

# Bahrain Back to Dictation

There are no  
journalists in  
BAHRAIN  
PRISONS





**Bahrain: Back to Dictation**

Sixth annual report about Press  
Freedom in Bahrain 2015

**Bahrain Press Association**

Organization concerned with defending  
freedom of expression in Bahrain  
Founded in London  
9th July 2011

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# Introduction

Bahraini journalists share the world's celebration of the World Press Freedom Day in 2016 amid a deteriorating media situation, where journalists face unjust governmental policies, setting journalism and media back to an age of dictation. This comes as a predictable result of the policies against journalists; targeting them, arresting and persecuting them in courts that lack the basic guarantees of fair trial. Perhaps the annual report of the Bahrain Press Association for 2015 being titled "Back to Dictation" is an indicator of the significance of the main developments in the country over the past year, reaffirming there is no space for the other opinion. In addition, to keep controlling this space, the government relies on intimidating journalists, citizens, politicians and human rights activists through targeting them and depriving them of their freedom of expression, a right granted by all local and international conventions as well as the constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In spite of the fact that the volume of political protests has decreased, the past year (2015) has witnessed the biggest amount of violations on freedom of press and expression. The authorities used the international media's preoccupation with the conflicts in other countries in the Middle East, to tighten their grip in Bahrain.

The records of the Bahrain Press Association show about 288 violations related to basic rights such as freedom of press, opinion and expression. Perhaps one of the main highlights of what has been documented in the past year is recording 30 cases of detentions and arrests of journalists and politicians for practicing their job or giving statements with content opposing or differing from the government perspective, whether on local or regional issues.

Bahraini authorities continue to use their harassment methods and ban press materials that conflict with their interests. It was hoped for political and security authorities to adhere to more neutral and positive policies, however, the course of events in 2015 did not see such improvements. Those extreme policies have resulted in minimizing the space for political dialogue and social conversation that could have contributed to bridging the gap between the active political sides, including the negative social reactions to the political developments in country and the region, alike.

Bahrain Press Association would like to express their deep gratitude to everyone who have contributed to completing this report, especially the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), United State of America.

BPA in a statistical report documenting 2011- 2015 violations

## Bahrain ends its fifth year with more than 890 violations of freedom of opinion and expression

**Bahrain Press Association (BPA) issued a statistical report entitled "Violations of Freedom of Opinion and Expression in Bahrain: Outcomes of 2011-2015" that has documented the violations practiced against the Freedom of Press and expression since 2011.**



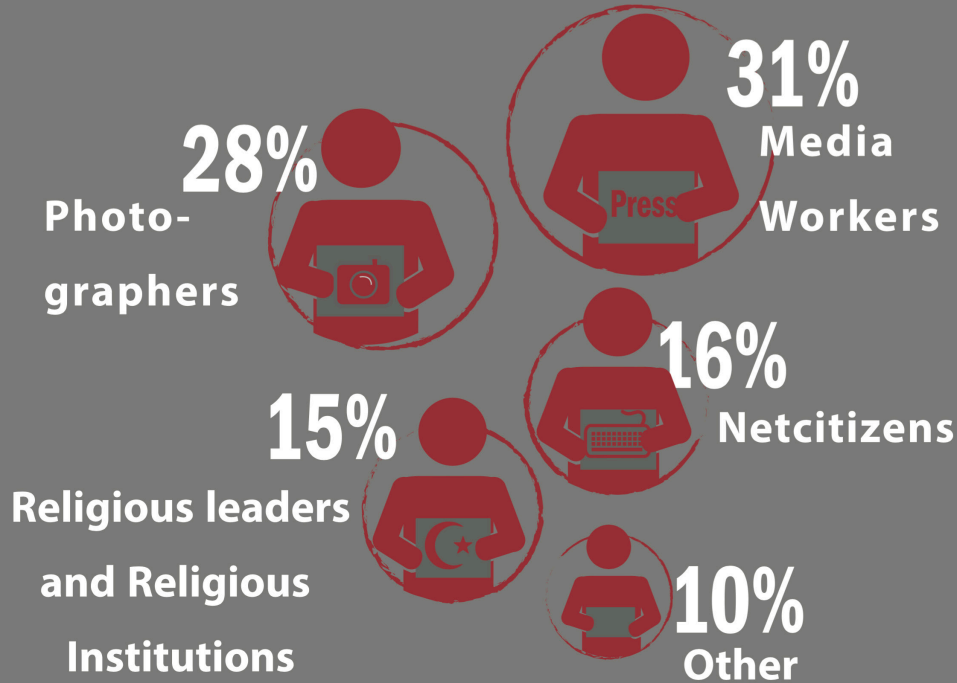
The report includes all the violations that have been endured over the past 5 years by figures such as; journalists, media personnel, social media activists, human rights activists, politicians and even ordinary citizens.

The results of the report indicate that 2015 has witnessed the highest rate of violations compared to the previous years, including 2011, when the authorities first began arresting media people, journalists and activists. Some of the ones that were

arrested were also subjected to torture according to the Human rights reports and the findings of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) which issued its final report on November 23, 2011. The association documented 288 violations within 2015 compared to 255 cases in 2011, whereas the violations of freedom of expression were considerably decreased to less than half the amount.

BPA documented in its report a total of 894 violations against people working

## Who Is The Most Targeted?



in the media sector and against political and human rights activists within the past five years, in which the media people and photographers received the lion's share of these violations. The report moreover, highlights that 59% of these violations were practiced against media figures and photographers; clearly targeting the freedom of media and press.

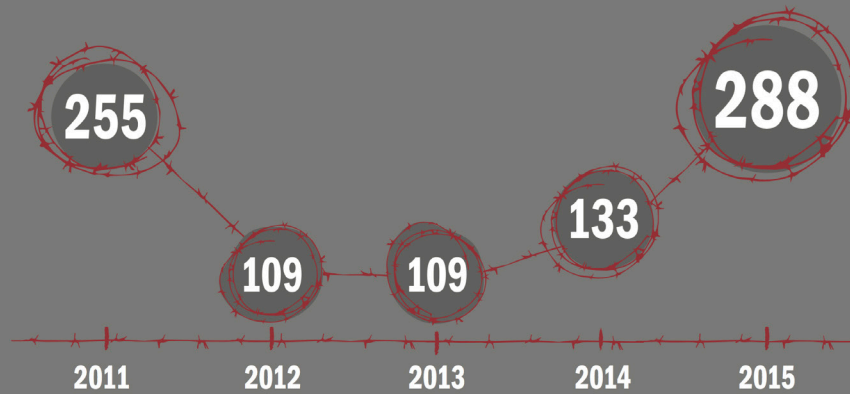
The online activists were also among the most prominent victims of freedom of expression. They were subjected to several violations; the finding of the report reveals that 16% of the total recorded violations were practiced against social media activists.

The association mentioned that the types

of these violations varied between killing and summoning for investigation. The journalists, media people and activists have witnessed 10 types of violations. The association recorded cases of 3 killings, despite the seemingly small figure, they were in fact the most brutal and violent. 29 cases were subjected to pressure, intimidation and constant fear. Besides, 25 of the violations victims were physically assaulted and 22 others were subjected to torture.

The report reveals that 21 journalists, people within the media industry and activists were forced to leave their country throughout the past five years for fear of being arrested or tortured. Whereas 110

## Number Of Violations Per Year



people were summoned for investigation, 109 were imprisoned and judicial measures were taken against 73 of them.

In the framework of its policy against freedom of expression, the Bahraini authorities conducted arbitral dismissing of 69 journalists, media figures and activists who were sacked from their jobs for reasons related to freedom of opinion and expression. Meanwhile, 66 cases faced internal pressure within their jobs.

The association detected in its report five charges; which were the most prominent with respect to the cases of freedom of expression. The charge of inciting hatred against the regime was the most common one followed by the charge of misusing the social media. The charge of insulting the king came in the third place followed by the charge of assembling and insulting a statutory body.

