark Must Do More to Free Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja on Bahrain Uprising Anniversary”



Human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was imprisoned for his role in the 2011 gatherings against the regime on unjust charges. Our statement examines:

- Al-Khawaja’s ongoing incarceration signifies a wider, systematic issue of imprisonment within Bahrain; jailed human rights defenders, activists, and journalists, who are subjected to torture and ill-treatment.
- Links with SALAM DHR’s aims of increased citizen participation in the running of nations – increased adherence to human rights, including the right to protest.
- SALAM DHR calls on the Danish government to work with the GoB to free Al-Khawaja, a dual citizen of Denmark and Bahrain.

# Statements on Conditions in Bahrain 2024

## 8 March "IWD 2024: CSO Renews Their Call on Saudi Authorities to Release Jailed Women's Rights Activists"



On International Women's Day, SALAM DHR renewed its call for Saudi authorities to release jailed women's rights activists who have been detained for their peaceful forms of protest against the state. It cites:

- The Government of Saudi Arabia has promoted an increasingly equal society despite implementing contradicting laws that codify female discrimination (male guardianship system).
- Continues deficiencies in fair trials and lack of justice.

# Statements on Conditions in Bahrain 2024

## 18 April – “SALAM DHR: Non-custodial Measures with Children are the Basis of Justice”

Focussing on the continued issue of child imprisonment and detention in Bahrain, which violates the Universal Declaration on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the rules of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It examines and cites:

- Children have been subjected to harsh sentences, torture, unfair trials and imprisonment within the adult complex highlighting an ongoing issue within Bahrain’s judicial processes.
- February 14, 2021, Law No. 4 of 2021 was issued, which raised hopes for improving the human rights situation of children in the country however a large proportion of child detainees were excluded from parts of the legislation.
- Focus on Mohammad Hasan Ahmed Ali Nasser who has served five years of an eleven-and-a-half-year sentence, violating the maximum limit stipulated for minors under Bahraini law.
- Continued inconsistencies between the law and its enactment within Bahrain.

## 29 April – “Escalating Concerns Over the Lives of Minors Threatened with Death in Saudi Arabia”

In partnership with 25 NGOs, SALAM DHR expressed joint concerns for the lives of minors under prosecution in Saudi Arabia, particularly two young men, Yousif Al-Manasif and Ali Al-Mubaiouq. It cites:

- Al-Manasif and Al-Mubaiouq’s rights violations present whilst imprisoned; enforced disappearance, solitary confinement for months, and various forms of torture.
- Acts related to their peaceful activism, are usually sentenced based on the Counterterrorism law and torture-tainted confessions are used as sole evidence for their conviction.
- The contradiction between the carrying out of death sentences and the legislation SA promotes e.g. promulgation of Royal Decree No. 46274, the Saudi Human Rights Commission mentioned that the death penalty against such individuals and minors would be annulled.
- Highlights the differences between what regimes promote on the international scale and the domestic realities.

# Statements on Conditions in Bahrain 2024

## 22 June – “Bahrain: The Result of United Kingdom’s Upcoming General Election Must Lead to a Policy Change in Support of Human Rights and Democratisation”

SALAM DHR highlighted the close connections between the UK and Bahrain – economic, political, and historical and listed

- A reduction in the UK’s action to hold Bahrain accountable (removal from HR watchlist)
- Seeks to hold/ push the UK to watch closer and publicly promote the development of human rights within Bahrain. Sets out 5 ways the new government needs to hold the state accountable to its international obligations and growth.
- Examines aforementioned themes of citizens' right to participate (democratisation), unjust and brutal imprisonment/human rights advocates suppression, adhering to what it promotes on the international scene, and use of the death penalty.

## 19 December – “Statement on the Conditions of Detainees in Jau Central Prison – Bahrain”

SALAM DHR called on the GoB to end severe violence and remedy poor conditions within the Jau Central Prison which have caused the death of Hussein Aman.

- Violations include deprivation of food and water, physical assault, medical neglect, and deprivation of all essential prisoner rights –visits, treatment, hygiene, and care– a blatant violation and abandonment of human rights and legal obligations.
- Continuing issues of poor conditions for prisoners and conscience and the state's judicial failures. This contradicts the legislation that the state promotes as adhering to international human rights laws - urges the government to allow prison visits by human rights organizations and international bodies, most notably the International Red Cross and UN special rapporteurs.

# Statements on Conditions in Bahrain 2024

## 20 December – “Kuwait – Halt Mass Citizenship Stripping to Ensure that the Measures Adhere to International Human Rights Law”

SALAM DHR called for the Amir of Kuwait to end Kuwait’s current citizen-stripping initiative, which leaves people vulnerable to exploitation and further human rights abuses

- MENA statelessness network
- The large-scale citizenship stripping of over 12,000 people in the last three months alone
- Case of the Bidoon community and its marginalisation.
- Advocates on behalf of minority groups and discriminated against parties including women and children’s legal positions, which are not currently protected by the state.
- Highlights a wider issue within the state of a two-tiered citizenship structure. The Bidoon’s continued referral as illegal citizens and naturalised citizens.

