



# The press in Bahrain: restricting the word and blocking freedom

Bahrain Center for Human Rights

## Methodology:

The report is based on an analytical study of Bahraini laws and legislation restricting freedom of the press, and shows their incompatibility with international treaties, charters and agreements. The report will show the reality of the Bahraini press, documenting the violations committed against journalists and workers in the press field.

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## About Us

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, registered with the Bahraini Ministry of Labor and Social Services since July 2002. Despite an order by the authorities in November 2004 to close down, BCHR is still functioning after gaining a wide local and international support for its struggle to promote human rights in Bahrain.

The vast majority of our operations are carried out in Bahrain, while a small office in exile, founded in 2011, is maintained in Copenhagen, Denmark, to coordinate our international advocacy program. For more than 18 years, BCHR has carried out numerous projects, including advocacy, online security trainings, workshops, seminars, media campaigns and reporting to UN mechanisms and international NGOs. BCHR has also participated in many regional and international conferences and workshops in addition to testifying in national parliaments across Europe, the EU parliament, and the United States Congress. BCHR receives its fund from the Norwegian Human Rights Fund (NHRF), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Sigrid Rausing Trust (SRT), CIVICUS, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), IFEX and Digital Defenders Partnership (DDP).

BCHR has received several awards for its efforts to promote democracy and human rights in Bahrain.

- **The Rafto Prize, 2013**

Presented to the BCHR with the motivation for their “long and courageous fight for fundamental human rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of association in Bahrain.” The award was also given with the aim to raise awareness on the broadening violations against human rights that occurs in the gulf region and many western governments ignores. Read more: [www.rafto.no](http://www.rafto.no)

- **The Stieg Larsson Prize, 2012**

Awarded to the then Acting-President of Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Maryam Al-Khawaja, for her "brave struggle to defend democracy and human rights. With the web and social media as tools and persistent activism and the free world as methods, Maryam Al-Khawaja has illuminated the injustices and inequalities of her home country in Bahrain". Read more: [www.stieglarssonfoundation.se/the-annual-stieg-larsson-prize](http://www.stieglarssonfoundation.se/the-annual-stieg-larsson-prize)

- **Baldwin Medal of Liberty, 2012**

The President and CEO of Human Rights First, Elisa Massimino awarded the BCHR with the prestigious Baldwin Medal of Liberty stating that: "There are so many human rights defenders doing amazing work in many parts of the world, but I am delighted that the Medal of Liberty will be presented to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, which continues to promote human rights under constant threat to the security of its members". The Baldwin Medal of Liberty was established in 1989 and aims to award international human rights advocates. Read more: [www.humanrightsfirst.org/2012/04/26/human-rights-first-awards-prestigious-medal-of-liberty-to-bahrain-center-for-human-rights/](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/2012/04/26/human-rights-first-awards-prestigious-medal-of-liberty-to-bahrain-center-for-human-rights/)

- **The Martin Ennals Award, Final Nominee, 2012**

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights was awarded with a prize from the Martin Ennals Foundation after being named as a 'final nominee' for its work reporting on human rights violations in Bahrain. The Martin Ennals Foundation stated that "despite harassment by the government, who warn of legal action against the Center's members if they continue their activities, the BCHR provides information to international NGOs and the diplomatic community in Bahrain and advocates locally and internationally in support of demands for democratic change in the Gulf Kingdom". The decision was made by the Martin Ennals Award Jury which consisted of the following organizations: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, the International Federation for Human Rights, the World

Organization Against Torture, Frontline, the International Commission of Jurists, German Diakonie, the International Service for Human Rights and HURIDOCs. Read more: [http://www.martinennalsaward.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=183&Itemid=153&lang=en](http://www.martinennalsaward.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=183&Itemid=153&lang=en)

- **Advocacy Award, 2012**

The Index on Censorship Advocacy Award (sponsored by Bindmans) was awarded to the BCHR with the aim to acknowledge campaigners or activists who have worked for change. Read more: [www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5132](http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5132)

- **The Silbury Prize, 2011**

The British charity sponsors, the Silbury Fund, awarded Nabeel Rajab, President of the BCHR, the Silbury Prize in 2011. This decision was made with the aim to promote Mr. Rajab's work within the human rights field.