However, with respect to restriction on the media establishments, the report showed that the “Al-Wasat” newspaper was the most targeted by the authorities. The Bahraini government stopped the publication of the newspaper and prevented its circulation twice. The “Al-Arab” channel also fell victim to the government’s policies that target the media. The Bahraini authorities brought the work of the “Al-Arab” channel to a halt in February 2015 over broadcasting an interview held with one of the Bahraini opposition figure.

The BPA affirmed that there is no way to guarantee real freedoms in the field of media and press unless five essential measures are implemented; these measures would make a remarkable shift in this field that is being subjected to ongoing violations.

“A modern law for the press” heads the

## Top Accusations In Free Speech Cases

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

Incitement to hatred and contempt of the regime

Misusing social media

Offending the King

Participating in assemblies

Offending a government institution

list of urgent measures to guarantee real freedoms in the areas of media and journalism, in addition to “the government’s break up of monopolies of visual and audio media”, “not interfering in the media contents”, “lifting the ban on websites” and “stopping targeting the media people and internet activists”.

The report on the Violations of freedom of

opinion and expression in the last five years was put together from published reports by the following: “Reporter without Borders”, “Human Rights Watch”, “Committee to Protect Journalists”, “Freedom House”, “Bahrain Center for Human Rights” and “Bahrain 19”. In addition to Bahrain Press Association’s monthly and annual publications.

## Four Journalists had their Citizenship Revoked

## "Al-Arab" Channel closed down and Agencies'

## Photographers became a Direct Target of MoI's Canisters

condemns the ongoing targeting of journalists, media people and Internet activists as a punishment for performing their jobs in covering the protests or exercising their right of expression and writing via the different media means. BPA documented one of the severest campaigns, since the beginning of the political protests, carried out by security forces in Bahrain against photographers, journalists and bloggers during January and February 2015.



BPA recorded during these two months several violations against journalists and news agencies' correspondents, on top of revoking the citizenships of 4 opposing journalists by royal decrees, closing down "Al-Arab" channel, only few hours after it started to broadcast in Manama. The clamp down by the authorities on protests that were triggered by the arrest

of the secretary-General of the Al-Wefaq National and Islamic Society left a number of casualties among the news agencies' correspondents.

Bahrain Press Association condemns the authorities' disregard of rights of the people working in the media field and Internet and taking revenge from them for presenting narratives about the general situations in





**Mazen Mahdi**

the country that contradict with that the official media seeks to promote.

### **Photographer Mazen Mahdi Injured by two Tear Gas Canisters**

The Photojournalist, Mazen Mahdi, correspondent of the German News Agency and European Agency, was injured by two tear gas canisters during his coverage of the demonstrations in Bilad Al-Qadeem, south of Manama, on the 1st of January, 2015, protesting against the arrest of Al-Wefaq's Secretary-General, Sheikh Ali Salman. As a result, Mahdi received a bruise on his hand and the lighting of his camera was demolished.

Mahdi was also injured on the second day, 2nd of January; he sustained bullets wounds as he was covering protests in the same village. On the 4th of January, he was shot directly by the police with a tear gas canister. Mahdi was not injured then. The same incident took place again on the 5th of January while covering similar protests.

The first tear gas canister was fired from an armored personnel carrier and targeted one of the protestors. Mahdi was standing behind a protestor and he pointed at his jacket that has "press" tag and to the camera in his hand. Despite that, he was shot directly into his press jacket but received no serious injury. A video camera installed at the top of a building in the village recorded the incident. You can watch the incident on the following link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BD20Sm6pVlo>

### **Reuters Photographers Directly Shot**

The police directly fired tear gas canisters against the video photographer Amer Mohammad, who works for Reuters, and the photojournalist Hamad Mohammad, who also works for Reuters, on the 5th of January in two separate incidents while covering the demonstrators who were protesting against the arrest of Al-Wefaq Secretary-General, Sheikh Ali Salman,

in Bilad Al-Qadeem. The first incident took place when Amer Mohammad, accompanied by Hamad Mohammad and photographer Mazen Mahdi, moved to an alley in front of the main road to avoid an armoured personnel vehicle heading towards the protestors, thus, the police targeted them from behind.

### **Adjourning 9 Lawsuits Brought against Journalists**

The Bahraini courts and those of Appeals adjourned over different periods of time in January 2015 about 9 cases brought forth against journalists and bloggers whom most of them are in detention waiting for the verdicts against them for expressing their opinions.

The Supreme Court of Appeals adjourned on the 8th of January its verdict against the blogger Nader Abdulemam who is accused of posting on his twitter account a tweet that is considered to be “an insult to the companion Khalid ibn Al-Waleed”. The court of Appeals also delayed, on the 11th of January, for the 6th time in a row the appeals session of the Internet activist Ali Al-Mearaj, in which he is accused of “insulting the king”, as the attesting witness did not show up.

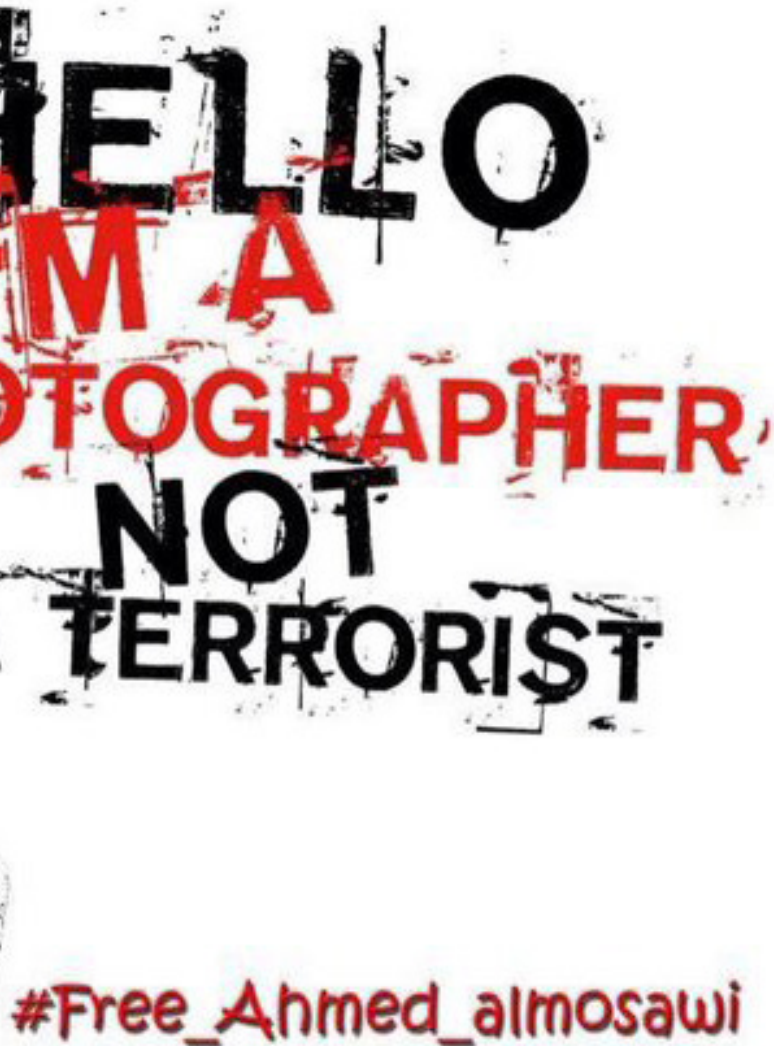
The third minor criminal court renewed on the 11th of January the detention of Hussein Ali Isa Mahdi, whom the authorities accuse of managing “Takrouz” account on Twitter, until the 26th January. After the renewal, Mahdi will have spent more than 7 months in prison, although the judge explained in the same session that “the accused can’t be kept in detention for more than 7 months.”

The first supreme criminal court decided on the 13th of January not to look into the case against the editor-in-chief of the “Gulf



News”, Anwar Abdulrahman, in which he is accused, along with the journalist Faisal Al-Hatt, of “insulting and humiliating one of the athletic referees through the publishing means” due to the expiration of the case that was raised 6 years ago.