# Events

## 9 February – Webinar: 13 Years After Unprecedented Unrest, Do Bahrainis Have a Voice?

To mark the 13th anniversary of Bahrain's 2011 protests, SALAM DHR hosted a webinar examining the country's political and human rights landscape. Alex Buckham, Head of UK Advocacy at SALAM DHR, chaired the discussion, which featured:

- Sayed Yusuf Almuhaftaha, a Bahraini human rights activist, reflected on the 2011 protests and the evolving situation in Bahrain.
- Falah Sayed, Human Rights Officer at MENA Rights Group, assessing the effectiveness of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI).
- James Lynch, Founding Co-Director of FairSquare, discussed Bahrain's investments in global entertainment and sports as a means of diverting attention from human rights violations.
- Katie Fallon, Advocacy Manager at Campaign Against the Arms Trade, addressed UK military and security ties with Bahrain, including arms sales and training programs.
- Devin Kenney, GCC Researcher at Amnesty International, examined changing trends in political repression in Bahrain since 2011.
- Martyn Day, SNP MP for Linlithgow and East Falkirk, provided a UK parliamentary perspective on Bahrain's political landscape and how citizens can advocate for human rights reforms

A webinar in commemoration of the thirteenth anniversary of Bahrain's mass popular protests which began on 14 February 2011 and formed part of the broader Arab Spring movement that took place across the MENA region

### '13 YEARS AFTER UNPRECEDENTED UNREST. DO BAHRAINIS HAVE A VOICE?'

**MARTYN DAY**  
Member of Parliament, UK

**KATIE FALLON**  
Campaigns Manager, Campaign Against the Arms Trade

**DEVIN KENNEY**  
Researcher, Amnesty International

**FALAH SAYED**  
Human Rights Officer, MENA Rights Group

**JAMES LYNCH**  
Founding Co-Director, Fair Square

**S. YUSUF ALMUHAFTAHA**  
Human Rights Activist, Bahrain

**CHAIR: ALEXANDER BUCKHAM**  
Head of UK Advocacy, SALAM DHR

**DATE: FRIDAY 09 FEBRUARY 2024**  
**TIME: 16:00-17:30 UK / 19:00-20:30 BAHRAIN**  
**LOCATION: ONLINE VIA ZOOM**

**SALAM DHR**  
WITH ARABIC TRANSLATION

**MENA Rights Group**  
**FAIR / SQUARE**  
**AMNESTY International**

# Events

## **22 March – Statelessness Awareness Forum: Lecture on Nationality Revocation at the Statelessness Awareness Forum Europe, organised by the Apatride Network**

Jawad Fairooz, Chairman and Co-Founder of SALAM DHR, delivered a lecture on the impact of nationality revocation in Alicante, Spain. Sharing his personal experience of being rendered stateless, he highlighted how citizenship deprivation is used as a tool of repression. His address contributed to broader discussions on the legal and policy reforms needed to protect stateless individuals.



## **3 April – Global Alliance Taskforce to End Statelessness Meeting at the World Conference on Statelessness**



During the Second World Conference on Statelessness in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, members of the Global Alliance Taskforce to End Statelessness convened to discuss global strategies to combat statelessness. The event, held from 26–29 February, was organised by the Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion (ISI), Nationality for All (NFA), and Development of Human Resources for Rural Areas Malaysia (DHRRRA Malaysia), with support from the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia, SUHAKAM). It gathered 450 participants from 50 countries, with an additional 100 joining online.



# Events

The conference culminated in the launch of the Global Movement Against Statelessness, a coalition advocating for equal nationality rights. The taskforce meeting was co-moderated by Christiana Bukalo (Founder of Statefree) and Marin Roman (Senior Statelessness Officer, UNHCR).

Monika Sandvik, UNHCR Senior Statelessness Coordinator, delivered the keynote, followed by a panel featuring:

- Rosalie M. Robles-Cumla, State Counsel, Department of Justice, Philippines
- Chris Nash, Director, European Network on Statelessness
- Yasah Musa, Project Manager, Nubian Rights Forum
- Radha Govil, Deputy Director, Peter McMullin Centre on Statelessness
- Kirsten Di Martino, UNICEF Senior Child Protection Adviser

## 26 June – Panel: Do ‘Parliaments’ in the Gulf States Mean that Citizens Really Have a Voice in Public Affairs?



Held alongside the 56th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, this online panel, co-organised by the Sectarianism, Proxies & De-Sectarianisation Project (SEPAD), Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), MENA Rights Group and SALAM DHR examined whether Gulf parliaments provide genuine representation or serve as authoritarian facades.