Read more: <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4661>

- **Ion Ratiu Democracy Award, 2011**

The President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, was awarded in 2011 the Ion Ratiu Democracy Award by the Washington based Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The director, president and CEO of the center, Jane Harman stated that: "In such a tumultuous year, Nabeel Rajab's efforts to peacefully advance democratic freedoms for Bahraini citizens, even in the face of considerable personal peril, are truly exemplary. He is an exceptional choice to receive the Ion Ratiu Award and I extend my sincerest congratulations".

Read more: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/bahraini-human-rights-activist-nabeel-rajab-to-receive-2011-ion-ratiu-democracy-award> and

<http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4436>

The current President of BCHR **Nabeel Rajab** is entering his fourth year in detention, after he was sentenced to several years in prison for his activities, defence, peaceful commitment, and calls to respect human rights. **Nabeel Rajab** is one of the most prominent human rights defenders around the world and is the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), the founding director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR), the Deputy Secretary-General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and a member of the Human Rights Watch Advisory Committee in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Rajab** has been detained since his arrest on 13 June 2016 until this moment where on December 31, 2018, the Court of Cassation upheld a five-year prison sentence against him, on the background of his tweet on his Twitter account claiming torture in prisons and criticizing Bahrain's participation in the Saudi-led military campaign against Yemen. **Rajab**, who has already spent two years on other charges related to peaceful expression, is slated to remain behind bars until 2023. It appears that he has at times been subjected to negligence in medical treatment that may amount to arbitrary punishment, causing his health to significantly deteriorate.

It is noteworthy that, in August 2018, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for the immediate release of **Nabeel Rajab**, saying that his detention was not only arbitrary, but also constituted discrimination based on political or other opinions, as well as on his status as a defender of human rights.

This arrest has also been criticized by a number of human rights organizations, the governments of the UK, the USA, France, as well as a number of UN dignitaries, including former **United Nations' Secretary General Ban Ki Moon**, who have called for his release.

Nedal Al-Salman, Bahraini human rights defender is the Acting President at the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) and a Conveyor at IFEX and Vice President at the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). She faced reprisal for the work she undertakes in advocacy for BCHR on the international stage, and for publicly calling for reform in Bahrain.

Most of the BCHR staff inside Bahrain remain anonymous, including a Vice- President and members of the Documentation Team.

Our Mission in Bahrain Center for Human Rights is to encourage and support individuals and groups to be proactive in the protection of their own and others' rights; to struggle to promote democracy and human rights in accordance with international norms; to document and report on human rights violations in Bahrain; and to carry on advocacy to influence international policies according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For more information on our work, or for donation, please visit our website through:

[www.bahrainrights.org](http://www.bahrainrights.org)

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## Introduction:

Freedom of expression is one of the most fundamental human rights, and freedom of the press is the most important embodiment. Freedom of the press means that it is not subject to interference by governments and it means the empowerment of journalists in the exercise of their tasks without interference or restrictions, just as freedom of the press means the right to obtain and publish information and allow individuals and groups to circulate it without limits or restrictions.

In view of the role that press freedom plays in determining the level of democracy enjoyed by people and guaranteed by governments, the United Nations General Assembly declared on November 2<sup>nd</sup> of every year "an international day to end impunity for crimes against journalists". The resolution urged member states to implement specific measures to counter the current culture of impunity, and this historic resolution condemns all attacks and violence against journalists and media workers.

This anniversary comes at a time when journalists and the press sector in Bahrain are exposed to the most severe violations of the fundamental right of the Bahraini people and touched one of the most important provisions of international agreements that explicitly stipulated the need to guarantee all human rights, especially those related to the freedom to express opinion and publish information.

This report sheds light on the most prominent of these violations and laws that restrict the right to freedom of expression and opinion and to publish it.

### First: A brief history of the reality of Bahrain's press

Bahrain was one of the pioneering countries to launch journalism. Bahrain was one of the countries that established the media in the Persian Gulf, and this was with the launch of the “Bahrain” newspaper in 1939 by its owner, Abdullah Bin Ali Al-Zayed. Work began in the field of journalism in Bahrain at the end of the thirties of the last century, in a civil way, and the Bahraini press was subject to strict censorship and blockade by the authority and with the explicit support of colonialism at the time.

It was not five years since its publication that the authorities forced the newspaper to close because it did not mortgage its policy until it finally stopped publishing in 1944 under the pretext of a “paper crisis”. While the real reason, as historian Mubarak Al-Khater points out, was the publication of the newspaper for an article calling for the necessity of unity for the Trucial Coast Emirates (currently the United Arab Emirates), which was considered incompatible with the Bahraini government policy and colonialism back then.