On the 20th of January, the third minor criminal court adjourned issuing its verdict in the case in which photographer Ahmad Al-Fardan is accused of “assembly”. The first minor criminal court delayed on its session on the 21st of January issuing the verdict against a member in Al-Fateh Youth Coalition, Yaqoob Al-Fateh, in which he is accused of “insulting the Bahraini army”



restroom." Al-Mosawi told his family that "he was put inside a cold room with no thick clothes." Al-Mosawi was arrested on the 10th of February, 2014, after his house was raided. The authorities also confiscated Al-Mosawi's own devices. He was taken to an unknown place and his family did not know anything about him for days after his arrest. The authorities accused Al-Mosawi of "joining a cell aiming at disrupting Bahrain's peace for a terrorist aim."

### **Fining "Al-Ayam" Newspaper 200 Dinar**

The supreme criminal court fined the editor-in-chief of the "Al-Ayam" newspaper, Isa Al-Shaiji, 200 BD in a case brought forth against him by Information Affairs Authority in which he is accused of "insult". The court also obliged him to pay the plaintiff Sameera Rajab, Minister of State for Information and former government's official spokesperson, 100 Dinar and to pay the counselor of the previous minister 50 Dinar as a temporal compensation and for the charges of the civil lawsuit and 20 Dinar for attorney fees. Sameera Rajab, Minister of State for Information and former government's official spokesperson, has filed a lawsuit to the attorney general against the chairman of boards of directors and its editor-in-chief and demanded to punish them for broadcasting in several publications what she considered "offensive and affects her integrity and that of her counselor."

### **Nabeel Rajab Sentenced to**

### **Six Months in Prison**

The minor criminal court handed down a 6-month jail term to the president of Bahrain Centre for Human rights, Nabeel

through a tweet in which he demanded free will for the army to vote in the elections. The court also delayed on the 26th of January the trials of photographers Kassim Zainuldeen, Ahmad Zainuldeen and Mostafa Rabie.

### **Putting Photographer "Al-Mosawi" in a Cold Room**

The family of detainee Sayed Ahmad Al-Mosawi, winner of 127 international awards, received a call from him on the 11th of January, 2015 during which he informed them that "he was put in solitary confinement and prevented from using the



Rajab, over insulting the army and statutory body, via a tweet in 2014.

In his tweet, Rajab said that the Bahraini security bodies are “incubators to create Jihadists”. The court then released Rajab on a 200 BD bail so that he can appeal the verdict. The Minister of Defense has assigned the president of the military court of cassation to instigate the lawsuit against Rajab over insulting the army. Rajab was referred to the court after the Public Prosecution charged him with “publically insulting statutory bodies”.

### **“Hubail’s” Family Complains about denying him Treatment**

The family of arrested photographer Husain Hubail said that the authorities prevented him from attending (the 23rd of January, 2015) the hospital’s clinic, despite him having a previous appointment. The family stated that “Hubail suffered from fatigue and illness and that the Jaw prison’s administration refused to send him

to hospital to receive treatment, thus he lost his follow up appointments.” The family also explained that “he ran out of the high pressure medication which he takes.” It reiterated on the 29th of January an appeal that “the authority has to expose Hubail to a doctor due to his need.” The authorities, however, continued to refuse to meet the family’s demands.

### **Nine Citizens Arrested over Insulting the Saudi King**

The Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security Directorate in the Ministry of Interior announced on the 27th of January, 2015 that it arrested 9 Shia citizens over “using the social media to insult the late Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz”.

The General-Director said “after investigation, 9 citizens were arrested over misusing the social media,” indicating that the arrested are: Mohammad Saeed Al-Adraj (24 years), Mohammad Ahmed Ali (21

years), Yousif Fadel Salman (21 years), Abbas Ali Ahmad (23 years), Ali Jaafar Ahmad (29 years), Sayed Hussein Jaafar (28 years), Ali Ibrahim Ali (21 years), Kamil Ibrahim Yousif (19 years) and Hussein Mohammad Ahmad (22 years). He further stated that "after receiving an authorisation from the Public Prosecution, the involved were arrested are referred to the prosecution." Their first trial was held on the 16th of February, 2015 and adjourned until the 16th of March.

## Four Journalists Revoked

### of their Citizenships

The Bahraini authorities revoked the citizenships of 4 opposing journalists on the 31st of January, 2015 among a list of 72 other citizens. The list included the founder of Bahrain Online Ali Abdulemam, the critic Ali Al-Dairy, the journalist for the Beirut-based opposition Al Nabaa station Abbas Busafwan and blogger Hussein Yousef. Bahrain News Agency (BNA) published the decree that included the names of 72 people who were stripped of their Bahraini citizenships "in the framework of measures taken by the Ministry of Interior to maintain the security and stability and combat the terrorist dangers and threats."

The statement published by BNA indicated that those stripped of their citizenships have "made actions that harm the Kingdom's interests and acted in a way contrary to their loyal duty."

## Closing down "Al-Arab" Channel

Bahrain halted on the 2nd of February, 2015 the "Al-Arab" channel, owned by the Saudi millionaire Alwaleed bin Talal, on its first day of launching after it aired an interview with the political assistant of the Al-Wefaq Secretary-General, the prominent



**Sayed Jameel Kadhem**

figure Khalil Al-Marzooq. However, the Information Affairs Authority claimed in a statement on the 9th of February that the suspension of the channel is due to "its failure to obtain the required licensing approval to commence broadcasting in Bahrain," according to the official statement. The Information Affairs Authority (IAA) added that "it sought to support the channel to complete the technical and administrative requirement and that the channel broadcast in a way that matches the standards of regional and international practice agreements, to take account of efforts aimed at stemming the tide of extremism and terrorism throughout the region and the wider world. However, the channel's non-compliance to these requirements made the Higher Authority of Media and Communications take the suitable decision and report to the Cabinet about it."



it was launched, because it hosted the political assistant of the Al-Wefaq Secretary-General, the prominent figure, Khalil Al-Marzooq, to talk about the decision of revoking the citizenships of 72 Bahrainis, including 50 dissidents.

### **Salis Fined 200 Dinar over “Insulting Army”**

The first minor criminal court fined on the 10th of February, 2015 member of Al-Fateh Youth Coalition, Yaqoob Al-Fateh, 200 Dinar over “insulting the army”. Salis was released on his first trial with the guarantee of his place of residence.

The Public Prosecution accuses Salis of publically insulting the army, through writing, on the 7th of June, 2014. He, however, denied the charge brought forth against him, saying “any demean to the army, is demean to me because I am a Bahraini citizen”.

### **Arresting Photographer**

#### **Hameed Al-Kidami**

The security forces arrested photographer Hameed Al-Kadimi while performing his duty in photographing the protests staged on the 14th of February, 2015 commemorating the political uprisings’ fourth anniversary.

A security forces arrested him in Bilad Al-Qadeem, south of Manama. He was questioned about his work as a photographer, as he is considered one of the most prominent photographers who continuously figure in the protests incidents. He was released on the 22nd of February after spending a week in prison.

### **Court Upholds Imprisoning Head of Al-Wefaq’s Shura over Tweet**

The supreme court of appeals upheld on the 15th of February, 2015 a 6-month jail term against head of Al-Wefaq’s Shura,

Sayed Jameel Kadhem, over “spreading false news aiming at affecting the elections.” Kadhem was directly arrested after the session and was returned to prison. It is worth mentioning that the court had released him 2 weeks ago, until the issuance of the appeals verdict. The Public Prosecution referred head of Al-Wefaq’s Shura to trial on the 23rd of November, 2014 over a tweet in which he talked about the role of political money in the elections organised by the authorities on the 22nd of November, 2014. The prosecution questioned Kadhem and released him thereafter, however, it referred him to trial. On the 13th of January, the court handed down Kadhem a 6-month jail term with the execution of sentence and a 500 BD fine. One day following the issuance of his verdict, security patrols chased Kadhem and besieged Al-Wefaq’s headquarters. Kadhem surrendered after the ministry of Interior rejected Al-Wefaq’s demand; that he directly goes to jail instead of being arrested from the society’s headquarters.