### Speakers:

- Simon Mabon (University of Lancaster)
- Sarah Leah Whitson (DAWN)
- Ahmed Al-Mukhaini (Former Assistant Secretary-General, Oman’s Parliament)
- Falah Sayed (MENA Rights Group, OHCHR)
- Jawad Fairouz (Former Bahraini MP, SALAM DHR)
- Luciano Zaccara (Qatar University)
- Kristin Smith Diwan (AGSIW)

### Key Issues Discussed:

- Weak legislative authority in Gulf parliaments, where real power remains with rulers.
- Bans on political parties and repression of opposition figures.
- Human rights violations, including arrests and restrictions on free speech.
- Comparative analysis of Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, and Saudi Arabia.
- The role of international pressure in addressing these challenges.

# Events

## 1 October – Meeting with OHCHR During HRC57 in Geneva

At the 57th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC57) in Geneva, SALAM DHR met with Mohammed Al-Nsour, Director of the Middle East and North Africa Division at OHCHR, to discuss human rights developments in Bahrain, focusing on:

- Prison conditions and the treatment of released detainees.
- Recent arrests and ongoing repression.
- The right of Bahraini women to pass nationality to their children.
- Civil and political rights challenges.

## 12 October – The Right to Peaceful Assembly in the Middle East and North Africa: Between Regime Repression and Legal Legitimacy

On 12 October 2024, SALAM DHR organised and hosted a legal seminar via X platform entitled "The Right to Peaceful Assembly in the Middle East and North Africa: Between Regime Repression and Legal Legitimacy."



The seminar was chaired by our director Jawad Fairouz and the speakers were:

- Ebtisam Al-Saegh (Salam for Democracy and Human Rights)
- Iham Burjas (Human rights activist and legal researcher)
- Abdullah Al-Jariwi (AIQST)
- Ferial Jradi Sharaf El-Din (Humena Human Rights and Civic Participation Organization)
- Louay Obeidat (Jordanian lawyer and former judge)
- Mohammed Al-Maghat (Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Monitor)
- Mustafa Fouad (Humena Human Rights and Civic Participation Organization)

710 tuned in to this two-hour seminar. It was divided into two main sections. In the first section, each speaker provided an in-depth discussion on the state of freedom of peaceful assembly in their respective country within the region. The second section was dedicated to a Q&A session

# Events

## 17 October – Launch of the Global Alliance to End Statelessness and First Regional Network Lab in Geneva

The Global Alliance to End Statelessness was officially launched during the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting in Geneva, marking a significant milestone in global efforts to address statelessness. This multistakeholder initiative, originally conceived by UNHCR, brings together stateless-led organisations, NGOs, faith-based groups, academia, states, UN agencies, and regional and international bodies to drive collaborative solutions. It builds on the momentum of the 10-year #IBelong Campaign, which concluded in 2024.

The launch featured a High-Level Segment on Statelessness, during which the UN High Commissioner for Refugees described the Global Alliance as *'the place to exchange best practices, to try to identify and develop solutions, and to advocate collectively for this cause'*. Following the announcement, over 30 states pledged to join the initiative, and a series of side events and meetings on statelessness took place.



A key outcome was the formation of the Global Alliance Advisory Committee, which will serve a three-year term and include a diverse group of stakeholders. The committee will ensure regional and sectoral expertise and representation from stateless-led organisations, such as the Global Movement Against Statelessness. UNHCR will continue to act as the Secretariat.

The Global Alliance has outlined several core initiatives, including:

- Regional Network Labs, the first, held in Geneva on the 15 and 16 October, facilitated cross-regional collaboration.
- Thematic Working Groups, which focused on policy and advocacy efforts.
- Online Marketplace and Knowledge Hub a platform for shared resources and best practices.
- Solutions Seekers Programme, supporting states and regional organisations taking concrete steps to prevent and reduce statelessness. The first members of this programme are Costa Rica and the Philippines.

# Events

## 30 October – Launch of the “Advancing Democracy: A Hope That Is Achievable” Campaign in Bahrain

On 30 October 2024, SALAM DHR launched the ‘Advancing Democracy: A Hope That Is Achievable’ campaign, presenting research on Bahrain’s adherence to Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which guarantees citizens the right to political participation and free and fair elections. Despite the release of 2,000 detainees, including political activists, restrictions on civil and political rights remain severe. The report highlights the increased suppression of dissent and calls for democratic reforms ahead of the 2026 elections to prevent further disengagement and instability.