Since its establishment, the Bahraini press has confronted colonial schemes on the one hand, and domestic arbitrary politics on the other. This means that the press was fighting on two fronts, against the colonial front, and against the government front with its arbitrary policies. Because the press was close to the aspirations of people for freedom, democracy and independence, it was targeted with prevention and dissolution, as journalists and writers faced repression and the confiscation of the right to expression.

This target against the press happened for nothing but for its commitment to defending the interests of the people and the justice of its causes against the colonialism, and the influential who exploited its weakness from the inside. The press back then was a mirror that reflected its causes and aspirations.

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The confrontational relationship between the press and the government continued even after the closure of the Bahrain newspaper, and even after the publication of other newspapers and magazines from the mid-1940s until the mid-1950s, during which newspapers such as: Voice of Bahrain appeared in 1949, and it was a political and cultural platform against the abuse of colonial and government policies, where it attracted a group of distinguished writers, intellectuals and activists. It is worth mentioning that the leaders of the national movement in the fifties were from the school of this newspaper. However, it was arbitrarily closed by the authority in the year 1954 because of its national positions in support of the people's issues. Several newspapers came after such as Al Qafila 1952-1954, and soon the authorities also closed it because of its positions. Al-Watan newspaper, 1955, was followed in the wake of Al Qafila newspaper, but it was also closed by a government decision along with two other newspapers, Al-Mizan and Al-Shula, after the National Union's body was struck in 1956 and its leadership was tried and exiled.

From the mid-1950s until the mid-1960s, Bahrain entered a severe repression, a phase similar to what is known as McCarthyism in the United States. The local press was targeted and the Arab press, which highlights the breaches of colonialism against the Bahraini people at the time, was also banned.

### **Second: Bahraini laws and legislation restricting freedom of the press**

Bahrain issued many laws that were considered by observers of Bahraini affairs as explicit restrictions on the press and workers in this field. Among these laws and decrees is:

Decree-Law No. 47 of 2002

The decree in its articles 67 and 68 stipulates that "in case the accusation against the journalist is proven, the committee shall issue a decision with any of the following penalties:

reprimand, warning, prevention from practicing the profession for a period not exceeding one month, and prevention from practicing the profession for a period not exceeding six months." The penalties contained in this law range from reprimanding to imprisonment, according to the two articles, and imprisonment for a period of no less than six months comes in the following cases: "Exposure to the official state religion in its constituents and elements by abuse or criticism, exposure to the king by criticism, or placing responsibility on him for any governmental actions, incitement to commit felonies of killing, looting, burning or crimes against the security of the state if this incitement does not produce in any result, incitement to overthrow or change the system of government".

It should be noted that the law used the term "criticism" and did not use defamation, hence it appears that if one expresses opinion about the religion of the state or the king without glorification, one will be punished with imprisonment, and even in the case of objection to the system. The law did not draw limits to this objection, but considered it tied in all its forms. Arbitrary punishments not only affect journalists, but also the means that they work for, according to Article 75 of it, "if the editor or the responsible editor were convicted in a publishing crime committed by the newspaper, the court may order the newspaper to be suspended."

On the other hand, while the law insisted on the freedom of the journalist to obtain and publish news, it restricted that by the provisions of the law, specifically Article 31, so that it gave an apparent picture of freedom and did not allow it to be practiced. This law punishes those who republish from other media outlets even with mentioning the source, as soon as publishing what is considered contrary to this law, it is punishable.

Journalists consider the current law restricting their freedom and their right to access the information and show it to the public, and many international organizations interested in guaranteeing and disseminating human rights, especially the right to freedom of expression,

expressing opinions, and obtaining and disseminating information, agreed with them. After this decree, a bill was issued on 23 February 2009, but it has not yet been passed.

### **Third: International treaties and agreements that guarantee the right and freedom of the press and the work of journalists**

#### **1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19)**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, through Article 19 thereof, expressly guarantees "the right to enjoy freedom of opinion and expression", and this right includes freedom to "embrace opinions without harassment, and to seek, receive, and impart news and ideas to others, by any means and without regard to borders". By doing so, it guarantees the right of journalists to express their opinion and communicate it through the media and other means.

#### **2. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 (Article 19)**

Freedom to receive and transfer information and ideas to others, was guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but it gave the state the power to regulate it by law, through Article 19, paragraph 3. It has nevertheless set conditions for its regulation, that is to "respect the rights or reputation of others" or "to protect national security or public order" or "public health or morals". International laws emphasize on freedom of expression and freedom to impart ideas in written or printed form, in artistic form, or by any other means chosen by the author of the idea, while restrict them to maximum conditions.