### **3 Months in Prison for Photographer**

#### **Ahmad Al-Fardan**

The Third Minor Criminal Court sentenced on 17th of February, 2015 the photographer Ahmad Al-Fardan to three months in prison and set 100 BD as bail for halting execution over “assembly”. Al-Fardan denied before the court the charge of assembly attributed to him. Lawyer Mohammad Al-Mahdi said that “the court allowed Al-Fardan to talk about the torture he was subjected to and that he works as a photographer and has no link to any assembly.” Al-Fardan stressed that he was doing his job as a photographer for the Italian “Noor Photo”

agency.

The photographer has received 105 international prizes in photography competitions by the International Federation of Photographic Art and American Photography Association. He won second place at IFEX in its Impunity Exposed photo contest and first place in the “Front Line” organisation.

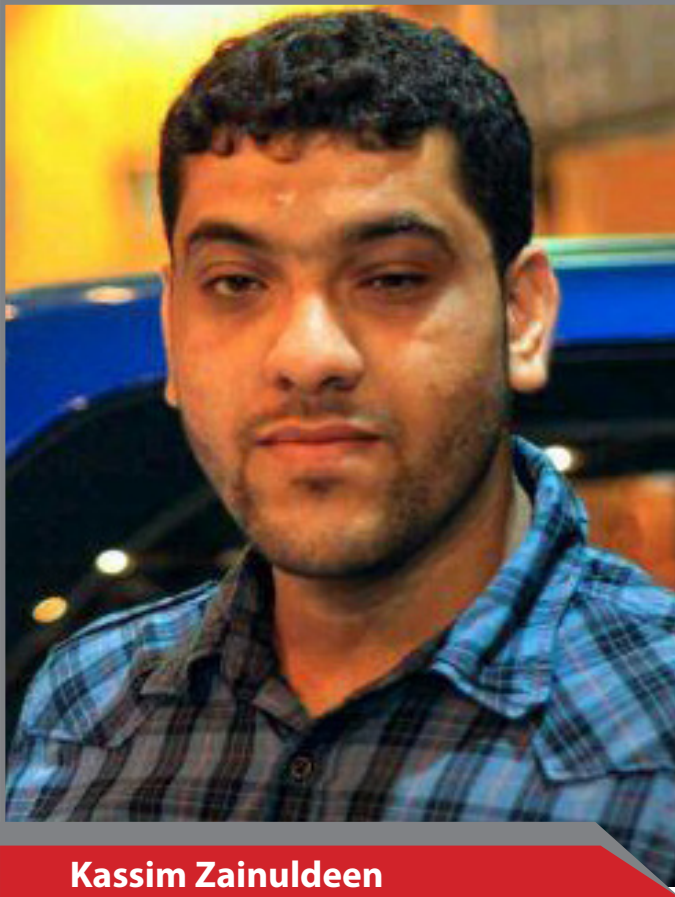
### **One year in prison to Ahmad Mushaima over “Insulting the King”**

A Bahraini court sentenced the eulogy reciter Ahmad Hassan Mushaima on the 18th of February, 2015 to a year in prison over “insulting the king” when he read a poem, in a religious ceremony, considered to be of insulting nature to Bahrain’s king. Ahmad, the son of Hassan Mushaima, Secretary-General of the Haq Democracy Movement who is sentenced to life imprisonment, was arrested on the 13th of November, 2014. After his arrest, Ahmad told his family that was “subjected to torture, beating and kicks on the legs during the investigation”. He explained that he was “forced to insult his father and his religion and sign documents that convict him”.

### **Physically Assaulting Photographer**

#### **Mohammad Al-Najjar**

The security forces arrested the video photographer Mohammad Najjar while covering a protest in “Al-Daih”, west of Manama, on February 23, 2015. After his arrest, Najjar said that he was “beaten, insulted and photographed while holding anti-regime slogans to be used as evidence against him.” The authorities, however, released him after taking his jacket and eyeglasses.



**Kassim Zainuldeen**

## **Trials of 15 Accused of Expressing their Opinions Adjourned**

The Bahraini courts and those of appeals adjourned over different periods of time in February 2015 about 15 cases brought forth against journalists and bloggers whom most of them are in detention waiting for the verdicts against them for expressing their opinions.

The first appeals session of the photographer Ammar Abdulrasoul that was held on the 2nd of February was adjourned due to the attesting witness. The ninth appeals session of the online activist Ali Mearaj that was held on the 15th of February was adjourned to listen to the attesting witness. On the 16th of February, the first trial session of 9 arrested tweeters over “misusing social media” was adjourned. The court also delayed the trial of the online activist Hussein Mahdi “Takrouz” and so it did on the 23rd of February with the activist Ghada Jamsheer and photographer Hossam Srour.

## **Upholding 3-Year Term Sentence against Photographer Kassim Zainuldeen**

The court of appeals upheld on the 25th of February, 2015 a 3-year jail term against the photographer Kassim Zainuldeen over “case of ward 10 in Dry Dock prison”. The Public Prosecution had already referred Zainuldeen, along with 18 other suspects, to the supreme criminal court over “violating the bodily integrity of members of public security forces and causing casualties among them’ and “damaging public properties aiming at spreading chaos”. Zainuldeen was arrested on the 2nd of August, 2013 after civilians, protected by police forces, raided his house in Diraz. His phone and laptop were confiscated and his car was searched.

## **Life Term Sentence to Photographer**

### **Jaafar Madhoun**

A Bahraini court handed down a life term sentence on the 24th of February, 2015 to the photographer Jaafar Abdulnabi Madhoun over “taking part in blasting a police check point on December 2013, which left a wounded policeman.”

Marhoun was arrested on the 26th of December, 2013. He reported to his family being tortured at the hands of the Criminal Investigations Directorate over four days, before being transferred to a clinic affiliated to the Ministry of interior and then to “Dry Dock” prison, where he spent 14 months of pre-trial detention. After his verdict was issued, Marhoun was transferred to Jaw prison.





"Jaw" prison events cuts off the news on "Hubail" & "Musawi" Photographers

## Nabil Rajab and the "Al-Wihdawi" secretary party imprisoned for criticising the war in Yemen



**Nabeel Rajab**

**Events that took place during April and May 2015 show that the Bahraini authorities continued their attacks on journalists and photographers as well as citizens who voiced their views via various means of expression, particularly the social networks.**

The Bahraini Press Association reported the arrest and trial of twitter activists including photographers and human rights activists and leaders of political associations after they expressed their critical view on the war in Yemen. Authorities arrested the Secretary General of Association of "Al-Wihdawi" Fadel Abbas and president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab

after their comments on "Twitter" where they criticised the war in Yemen, while a photographer was arrested and faced investigation due to his personal view and opinions.

In addition, at least four prison sentences were handed to nine detainees who were arrested on charges of "abusing the use of social communication" to mock the



Saudi King. In the meantime, the events of “Jaw” Central Prison came in mid-March / April to reveal the large extent of abuses against prisoners of opinions. There was also a loss of contact with the detained photographer Ahmed Humaidan for nearly a month, during which he was subjected to physical and psychological torture. Another detained photographer, Ahmed al-Musawi, also complained of his imprisonment in solitary confinement and exposure to physical beatings, in addition to preventing him from drinking water or using the toilet for 3 days.

The Bahraini Press Association believes that this significant and frequent violations against media professionals and bloggers comes as a form of vengeful reprisals part of a systematic plan to silence and prevent them from carrying out their work in

bringing the truth to a wider audience.

### **Poet Abdullah Al-Qurmozy is investigated**

Abdullah Al-Qurmozy, the poet, was called by the security authorities for questioning on the 2nd of March 2015 due to a poem he recited in an event to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the killing of Buhmaid; a victims of the protests in Bahrain. The Authority interrogated Abdullah Al-Qurmozy in the city’s police station on the southern Hamad regarding the poem that he recited on the 19th February. He was released the same day after signing a pledge to return back to the police station if requested to do so.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al34LtKNmak>

## Photographer Humaidan's family complaining about contact loss

Photographer Ahmed Humaidan's family stated that they lost contact with him since the first day of the revolt at "Jaw" Central Prison on the 16th March 2015. "I don't know, where my husband is, I don't know his fate!" said his wife Janan Humaidan. Humaidan, a renowned photographer and winner of dozens international awards was sentenced in March 2014 to ten years in prison for allegedly attacking a police station, following his arrest at the end of 2012.