**HYBRID EVENT**

REPORT & CAMPAIGN LAUNCH  
**BAHRAIN - ADVANCING DEMOCRACY: 'A HOPE THAT IS ACHIEVABLE'** With Arabic Interpretation

**Chair**

- Joey Shea  
Researcher - Human Rights Watch
- Ibrahim Sharif  
Former WAAD DG
- Staci Strobl  
Challenging and Criminal Justice Professor
- Martyn Day  
Former Scottish National Party MP
- Sarah Leah Whitson  
Executive Director of Democracy for the Arab World Now Centre
- Dr Andrew McIntosh  
Researcher - SALAM DHR
- Ali Al Aswad  
Bahraini Former MP - AL-BAYAN

To join in person:  
National Union of Journalists, Headland House,  
72 Acton St., London, WC1X 9NB

30 Wednesday  
October  
2024

Date and Time:  
17-19.00 BST  
London time

@SalamDHR  
info@salam-dhr.org  
www.salam-dhr.org

### Launch Event and Key Findings:

The launch featured a panel discussion with speakers from Human Rights Watch, DAWN, and former Bahraini parliamentarians. SALAM DHR Director Jawad Fairouz emphasised that the findings reflect growing public frustration with the lack of genuine representation and warned of the risks of continued exclusion from the political process.

### Key Findings:

#### Public Disillusionment

- 76% believe the National Assembly and executive branch do not work together to serve citizens' needs.
  - 84.6% lack confidence in the House of Representatives (HoR) to hold the government to account.
  - 86.3% feel their MPs do not represent their interests.
  - Weak Political Representation
- No evidence of public consultation on legislative matters.
  - Top-down governance, with cabinet ministers following royal directives, sidelining the HoR.
  - MPs have limited powers, acting largely in a consultative role.
  - 2018 'political isolation' laws continue to prevent former political activists from voting or standing for election.

# Events

## Emerging Trends

- Greater public debate on accountability.
- Some MPs show more engagement with constituents.
- Increased media scrutiny of the HoR's role.

## Research Methodology

The report's findings are based on:

- A survey of 308 people on governance and parliamentary performance.
- Three roundtable discussions in Bahrain with 150 participants.
- Four online discussions involving 200 people.
- Two webinars, each attended by 1,000 participants.
- Direct observation of HoR sessions, public forums (majlis), and state media coverage.

## Next Steps: Advocating for Reform

From 2025, SALAM DHR will push for:

- Reforms before the 2026 elections to improve public participation.
- Lifting restrictions on political rights, including reinstating voting and candidacy rights for opposition figures.
- Greater public engagement in decision-making, ensuring more transparency and accountability.

# Events

## 27 November – Alternative Human Rights Expo



Ahead of International Human Rights Defenders Day (9 December 2024), the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) hosted the third Alternative Human Rights Expo on 27th November 2024. Held online with support from over two dozen partner organisations, the event called for the release of human rights defenders (HRDs), women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and activists persecuted across the MENA region. It also showcased the resilience of detained HRDs, artists, poets, writers, and musicians, highlighting their work despite ongoing repression.

The Expo brought together activists, former prisoners, and family members of detainees from Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, with a particular focus on the plight of Palestinians and Lebanese civilians. The event opened with a performance by Tabiba, a Canada-based Arab women’s drum and vocal ensemble, featuring artists from Palestine, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. Their song “Marhaba” blended cultural traditions with a message of resistance.

GCHR Executive Director Khalid Ibrahim, who co-hosted the event, stated:

*Today’s event is not entertainment; it is cathartic and awareness-raising. We aim to show the reality of the human rights defenders we work with.*

Co-host Marwa Fatafta, MENA Policy and Advocacy Director at Access Now, provided a regional overview, describing the war in Gaza as “hell on earth” and warning of the rise in authoritarianism across MENA, driven by:

- Repressive laws, including cybercrime and counterterrorism legislation, used to detain activists for peaceful expression.
- Surveillance technologies and spyware are deployed to monitor and suppress dissent.

### Key Cases Highlighted:

Taha Alhajji, from the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights (ESOHR), addressed Saudi Arabia’s repression of WHRDs and activists, highlighting:

- Salma Al-Shehab, Nourah Al-Qahtani, Manahel Al-Otaibi, and Israa Al-Ghomgham, are all imprisoned WHRDs.
- Osama Khalid and Ziad Al-Sufyani, Wikipedia editors were sentenced to decades in prison for online activity.

# Events

## 27 November – Alternative Human Rights Expo

Partner Organisations:

The event was co-hosted by 29 leading human rights organisations, including:

- Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)
- ALQST for Human Rights
- Access Now
- Amnesty International & AI Local Groups (Sutton, Westminster & Bayswater)
- Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)
- Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
- Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
- European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights (ESOHR)
- FairSquare
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Human Rights Watch
- Index on Censorship
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- PEN America
- SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights
- Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD-IC)

The Alternative Human Rights Expo remains a crucial platform for advocating for persecuted HRDs, amplifying the voices of those imprisoned, and demanding justice across the MENA region.