#### **3. UNESCO Declaration of 1978 (Article 2)**

At a time when the UNESCO Declaration considered the exercise of "freedom of the media" as an "integral part of human rights and fundamental freedoms", in the first paragraph of the second article, it guaranteed the "right of the public to obtain information through the diversity of sources and media prepared for it, which allows everyone to verify the facts and form an objective opinion on the events". This announcement not only guaranteed the freedom of journalists, but the right of peoples to obtain information through journalists, and urged media workers to communicate objective information without bias. For this purpose, the declaration says, "Journalists should enjoy freedom of information and have the greatest possible facilities to obtain information. Likewise, the media should respond to the interests of people and individuals, thereby creating public participation in shaping the media". According to the same article, and based on the principle of supporting peace and international understanding, promoting human rights, combating racism, apartheid and war incitement, the media must "contribute to every part of the world and by virtue of the role assigned to it, in promoting human rights".

#### **4. Resolution 1738 of the United Nations Security Council**

It condemns the intentional attacks against journalists, media personnel and individuals associated with them in situations of armed conflict, and calls on all parties to stop these practices; and confirms that it will address the issue of protection of journalists in armed conflict exclusively under the agenda item "Protection of civilians in armed conflict".

#### **5. The Arab Charter for Human Rights (Article 32)**

- This charter guarantees the right to information, freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the right to obtain and receive news and ideas and transmit it to others by any means without regard to geographical boundaries.

- Exercising these rights and freedoms within the basic foundations of society and is subject only to restrictions imposed by respecting the rights or reputation of others or protecting national security, public order, public health, or public morals.

#### **Fourth: Violations against the press and journalists**

Despite the praise attributed to the press as a “pillar of human rights and a mirror of Bahrain’s nascent democracy,” the Bahraini government continued to suppress it against anyone who defies its official vision. Journalists who cover or address opposition protests have been harassed, arrested, expelled, and dismissed from the country. The violations experienced by journalists in Bahrain can be categorized as follows:

##### **1. Closing newspapers and blocking websites**

The Bahraini authorities continued their repression of the media by issuing a decision to “stop the publication and circulation of Al-Wasat newspaper” on June 4, 2017. The decision was due to: “violating the law and repeating the publication and broadcast of what divides society and affects the Kingdom of Bahrain’s relations with other countries,” according to Bahrain Official News Agency. This came after Al Wasat published an opinion piece on “Rural Mobility” in Morocco. The authorities suspended the newspaper’s electronic version for several days in November of the same year after accusing it of “spreading discord in society and harming national unity”. The newspaper was also suspended two days in August 2015 on similar charges.

Human Rights Watch said that Al-Wasat is the only independent newspaper in Bahrain, and it is one of the few independent news sites in the entire Gulf region.

The Bahraini authorities have expelled the editor-in-chief of Al-Wasat newspaper, Ali Sharifi, and the newspaper's writer, Rahim Al-Kaabi, who are Iraqi, according to news reports and interviews with the Committee to Protect Journalists. The newspaper's author, Maryam Al-Sherouqi, told CPJ that, according to what she learned, the government did not provide an explanation for this decision.

The authorities continued to suppress expression by blocking websites, penetrating social media accounts, and prosecuting citizens who criticize officials, and the government is currently considering putting restrictions on telecommunications services via the Internet. Bahraini journalist Ali Abdul-Imam, who was convicted of anti-state accusations, had to flee into exile after hiding from the eyes of the Bahraini authorities for two years. The Bahraini government indirectly implemented blocking policies for all ISPs in the country through orders from the Information Affairs Authority (IAA) and the Ministry of Interior, which Internet service providers must adhere to in order to maintain their licenses with the TRA. With the new unified system, the government will directly control the filtering process, allowing government employees to block content they deem unwanted.

## **2. Dismissal from work**

After the authorities decided to suspend the publication of Al-Wasat newspaper, all its employees were laid off, which means that more than 160 employees lost their right to work and their families are deprived of their only source of livelihood. At the beginning of the events that started in 2011, more than 100 journalists and technicians were fired and only four of them returned to work.

## **3. Arbitrary detentions**

Bahrain is one of the ten worst countries in terms of imprisoning journalists for the year 2017, according to the American Committee to Protect Journalists. The committee indicated

in its annual report issued on 13 December 2017, that Bahrain has 6 journalists detained while doing their work covering events.