He was among the prisoners at "Jaw" Central Prison, south of Bahrain, where riots and clashes broke out. The Ministry of Interior announced in a brief statement that the "riots that occurred were controlled promptly and that the culprits behind the riots were convicts and their families at the prison visiting building."

Prison Authority informed the convict's parents that they are not allowed to see him as they went to visit because he was prohibited from receiving visitors. Humaidan was not allowed to contact his family for a whole month, but finally was allowed to do so on the 10th of April.

## Hossam Sorour, the photographer sentenced to 10 years imprisonment

On the 23rd of March 2015 the Bahraini court sentenced photographer Hussam Mahdi Sorour to 10 years imprisonment on charges of "assault on a public official and participation in demonstrations and the possession of flammable materials."

He was arrested on the 4th of September 2014. His family stated that "the security forces stopped a car that that Hossam and



Fadel Abbas

his colleagues was driving together near the Diraz area and taken to an unofficial torture centre known locally as « Equestrian Unit » where they were there beaten by security officers."

Hossam Sorour is one of many a photography enthusiast who documents and publishes the daily protests and human rights violations. Hossam was arrested in 2012 and subjected torture before being released without charges.

## Fadel Abbas arrested following a statement against the war

On the 26th March 2015, the security authorities arrested both the secretary general of the National Democratic Rally Society "Al-Wihdawi" Fadhil Abbas, and assistant secretary-general lawyer Mohammed Al Mutawa, on reasons of issuing a statement condemning the Saudi Arabia led alliance was in Yemen.



The Public Prosecutor stated on the 29th of March that “an investigation was conducted and completed upon the request submitted by the General Directorate of Investigation and Criminal Evidence, which stated that one of the political societies Secretary General publication overtly states its opposition to military actions currently being taken by Bahrain with a number of allied countries in order to restore legitimacy and stability in Yemen. This led to his remand in custody for pending further investigation. The public prosecutor decided to refer Abbas to the fourth Criminal High Court, and the release of lawyer Mohammed Al Mutawa, Assistant Secretary-General of the Assembly. The first trial was held for Secretary General of the “Al-Wihdawi” assembly Association Fadel Abbas sessions before the Fourth

Criminal Court on the 21st April 2015. Lawyer Abdullah Shamlawi said that the court decided to postpone the hearing until the 21st May 2015.

The prosecution presented Abbas with the charge of “publishing a statement of the association in the media, that contains criticism of the military actions currently being taken by Bahrain with a number of allied countries in order to restore legitimacy and stability of the situation in Yemen, the publication casts doubt on the legality and morality of the Kingdom of Bahrain’s position in both political and military matters.” He was also charged with “felony in deliberately broadcasting false and malicious news with the intention of spreading rumours at time of war, that stirs propaganda and could potentially harm the military operations of the armed

forces. This is a crime that is punishable by imprisonment for up to 10 years, as well as charges of insulting allied states publicly.”

### **Hubail’s family complaining about the denial of treatment**

There were reports on the 27th of March 2015 that claims that the detained photographer Hussein Hubail was found unconscious after he passed out due to high blood pressure brought on by not giving him the required medication. Reports pointed “he has been left in tents inside the prison area following the rebellion events that took place on the 16th of March and prevented from using the toilet and other degrading treatment that does not fit his health situation.” The Hubail’s family issued repeated calls in relation to the prison authorities’ refusal to take him to the hospital clinic, despite the fact that there were previous appointments for him.

“He was subjected to spasm of fatigue and illness and the “Jaw” prison administration refused to send him to the hospital for treatment, which led to the loss of medical follow-up appointments” Hubail’s family said.

The family also added that “the blood pressure medication has actually run out and needs renewal.” Repeating their call on the 29th of February for him to be “ examined and see a doctor as he is in dire need for it” but the authorities remained firm in their refusal.

### **The trial postponement of 15 photographers and bloggers**

On the 15th of March the court postponed the trial of photographers and bloggers, who are facing charges related to the



right in expressing their opinion and their coverage of political protests.

The Court of Appeal postponed the court session for the tenth time of activist Ali Al Maraj due to the absence of the witness, which was held on the 12th of March. Another court session that also got postponed on the 2nd of March is of activist Ghada Jamsheer also.

On the 16th of March, the hearing of 9 social activists accused by the authorities of “misuse of communication tools” was also postponed. In addition, the appeal session of photographers Hossam Ahmed Sorour and Zainnedeene Mustafa Rabiey was adjourned on the 24th of March.



against the Houthis in Yemen, in which Bahrain participate, as “aggression” and “illegal and a breach of international law”, he also stated, according to the public prosecution “insulting the coalition forces participating in operations” in addition to “insulting the statutory body which is the Ministry of Interior”.

Prosecutors also accused Rajab of “spreading fabricated images of children killed in Syria in regarding of the operation in Yemen, as Yemeni children who were killed during the operations” in Yemen.

**Investigation with a photographer about his opinion on the war in Yemen**

A security force arrested the photographer “A.G.” on the 14th of April 2015 while he was in a barber shop in “Sanad” area. They led him to the Criminal Investigation building in Adliya in Manama where he was handcuffed and his eyes were blindfolded for 3 days.

He stated that the authorities interrogated him about his position on the war in Yemen and accused him of “the assemblage.” He was released on the 23rd of April, bailed by his wife.

**3 months in prison for 4 accused of insulting the Saudi king**

On the 18th of April 2015, the Bahraini court passed a sentence of three months accused of “abusing the Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz on social networks.”

The trial of eight others accused of the same charge was postponed. On the 24th of same month the court ordered the release of three of the defendants and continued attaining five of them on trial. On the 28th of April, the

On the 29th of the same month trial of photographer Ahmed al-Moussawi was postponed to listen to the witnesses.

**Detaining of Nabeel Rajab after Tweets for Yemen**

The president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, arrested by security authorities on the 2nd of April 2015, and the public prosecutor gave orders for him to stay in custody pending investigation in relation to “publishing false news about the ongoing military operations in Yemen.” According to the public prosecutor, Nabeel Rajab described the military operations



**Ahmed al-Musawi**

court sentenced three of them for a period of 3 months and the postponement of the two remaining defendants' cases until the 12th of May as they await the investigator to attend.

The General Department for Combating Corruption of Economic and E-Fraud Ministry of the Interior and Security announced on the 27th of January 2015 the arrest of nine Shia citizens on charges of "abuse of social media."

### **Custody renewed of online activist**

On the 21st of April 2015, the Bahraini court renewed the imprisonment of activist Ali Hassan Almqaba.

Almkaba was arrested on the 26th of January 2015 where the public prosecutor ordered his detention for 10 days. Also, he was re-imprisoned after the end of the renewal period of the first arrest.

### **Torture of photographer Ahmed al-Musawi in "solitary prison"**

The family of the photographer Ahmed al-Moussawi, received a call from him on the 27th of April 2015, telling them he was punished with solitary confinement. During a visit from his family on the 30th of April, he informed then that he was subjected to beatings during his solitary confinement and prevented from drinking water or the use of toilet for 3 days.

According to the family they saw evidence of bruises on Ahmed's head and back of a clear sign of the severity of the beating he had received. Moussawi appeared before court for his trial on the 23rd and 29th of the same month, when the session was postponed to listen to the witnesses. He was re-submitted to the Court on 30th of April to hear the defense witnesses which was postponed until the 23rd of May 2015.