# Events

## 3 December – Launch of the “My Mother, My Nationality” Campaign

On 2 December 2024, SALAM DHR hosted an open online webinar in Arabic with English interpretation. The event, titled “My Mother, My Nationality,” was organised in collaboration with the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights (GCENR), the Bahrain Human Rights Society, and the Regional Network on Statelessness (HAWIATI). It featured activists, affected families, and representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs), highlighting the issue of discrimination in Bahrain’s nationality laws. Discussions covered a brief historical overview, legal perspectives, and the broader implications of gender-based discrimination as a root cause of statelessness. The campaign seeks to:

- Raise awareness of Bahrain’s discriminatory nationality laws.
- Push for legal and policy reforms to achieve gender equality in nationality rights.
- Highlight the social and economic consequences of statelessness.

### The report examines:

- Bahrain’s legal framework, where nationality laws contradict constitutional guarantees of gender equality.
- The impact of statelessness, restricting access to basic services like healthcare, education, and travel.
- First-hand testimonies from those affected.

The poster is for a hybrid event titled "My Mother, My Nationality". It is a webinar on the occasion of 'Bahraini Women's Day' on a campaign to grant Bahraini mothers the right to transmit their nationality to their children. The event is on Tuesday 3 December 2024 at 16:00 London / 19:00 Bahrain. The poster features several speakers: Dr. Mona Alkhatib (Moderator and Researcher), Estereem Alsaigh (Moderator - SALAM DHR), Abbas Tawab (Moderator - SALAM DHR / GCENR), Farida Ghulaim (Human Rights Activist - Bahrain Rights Association), and Sarah Yousef Alshahadha (Moderator and Researcher - SALAM DHR). There is also a 'Chair' section with Fatma Alsharrah (HR Lawyer - SALAM DHR). The poster also includes a testimonial from individuals affected by statelessness, logos for Salam DHR, GCENR, HAWIATI, and other partners, and social media handles for SALAM DHR.

### First-Hand Testimonies:

A stateless young man, born to a Bahraini mother and a non-Bahraini father, described his reality:

*I have no nationality, no passport. I go to the hospital and face delays before they accept me. I go to school and face delays before they admit me. I can't travel. My friends go abroad on holiday, but I can't even cross the bridge to Saudi Arabia. Everything depends on having a passport, and I'm deprived of it all.  
I feel suffocated, Mum...*



# Events

## 3 December – Launch of the “My Mother, My Nationality” Campaign

### The report recommends:

- Amending Bahrain’s nationality law to allow mothers to confer nationality to their children.
- Ensuring equal legal protections for children of Bahraini women, regardless of their father’s nationality.
- Tackling social and economic marginalisation by ensuring access to essential services.

With 14,000 views on SALAM DHR’s X (formerly Twitter) account, the webinar received significant engagement, sparking discussions through comments and interactions, as the format did not allow for live interventions. To further amplify the campaign’s message, the event also included the screening of a short film, showing the urgent need for nationality law reforms in Bahrain.

## 9 December – Webinar on Human Rights Under Threat in Bahrain



On 9 December 2024, SALAM DHR co-hosted the webinar “Human Rights Under Threat: The Political and Legal Ramifications of the Death Penalty, Citizenship Revocation, and Gender-Based Repression in Bahrain”, in partnership with HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement. The event was held in Arabic, with live English interpretation available.

The discussion focused on state repression, legal violations, and human rights concerns, particularly:

- The death penalty
- Citizenship revocation
- Repression of women

### Speakers included:

- Said Yousif Almuhafezha – Bahraini human rights researcher
- Nedal Al-Salman – Director, Bahrain Center for Human Rights
- Jawad Fairouz – Chairman, SALAM DHR and former MP
- Ibrahim Sarhan – Bahraini lawyer and legal consultant

The event was moderated by Sarah Sheykh Ali, Regional Director, Innovation for Change MENA hub.



# Articles

SALAM DHR has always provided regular content updates, showcasing developments in the MENA region and the talents of its contributors.

## **“Post-Bahrain”: Examining Identity, Subalternity and Vision 2030 Post-Rentier Narratives**

- Andrew McIntosh explored how official narratives can be challenged in Bahrain by exposing gaps between policy rhetoric and lived realities.
- It can highlight the material and social consequences of state policies.
- Policy language is not merely an official document. It shapes social and political realities. e.g., Vision 2030
- Discusses the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to help analyze the intersection of neoliberal reform, sectarianism, and securitization.

### **The article:**

- Examines Bahrain's Vision 2030, arguing that the reforms exacerbate sectarian inequalities and bolster state securitization over social inclusion and cohesion.
- Introduces the concept of "post-Bahrain," - state power strengthened, obscuring the exclusion of Shi'a and migrant groups.
- Reaches beyond policy declarations to expose how these narratives are political instruments of rule that construct domestic and transnational identities.
- Discusses how neoliberal reform intersects with sectarian discrimination, maintaining economic and social inequalities under the guise of modernisation.