The Committee to Support Journalists in Bahrain has called on the international community and human rights organizations to take the necessary measures to end and condemn these violations of media rights and freedom of the press in Bahrain, follow up on the Bahraini government's implementation of the recommendations of the Human Rights Council regarding press freedom, and make the file of journalists' rights and media freedom in Bahrain a priority. The great importance of exerting pressure on the Bahraini government to deter it from continuing to violate the freedoms of opinion and expression and media and press rights.

The government detained at least three bloggers and photographers on the eve of a massive demonstrations that started on 14 August 2011. In addition, it has arrested nearly twenty journalists and bloggers since 2011.

Reporters Without Borders said that Bahrain joined the blacklist on freedom of the press, imprisoning journalists, and recorded a decline in two places in 2017 in press freedom.

In its annual report, it said that the freedom of the press map became more and more cloudy year after year, as the RSF-index had never reached such high levels, which means that freedom of the press was never threatened as it is today.

The World Press Freedom Index 2018, published by Reporters Without Borders, showed that press freedom in Bahrain decreased by two degrees, so this year it ranked 166 in the Press Freedom Index, after it was 164 last year on the black list.

It should be noted that all those who were tried in Bahrain were subjected to trials marred by legal violations by the Bahraini judiciary.

#### **4. Revocation of citizenship**

Bahrain has revoked the nationalities of seven journalists and social media activists since the outbreak of a wave of anti-government protests (from 2011 to 2018), after accusing them under Article 10 of the Nationality Law of Supporting Terrorism, and the Bahraini authorities have used this type of punishment in order to pressure media to follow the government line.

## **5. Travel ban**

On 08 February 2012, Bahraini authorities refused to grant visas to a number of foreign journalists who wanted to cover the anniversary of the February 14 revolution, including: The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, BBC Radio, Wall Street Journal, Christian Science Editor, Agence France Presse and Al Jazeera. The authorities also refused to grant a New York Times correspondent, Nicholas Christoph, a visa.

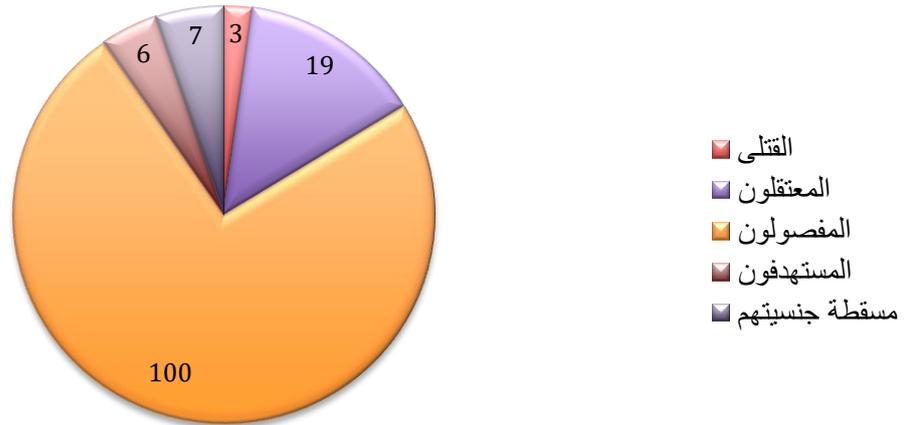
On January 24 of the same year, the Bahraini writer and critic, Dr. Ali Al-Diri, was prevented from entering Egypt and deported to Lebanon, which was considered by the Bahrain Press Association as a target for Bahraini media professionals abroad through blacklists sent by the Bahraini authorities to some Arab governments.

On February 8, the French Press Agency announced that the Bahraini authorities last year prevented its local reporter, Mohamed Fadel, a Bahraini, from working as part of a series of measures the authorities have taken against foreign press correspondents. On February 12, the Bahraini authorities prevented Robert Neiman, who is the head of political desk at the Just Foreign Policy organization from entering Bahrain. On the following day, the Bahraini authorities deported two American activists, Howaida Arraf and Radhika, who are part of the "Witness Bahrain" team to monitor the events, on the eve of the first anniversary of the protests demanding democratic reforms in Bahrain.