Photographer "Hubail" Prevented from Taking his Medications for 20 Days,

"Hmaidan" accused of Taking over "Jaw" Prison  
and CNN Correspondent summoned

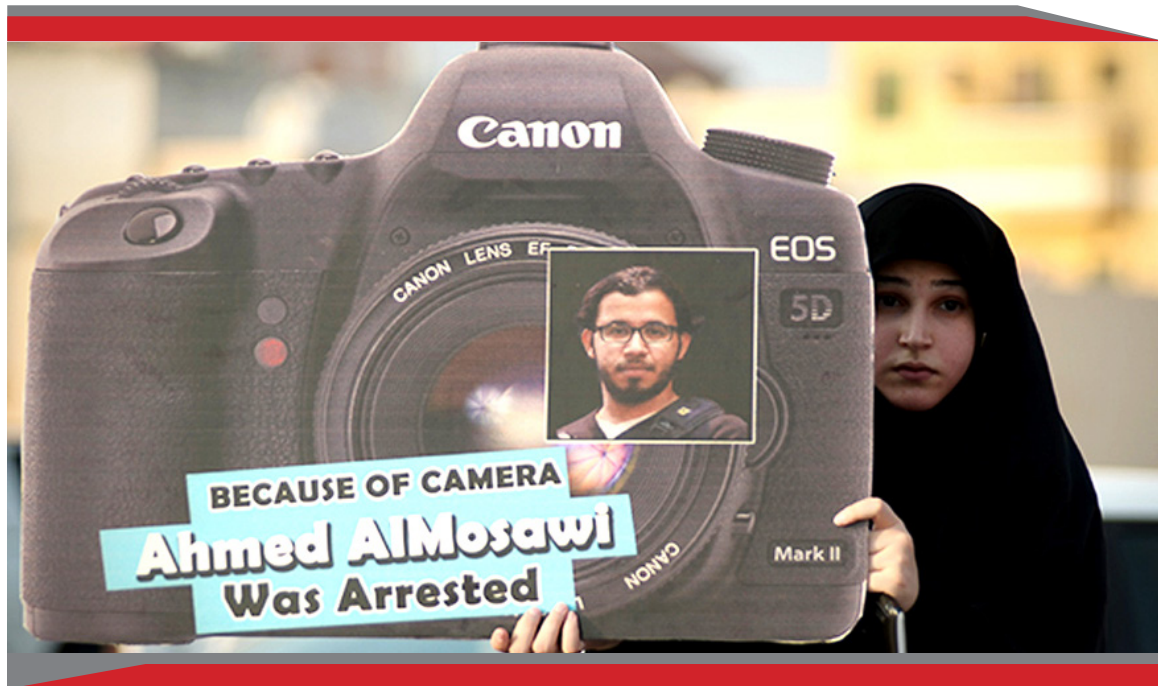


**Bahrain Press Association recorded several violations against journalists, photographers and Internet activists during May 2015.**

**BPA's records showed that photographer Ahmad Hmaidan was tortured and appeared before the Public Prosecution over new charges despite him already had been sentenced to 10 years in prison.**

The security authorities also summoned the correspondent of the Arabic "CNN" website, Mohammad Al-Ghasra, for questioning over publishing a report that tackled corruption. Meanwhile, the arrested photographer Hussain Hubail complained about

being unable to take his blood pressure medications for 20 days because the administration of "Jaw" prison refused to take him to the hospital for his medical appointments. Besides, the Court of Appeals upheld a 6-month jail term against



Nabeel Rajab over “insulting the army”. “Bahrain Press Association” condemns the authorities’ ongoing oppressive measures against the photographers, media people and Internet activists as a punishment for performing their jobs in covering the protests or exercising their rights in freedom of expression through the various media means. Below are the details:

### **Torturing Photographer Ahmad Hmaidan and Bringing Forth New Charges against Him**

The family of the photographer Ahmad Hmaidan said they were allowed to see him on the 5th of May 2015 after about a month and a half of being unable to contact him. The family reported that their son Ahmad talked about being subjected to physical and psychological torture over the incidents that took place in Jaw Central Prison on the 16th of March.

He said that he was taken to appear before the Public Prosecution where new charges were brought forth against him; “inciting to attack the police” and “inciting to take over a public building”. Hmaidan’s family

announced that they had lost contact with Ahmad since the first day of the rebellion at Jaw Central Prison on the 16th of March 2015.

Photographer Ahmad Hmaidan, who has won dozens of international awards, was sentenced to 10 years in prison in March 2014 over attacking a police station, following his arrest at the end of 2012.

### **“Hubail” Banned from Taking Medications for 20 Days**

The family of the photographer Hussain Hubail said they received a call from Hussain on the 11th of May 2015 in which he said that he hadn’t take his blood pressure medications for 20 days, because Jaw Prison’s authorities refused to take him to the clinic. Hubail added that he always suffers from exhaustion and vertigo as a result. Reports on the 27th of March indicated that Hubail fainted because of his high blood pressure due to not taking his medications. The ongoing refusal of the prison’s administration to send Hubail to the hospital made him lose his medical



follow up appointments.

### **Summoning “CNN” Website Correspondent**

The cybernet department affiliated to the Ministry of Interior summoned the journalist Mohammad Al-Ghasra, correspondent of Arabic CNN Website, for investigation on the 11th of May 2015. In this context, it was reported that Al-Ghasra was questioned over a piece of news he had published about corruption, without mentioning further details.

### **Court of Appeals Upholds 6-Month Jail Term against Nabeel Rajab**

The Second Criminal Court of Appeals upheld, on the 14th of May 2015, a 6-month jail term sentence against the human rights activist and president of Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab, for being convicted of insulting the Ministries of Interior and Defense via a tweet on his own twitter account.

The Attorney General Wael Buallay said in a statement published on Bahrain News Agency “BNA” that the Supreme Criminal

Court of Appeals “upheld the appealed sentence that states imprisoning Rajab for 6 months over publically insulting two statutory bodies”. Buallay indicated that Nabeel Rajab “claimed that the Bahrainis who joined groups outside Bahrain are affiliated to the two security institution (ministries), describing the two ministries as the ideological incubator for terrorist groups.”

### **Detention of Online Activist Ali Al-Maqabi Renewed**

The judge ordered on the 21st of May 2015 to renew the detention of the online activist Ali Hasan Al-Maqabi for two weeks. Al-Maqabi completed 5 months in detention since he was arrested on the 26th of January 2015.

In another context, on the 12th of May, the Court of Appeals adjourned the appeal session of the online activist Ali Al-Me’araj for the 12th time due to the absence of the attesting witness. On the 27th of May, the trial of photographer Sayed Ahmed Al-Mosawi was also adjourned until the 29th of June. Meanwhile, during the trial, three witnesses denied the involvement of Al-Mosawi in the case.



## Ibrahim sharif back to the detention,

Ali Salam sentenced for four years  
and Yaqoob Al-Slais penalized 200 BD



**Bahrain Press Association recorded a remarkable increase in the index of freedoms in media's opinion and expression during June and July 2015.**

During these two months, the authorities rearrested the former Secretary-General of the National Democratic Action Society "Wa'ad", Ebrahim Sharif, over a speech in which he criticised the government. The authorities also sentenced Al-Wefaq's Secretary-General, Ali Salman, to 4 years imprisonment over speeches in which he expressed his opinion in the need of reform. The human rights defender, Ghada Jamsheer, was handed down a one year and 8 month-jail term over some tweets she

posted on her twitter account. However, the court of appeals upheld a sentence fining the member of Al-Fateh Youth Coalition; Yacoub Al-Slaise, 200 BD over the charge of "insulting the army" on twitter. Photographer Mohammad Al-Katifi was sentenced to a year and a half over taking images of public protests. Majeed Milad, the former president of the Capital Governorate Municipal, was taken into custody over a speech he delivered in a political seminar.

Media personnel and filed journalists received their share of violations through the ongoing obstruction by the security forces to limit or stop their work as in the cases of the Associated Press photographer, Hasan Jamali, and Agence France-Presse photographer, Mohamed Al-Shaikh. Bahrain Press Association believes that the security authorities' violations against journalists and photographers in addition to citizens who express their opinion via different means, especially social media, reveals that the fundamental rights for the freedom of opinion and expression have reached a dangerous level. BPA condemns the continuous repressive measures taken by the authorities against the photographers, media personalities and Internet activists, as a punishment

for merely doing their job by covering the protests or exercising their rights in freedom of expression through the various media resources.