## **Immigration Detention: Barriers to Justice in Bahrain**

Panchami Manjunatha provided a comprehensive analysis of Bahraini immigration detention, focusing on legal and human rights concerns.

- It compares Bahraini legislation with international human rights norms, pointing out gaps and inconsistencies.
- Documents migrant workers' testimonies show how the obstacles they face to gaining access to justice and the deplorable conditions in detention.
- Criticises the Bahraini government's accountability mechanisms, such as the PDRC, for not being independent
- Recommends how to render legal assistance more accessible, establish independent oversight, and ensure domestic legislation adheres to international norms, in favour of more transparent immigration detention policies

# Articles

## **Immigration Detention: Barriers to Justice in Bahrain**

The article:

- Highlights the valuable role of human rights organizations in generating research that brings to light systematized abuse.
- Provides empirical and advocacy-oriented research, based on eyewitness accounts and monitoring to bring out abuse.
- Prioritizes timeliness and specificity, offering up-to-the-minute information on the well-being of children in detention.
- Demonstrates how research can impact policy change, utilizing evidence to drive governments and international institutions.
- It also illustrates that human rights research goes beyond documentation and necessitates legislative and procedural changes.

## **Children Behind Bars: Violations of Children's Rights in Bahraini Prisons**

SALAM DHR emphasised the vital role played by human rights organizations in producing research that uncovers systematic abuse of minors in Bahrain's prisons.

- Empirical and advocacy-oriented, rooted in first-hand testimony and monitoring to expose violations.
- Provides real-time data on the situation of children in detention.
- Illustrates how studies can cause policy change, using evidence to pressure governments and international organizations.
- Demonstrates that human rights work goes beyond documentation, demanding legislative and procedural reform.

The article:

- Provides detailed, empirical information on the conditions of child detainees in Bahrain's Dry Dock prison, such as infringement of religious freedoms, contact with family, access to medical care, and education
- Shows evidence of state manipulation, with short-term benefits for international inspections that are withdrawn later.
- Frames how these abuses under international law, arguing that Bahrain is violating universal human rights norms.
- Offers policy alternatives, including the release of children in detention, the abolition of child imprisonment, and increased international oversight.
- Contributes both to academic debate and to real-world advocacy for change

# Articles

## **Liberalism and Ethics, a New Frontier for British Foreign Policy in the MENA Region**

Callum Robertson promoted a foreign policy study that combines history, ethics, and political analysis.

- Implies that studies need to go beyond theory to address actual, practical impacts.
- Talking about Northern Ireland and MENA shows exactly how important cross-country foreign policy comparisons are.
- Criticises overly simplistic accounts and calls for research to challenge assumptions and give more complex answers.
- Emphasises the need for policy, requesting researchers to connect their research to actual plans for solving global issues.

The article:

- Offers a moral framework to British foreign policy, based on five broad principles: human rights, democracy, sovereignty, peacebuilding, and economic stability.
- Denounces recent and past UK foreign policy blunders. It sets out a reasonable balance between practical politics and ethical factors.
- Taking Northern Ireland as a model of success, it recommends applying the same methods for conflict resolution in the MENA region.
- Claims that the old colonial powers have a responsibility to make amends for past mistakes and help construct lasting peace.
- Promotes consistent and ethical practice in global affairs.

## **The Illusion of Reform in Bahrain**

Contributing to DAWN, SALAM DHR member Sayed Yusuf Almuhafehdha highlighted the gap between reformist commitments from the GoB and ongoing human rights abuses.

- Argues that studies should critically analyse the difference between official accounts and the victims' experiences.
- These studies require careful analysis and cross-verification of various sources of information to ascertain the real impact of reforms.
- Challenge authoritarian regimes' narratives about progress and expose the limitations of top-down reforms.
- Call for more evidence-based, transparent assessments in these kinds of settings.

# Articles

## The Illusion of Reform in Bahrain

The article:

- Critically examines Bahraini reforms, questioning the validity of government assertions.
- Unveils the difference between the government's account of reforms and the ugly reality for political activists and dissidents.
- Accentuates state repression that disqualifies attempts at genuine reform, offering an advanced critique of the political regime.
- Invites a global audience and more researchers to conduct more comprehensive, objective analyses of reform narratives in authoritarian states.
- Calls for more monitoring of human rights and greater civil society representation from Bahrain to provide a more comprehensive portrait.