## **Fifth: Statistics**

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The monitoring team at the Bahrain Center for Human Rights worked and is still working to monitor and document all violations media workers have been subjected to since the launch of the popular protests in 2011, which can be illustrated in the following graph:



1. As shown in the above infographic, the security forces killed 3 media workers, who are: publisher Abdul Karim Fakhrawi, photographer Ahmed Ismail and blogger Zakaria Al-Asheeri. It arrested several journalists including 19 media personnel, amongst them is the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, who was arrested on the background of using Twitter. More than 100 journalists were also dismissed from their jobs, and only four were allowed back.
2. There is still a list of suppressive measures taken against journalists, whether by not renewing their licenses, as was the case journalist Naziha Saeed, or by deporting them after releasing charges against them, as in the case of activist Ebrahim Karimi.
3. The Bahraini government took the measure of revoking citizenship as a tool against those who disagree with its opinions. The citizenship of 7 Journalists and bloggers

were revoked, most notably those of blogger Ali Abdel-Imam and human rights activist Ahmed Al-Mousawi.

**Journalists and media persons who have been killed by the authorities since 2011:**

1. Abdul Karim Fakhrawi, publisher
2. Ahmed Ismail, photographer
3. Zakaria Al-Asheri, blogger

**Imprisoned journalists and bloggers:**

1. Khalil Al Madhoon, online activist
2. Sayed Ali Sayed Falah Al Durazi, online activist
3. Ali Al Mearaj, online activist
4. Nabeel Rajab, Human Rights Defender
5. Sayed Ahmed Al Mosawi, photographer
6. Ahmed Humaidan, photographer
7. Mahmood Al Jazeeri, journalist
8. Hasan Qambar, photographer
9. Jaafer Marhoon, photographer
10. Ahmed Zaineddin, photographer
11. Mustafa Rabeea, photographer
12. Husam Seroor, photographer
13. Yaser Al Mawali, online activist
14. Hasan Ghareeb, photographer
15. Mohamed Al Sherooqi, TV presenter
16. Abdulaziz Al Shemmiri, online activist

17. Abdelaziz Al Shaweesh, online activist

18. Dhafer Al Zayani, online activist

19. Ahmed Al Benkhalil, online activist

**Dismissed journalists:**

The list is long. None of the 100 journalists and technicians who were fired in 2011 returned to work, except for 3 or 4 of them.

**Targeted journalists:**

The list is long, including correspondents of foreign channels and agencies whose licenses have not been renewed. They are: Reem Khalifa, Mohammed Al-Sheikh, Hassan Jamali, Amer Muhammad and Naziha Saeed, in addition to the online activist Ebrahim Karimi who was deported from the country.

**Journalists and writers whom citizenships were revoked:**

1. Hussain Yusef
2. Ali Abdelimam
3. Abbas Busafwan
4. Sayed Ahmed Al Mousawi
5. Ali Al Mearaj
6. Mahmood Al Jazeeri
7. Dr. Ali Al Diri

**Targeted newspapers:**

Al-Wasat was closed in June 2017.

## **Conclusion:**

During the past decades, the Bahraini press has been fighting for freedom of expression, and it enjoyed the greatest freedom compared to the rest of the region, but Bahrain was placing great restrictions on media workers, and these restrictions were inflated after the events of 2011, as the government dealt with journalists with the most severe repression. Journalists found themselves at risk of being arrested, or getting their citizenship revoked. The World Press Freedom Index 2018, issued by Reporters Without Borders, showed that press freedom in Bahrain decreased by two degrees, so this year it ranked 166 in the Press Freedom Index, after it was 164 last year on the black list.

The repression practiced by the Bahraini government stems from the law regulating the work of the press in Bahrain (Decree Law No. 47 of 2002). This law includes provisions imposing imprisonment or dismissal in a manner that does not observe international laws and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in addition to its violations of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## **Recommendations:**

- The immediate and unconditional release of all media professionals and prisoners of conscience who have been arrested for expressing their opinions or for their work in the field of journalism and media.
- Acknowledge accepting obligations to grant journalists protection as civilians in conflict situations, strengthening national laws and reforming justice systems, and inviting journalists to adhere to the Code of Ethics for the Profession.
- Repeal laws that do not meet the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in the Bahraini Penal Code and Decree Law No. 47 of 2002 that limits freedom of expression and freedom of the press.
- Allowing Al-Wasat newspaper to return to work without conditions or restrictions that do not meet Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Civil Rights.

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- Unblock the international news agencies and satellite channels, allow them to visit the country, cover events, and open offices without imposing conditions and restrictions that limit the ability to conduct media work freely.