## Appeals Session of Yacoub

### Al-Slaise Adjourned

The supreme court of appeals adjourned on 7th June, 2015 the case of Al-Fateh Youth Coalition member, Yacoub Al-Slaise, over the charge of "insulting the army" on social media "Twitter". The defence panel presented an oral and written plea before the judge. The pleas were seized until issuing the verdict on 15th June.

## Trial of Journalist Hani

### Al-Fardan Postponed

Bahrain's First High Criminal Court adjourned on the 8th June, 2015 the case of journalist Hani Al-Fardan, in which he is charged with slander against Member of Parliament, Abdul Halim Murad, until 14th September, 2015 for deliberation and pleading. The Public Prosecution accused journalist Hani Al-Fardan and editor-in-chief of Al-Wasat Mansour Al-Jamri that "in February 2014 they publically attributed to the victim which defame him and subject him to punishment."

## Ghada Jamsheer Sentenced to one year and 8 months in prison

Bahrain's First High Criminal Court sentenced the human rights defender and Head of the Women's Petition Committee, Ghada Jamsheer, on the 9th June, 2015 to a year and eight months imprisonment over "insulting a number of employees" on social media. The court also specified a sum of 400 BD bail to stop the execution. The case against Ghada Jamsheer was





**Sheikh Issa Eid**



**Majeed Milad**



**Khalil Al-Marzooq**

brought against her by one of the ruling family; the director of the hospital, Salman bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa, after she posted some tweets on her twitter account about corruption in King Hamad Hospital.

### **Arab Blogger Imprisoned and Expelled for promoting ISIS**

On the 9th June 2015 a Bahraini court imprisoned an Arab blogger for one year and ordered the decision to be enforced immediately. The court also fined the accused 2000 BD and expelled him from Bahrain after serving his sentence for using social media to promote the so-called terrorist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The Public Prosecution brought against him the charge of “publishing topics on social media that promote the idea of one of the extremist organisations, which is considered an incitement of hate a sect and insult its rituals”.

### **Appeals Session of Ali Mearaj Adjourned for the 13th Time**

The supreme court of appeals adjourned on the 14th June, 2015 the appeals session of the online activist Ali Mearaj

until September 13, 2015 over the case in which he is accused of “insulting the king”. Mearaj’s session was adjourned for the 13th time because the attesting witness did not show up. During the session, the lawyer asked the judge to exclude the testimony of the witness after the judge presented documents proving that the witness is outside Bahrain.

### **Court of Appeals Upholds Fining Yacoub Al-Slaise 200 BD**

The second court of appeals upheld on the 15th June, 2015 fined Al-Fateh Youth Coalition member, Yacoub Al-Slaise, 200 BD over the charge of “insulting the army”. The Public Prosecution charged Al-Slaise with “publically insulting the army, through writing, in an incident on the 7th June, 2014”. Al-Slaise, however, denied the charges brought against him, saying that “any offence against the army is an offence against me because I am a Bahraini citizen”.

### **Sheikh Ali Salman Sentenced to 4 years in prison**

Bahrain’s Fourth High Criminal Court issued





**Ghada Jamsheer**

a preliminary sentence on the 16th June, 2015 imprisoning Bahrain's opposition leader and Secretary-General of Al-Wafaq National Islamic Society, Sheikh Ali Salman, to four years in prison after convicting him of charges of "inciting hatred against a sect, disobeying the laws and insulting the Ministry of Interior". The court acquitted him of the charges of overthrowing the regime by force.

### **Investigation Al-Wafaq's Deputy Secretary-General**

The Ministry of Interior summoned on the 30th June, 2015 Al-Wafaq's Deputy Secretary-General Khalil Al-Marzooq to investigations over a speech he delivered in Al-Dirza on June 27. Abdullah Al-Shamlawi said that Al-Marzooq was summoned to the Al-Budai police station. He was charged with "inciting hatred against the regime" and "insulting the Ministry of Interior".

### **Questioning Sheikh Issa Eid**

Bahrain's Ministry of Interior summoned on the 30th June, 2015 the Shiite cleric, Sheikh Issa Eid, the preacher of Karzakaz Grand

Mosque. Lawyer Abdullah Al-Shamlawi said that "Hamad City police station at Roundabout 17 summoned Sheikh Eid to the police station to interrogate him over a sermon he delivered on the 26th June 2015".

### **Majeed Milad Arrested**

Bahrain's Ministry of Interior summoned on the 1st July 2015 the secretariat member and former president of the Capital Governorate Municipal, Majeed Milad, to interrogate him over a speech he delivered in a political seminar held by the Al-Wafaq National Islamic Society in Al-Ma'ameer. The ministry ordered his arrest as prior to his appearance before the Public Prosecution. The prosecution decided on the 2nd July, 2015 to detain him for 7 days pending an investigation over "participating in a public seminar and inciting disobedience of law and staging protests". On the 13th July 2015, he appeared before the 4th criminal court in his first trial session. The court decided to adjourn the case until the 4th August with his continued detention pending investigation. The court recited the charges brought against him, however, he



**Ahmed al-Musawi**

denied them. Lawyer Abdullah Al-Shamlawi asked the court to give him some time for deliberation and pleading.

### **Dr. Saeed Al-Samahiji Released**

On the 1st July 2015 the Bahraini authorities released Dr. Saeed Al-Samahiji, an eye surgery consultant, after serving his full sentence. A Bahraini court sentenced Al-Samahiji to one year in prison after convicting him of insulting the king on social media.

### **Kuwaiti Tweeter handed over to his country's authorities**

The Bahraini authorities handed over on the 11th July 2015 the Kuwaiti tweeter Yousef Shamlan Al-Essa to his country's authorities over the charge of "spreading

false information". The Bahraini security apparatuses arrested him at Manama Airport as he attempted to leave for London. The Kuwaiti Public Prosecution charged the arrested Yousef Shamlan Al-Essa with "spreading false information deemed harmful to the country and its security", "defaming and slandering the members of the judiciary by doubting their financial integrity," in addition to "misusing the cell phone" through creating a group on WhatsApp called "Fintas".

### **Ebrahim Sharif Rearrested**

The Security authorities arrested on the 11th July 2015 the former Secretary-General of the National Democratic Action Society "Wa'ad", Ebrahim Sharif, from his home in the early morning, 22 days after releasing him. The Director-General of the Criminal Investigation & Forensic Science Directorate in the Ministry of Interior announced that "Ebrahim Sharif was arrested for promoting the overthrow of the regime and publically inciting hatred against the regime" in a speech he delivered at a funeral in Muharraq on the 10th July 2015.

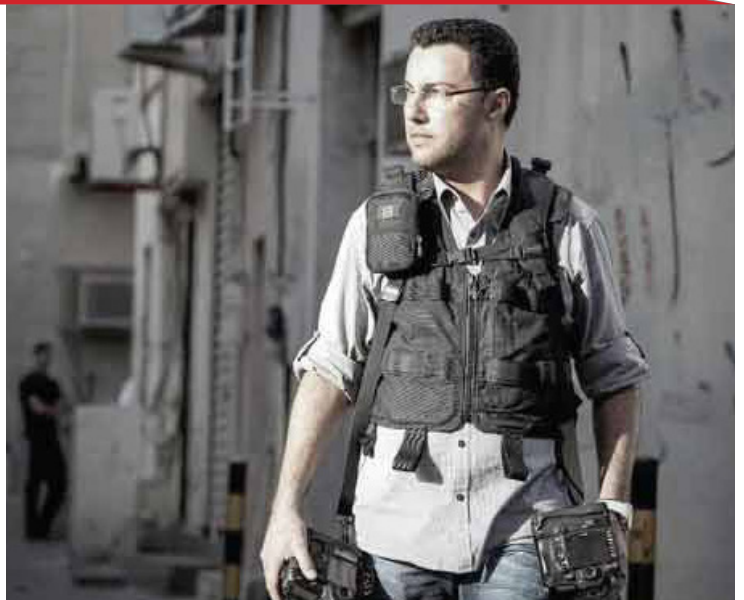
Sharif was released on the 19th June 2015 after spending about 5 years in prison before the authorities arrested him again.