# Press Releases

## **Bahrain NHRI Follow-Up Letter (June 2024)**

Writing to the Bahraini National Human Rights Institute, SALAM DHR:

- Highlighted human rights and authoritarianism issues throughout MENA, with an emphasis on Bahrain.
- Discussed institutional dependency, where national human rights institutions are not independent and cannot enforce accountability against governments.
- Provided evidence on how civil society is repressed, and how governments constrain or regulate independent advocacy.
- Gave examples of systematic human rights abuses, including arbitrary detention and torture, are rampant, and institutional responses are weak.
- Explained how legal frameworks institutionalise executive authority, and token adjustments aim to make improvements for the international community without affecting structural issues.
- Argued that the Gulf region demonstrates a fragile democracy with ongoing human rights violations.

SALAM DHR's goals with these official communications are:

- Expanding its studies throughout MENA, with an emphasis on authoritarianism and state-sponsored abuse of human rights.
- International bodies such as GANHRI and the UN can be used to pressure governments and achieve regional accountability.
- Coordinating with multiple parties of various viewpoints to forge coalitions.
- Addressing gaps in independent oversight and institutional weaknesses in countries with weakened national institutions, replicating the Bahrain model elsewhere.

## **Kuwait CEDAW Joint Submission (April 2024)**

In partnership with the Global Campaign for Equal Nationality Rights and the Institute for Statelessness and Inclusion, SALAM DHR submitted information to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in advance of its 88th session.

The information:

- Highlights gender discrimination in MENA, as discriminatory nationality laws limit women's rights in the law and lead to statelessness, for girls and women.
- MENA governments often agree to international conventions but fail to implement them. This indicates that they oppose global human rights norms.
- Authoritarian measures, for example, Kuwait's parliament suspension, illustrate how executive authority limits democratic reform.
- Reflects a broader regional pattern of institutionalised gender discrimination, ignored international commitments, and manipulated political processes that suppress human rights reform.

# Press Releases

## **Kuwait CEDAW Joint Submission (April 2024)**

By partaking in CEDAW submissions, SALAM DHR is:

- Expanding its research and campaigning throughout MENA, prioritizing gender-based nationality discrimination, statelessness, and legal inequality.
- Collaborating with its international partners like Equality Now and ISI to increase its advocacy and policy impact in the region.
- Observing how legislation is enacted, particularly regarding citizenship and women's rights, which may have implications for other nations.
- Portraying gender inequality as systemic, encouraging research into other types of legal discrimination.
- Providing a regional model for documenting and combating human rights violations by the state.

## **EU-GCC Summit Call on Gulf Leaders to Engage People in Public Affairs (October 2024)**

Attending the summit and reporting on its discussion, SALAM DHR:

- Highlighted growing authoritarianism in the MENA and specifically GCC countries, where public participation is merely symbolic and electoral processes are tightly managed.
- Despite ratifying global pacts, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar continue to defy commitments to free and fair participation.
- Political opposition is repressed by arbitrary detention and unfair trials, and long-standing human rights campaigners remain in prison.
- Judicial transparency remains poor, particularly in the death penalty and national security cases.
- The report depicts a regional pattern of undermining democratic institutions and disregarding human rights obligations.

The event was part of SALAM DHR:

- Taking its research and advocacy work outside Bahrain to other GCC and MENA countries.
- Monitoring authoritarian trends, campaigns on behalf of political prisoners around the globe, and urges EU leaders to push GCC governments on human rights.
- Stressing the need for judicial transparency in national security-related cases, leveraging online platforms to amplify its regional advocacy.
- Shifting to broader issues of democratic governance and state responsibility.

# Press Releases

## **Bahrain: NGOs Call on the National Institution for Human Rights to Improve Its Independence, Effectiveness and to Engage with Independent Civil Society to Better Fulfill Its Mandate**

In partnership with MENA Rights Group and the Bahrain Human Rights Society, SALAM DHR called on the GoB and NIHRB to increase the effectiveness of the NIHRB's mandate and its independence from other branches (of government) and to improve the character of the NIHRB's leadership for its accreditation level to be increased.

The statement:

- Highlighted concerns for democracy and human rights in Bahrain and the wider MENA region.
- Criticised Bahrain's National Institution for Human Rights (NIHRB) for not being independent, restricting cooperation with civil society, and not following up on abuses such as prison conditions.
- Claimed these issues exhibit regional patterns in which human rights organisations are state-controlled and hence less effective.
- Called for more diversity, openness, and compliance with international norms so that there are independent institutions to protect democracy and human rights.

SALAM DHR's output:

- Encourages cooperation should be done with independent NGOs in the region.
- Calls on Bahrain to collaborate with international human rights groups for a more cohesive approach.
- Seeks to establish support networks and build expertise on democracy and human rights issues in MENA.
- Encourages Bahrain's compliance with the Paris Principles and international collaboration on human rights.

## **Support the Global Alliance to End Statelessness**

SALAM DHR, Hawiati and the Rights Realization Centre reaffirmed that statelessness is a key human rights issue in the MENA region, leaving millions of people excluded from fundamental rights such as education, health, jobs and legal protection. The statement cited:



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The statement cited:

- Exclusionary measures, such as citizenship stripping and discriminatory nationality legislation, which further isolates some Bahrainis.
- Poor legal frameworks and the lack of ratification of international conventions make stateless individuals vulnerable.
- Lack of democratic processes in the region, where minority groups are refused legal recognition and access.
- Systemic discrimination and extensive human rights violations against stateless people.

The work reflects:

- Engagement in global advocacy and enhances its contribution to human rights work.
- Reflects the increasing impact and research agenda on statelessness.

## **Has the Time Come to Grant Citizenship to the Children of Bahraini Women?**

SALAM DHR illustrated that gender discrimination in Bahrain is emblematic of broader human rights concerns in the MENA region, citing that:

- Bahraini women cannot pass on their nationality to their children, which contradicts the democratic values of justice and equality.
- This discrimination is damaging to personal dignity and civil rights, especially for children who are left stateless.
- It points out the discrepancy between Bahrain's national legislation and international obligations, such as CEDAW, which shows a gap between legal commitment and practice.
- The law must change to ensure conformity with international and local human rights standards, requesting improvements in rights and democracy in the region.

The statement is part of SALAM DHR's:

- Mission to promote gender equality as a fundamental human right.
- Campaign to reform Bahrain's nationality law may be a priority research agenda of SALAM DHR and may also be replicated in other MENA countries.
- Playing a key role to play in promoting legal reforms and awareness-raising at the regional level.

# Press Releases

## **Qatar: Vote to Keep an Elected Assembly in the 5 November “Constitutional Amendment Referendum”**

SALAM DHR expressed concerns surrounding the erosion of democracy and human rights in MENA, particularly in Qatar, which has proposed constitutional amendments that would further centralize power. It cites several examples:

- Selection rather than election by the people, is the plan for the government to nominate members of the Shura Council, effectively sidelining citizens from the government.
- Such an arrangement would violate Qatar's international obligations in terms of the ICCPR, which entitles citizens to elect representatives.
- This fits and reflects a pattern in the region in which governments restrict political freedoms to enhance their control over democratic ideals.

*This is part of SALAM DHR's ongoing research and advocacy:*

- Highlighting growing democracy and human rights lobbying in the MENA.
- Qatari advocacy, urging citizens to vote against the referendum and exercise resistance toward the attempts and the changes in authoritarianism.
- Calling for increased transparency from Qatar through the dissolution of the Shura Council.
- Engaging with wider regional issues: the need for reforms across the MENA region.

# Intern Recruitment

Every year, SALAM DHR recruits bright, passionate young scholars and activists, developing them into the next generation of human rights defenders. Due to the volatile situation in Lebanon, we couldn't recruit interns for our Lebanon office this past year. Their expertise was sorely missed, and we intend to restart the programme there soon. SALAM DHR focussed on European and international recruitment throughout 2024, training talented human rights defenders from the UK, the US, France, Ireland, Spain, Cyprus, Hungary, India, and the Russian Federation. We've recruited from institutions such as Lancaster University, SOAS University of London, the London School of Economics, the University of Leeds and Sciences Po, Paris. Global events have increased interest in the human rights sector. Throughout the past two years, young people have become more politically engaged and seek to channel their frustration into constructive action as human rights defenders. SALAM DHR recruited and trained 17 interns in research and advocacy throughout 2024, who contributed to projects and developed groundbreaking research following their training. Panchami Manjunatha successfully published her research on barriers to justice for migrant workers in Bahrain and Leio Koga's article on disability rights in Bahrain will be published this year.

SALAM DHR is immensely proud of transforming curious minds into qualified human rights researchers. Several interns have gone on to jobs at the UNCHR and NGOs such as the Institute for Statelessness and Inclusion. We will continue our efforts to recruit, train, inform and network interns for human rights employment. Their contributions are needed more than ever in this field.



# Looking Forward

2024 placed SALAM DHR under unique pressure. Yet, under that immense strain, it produced the highest quality, most impactful work to date. We are a dedicated team of talented researchers and advocacy officers. Our success is attributed to our commitment to our craft and to looking after each other. The human rights sector faces incredible challenges in 2025, where conflict and repression have increased while funding opportunities have decreased. This, however, has not diminished our resolve to document human rights violations, draw attention to issues specific to the Gulf region, and train young human rights advocates in best practices.

SALAM DHR intends to face these challenges head-on. We're excited to share new projects and participate in advocacy in 2025. We'll increase our scope while remaining firmly committed to our present specialties. Prioritising innovation, creativity, and resourcefulness, we will continue covering Bahrain, Kuwait, and the Gulf region, advocating against statelessness, torture, and ill-treatment and for the fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are entitled.



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