### **Nabeel Rajab Released**

On the 13th July 2015 the Bahraini authorities released the president of Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab. King Hamad bin Isa issued a royal decree granting a special pardon to Nabeel Rajab for "health reasons". The Ministry of Interior arrested Rajab on the onset of April 2015 and sentenced him to 6 months in prison over "publishing information that would harm civil peace" and "insulting a



**Dr. Saeed Al-Samahiji**



**Mohammed Al-Sheikh**

statutory body”.

### **AFP Photographer Denied from Entering Al-Ekr**

The Bahraini security forces denied on the 16th July 2015 the AFP photographer Mohammed Al-Sheikh from entering Al-Erk to photograph the funeral of the youth Kassim Mohsen whom the authorities said he was killed in a bomb blast. The security forces stopped Al-Sheikh for more than 20 minutes while he was attempting to enter the country through one of its entrances, thus preventing him from covering the event.

### **AP Photographer Prevented from Entering Al-Ekr**

The Bahraini security forces prevented on the 15th July 2015 the AP photographer Hasan Jamali from entering Al-Erk to cover a bomb blast. The Ministry of Interior announced that the blast was caused by a locally made bomb. The security forces stopped Jamali's attempts to enter Al-Ekr through one of its entrances after the

announcement of the incident.

### **Photographer Ahmed Humaidan Beaten in Prison**

Photographer Ahmed Humaidan was beaten on the 25th July 2015 in Jaw central prison. A group of security forces beat him after he and a number of his friends, announced starting a hunger strike demanding the amelioration of their conditions in the prison. Humaidan was sentenced to 10 years in prison over the charge of attacking a “police station”.

### **Photographer Mohammad Katifi Sentenced to Year and half in prison**

On the 31st July 2015 a Bahraini court sentenced the photographer Moahmmad Al-Katifi, who resides in Al-Daih, for a year and a half in prison over the charge of photographing protests. Al-Katifi was convicted of photographing the protests that erupted on the 12th, 13th and 14th of February 2015 in Al-Daih, west of Manama, on the fifth anniversary of the uprising that erupted on the 14th February 2011.

## "Al-Wasat" newspaper targeted,

Hani Al-Fardan received a warning and tweeters  
"Bou Khamees" and "Haji Ahmed" arrested



**Bahrain Press Association recorded a number of violations during August and September 2015 against journalists, photographers and citizens who expressed their opinions.**

BPA's records revealed that the "Al-Wasat" newspaper was suspended for two days. Moreover, its journalist Hani Al-Fardan received a warning from the Information Affairs Authority for writing a column criticising and doubting the government's crackdown on opposing media and political figures who were charged with betrayal. The security authorities arrested Masnour Al-Jidawi, known as "Sankimah" after circulating an audio clip on social media in which he criticised the discriminatory practices.

The authorities also arrested tweeters Hussein Khamees, known as "Bou Khamees", and Youssif Al-A'am, known as "Haji Ahmed" over their criticism of Bahrain's participation in the war on Yemen. In addition, the authorities also arrested photographer Mohammed Al-Shaikh, the correspondent of Agence France-Press (AFP), and photographer Ahmad Al-Fardan, the correspondent of the agencies Nur Photo and Demotix. Meanwhile, the Bahraini cabinet passed a law restricting the media institutions and imposing censorship



**Hani Al-Fardan**



**Sheikh Hani Al-Banna**

on its media contents.

“Bahrain Press Association” sees that these strict policies have contributed to minimising the horizons of the political dialogue and social discussions. These policies have also limited the electronic horizon that was an incubator to the political and social reactions in the previous years.

The association stresses that imprisoning the photographers and media people in Bahrain is listed among the government’s general orientation towards taking revenge upon the media, photographers and all the activists who represent a narrative for the security events in Bahrain that is inconsistent with the governments’

### **Arresting Comedy Actor “Sankimah”**

On the 1st of August 2015 security authorities arrested the comedian actor Mansour Al-Jidawi, known as “Sankimah”. The General-Director of the Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security Directorate announced that “a person

has been arrested for circulating a voice recording on social media that degrades one of the respected religious sects in Bahrain.” Sankimah’s arrest took place after posting an audio clip on social media in which he criticised the discriminatory nature of dealing with policemen in the Ministry of Interior.

### **Information Affairs Authority Warns Journalist Hani Al-Fardan**

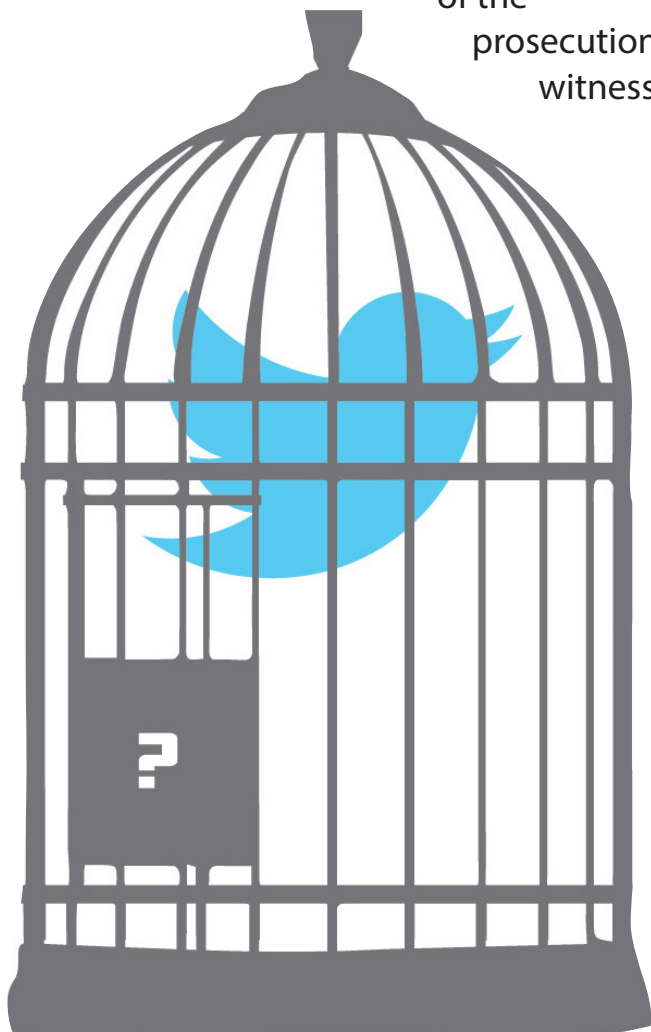
The Bahrain Information Affairs Authority sent a written warning on the 4th August 2015 to the “Al-Wasat” newspaper over an article written by the journalist Hani Al-Fardan. The warning came with reference to the column of the named writer which was entitled “And It Will Never Approve of You” and published in Al-Wasat newspaper on Saturday 1st of August 2015, number 4711. “We inform you that the column contained false information that is considered a violation to the Decree-Law No. 47 of 2002 on the Organisation of the Press, Printing and Publishing, thus the

Bahrain Information Affairs Authority sends this warning to your newspaper pursuant to Article 84 of the decree, stressing on the necessity to publish it in the first publication after receiving this warning, as stipulated in the aforementioned article”.

### **Adjourning Majeed Milad’s Trial**

The fourth minor criminal court adjourned on the 4th of August 2015 the case of Majeed Milad, the former president of the Capital Governorate Municipal council, over a case in which he is accused of “inciting disobedience of the law” until the 13th of December 2015 with his continued detention. During the session, lawyer Abdullah Al-Shemlawi asked for a copy of the CD related to the incident and listening

to the testimonies  
of the  
prosecution  
witnesses



for deliberation. He also demanded the release of Milad with any guarantee. The court; however, denied this request.

### **Suspending “Al-Wasat” Newspaper for 2 Days**

On the 6th of August 2015, the Bahraini authorities suspended the Al-Wasat newspaper until further notice. The Information Affairs Authorities said that suspending Al-Wasat came “for its violation of the law and repeatedly publishing news and information that affect national unity and the Kingdom’s relations with other countries.” The decision came a day after the Minister of Information Affairs Isa bin Abdulrahman Al-Hammadi warned of taking legal measures against all media that publish information that he described as “false information about Bahrain”. On the 8th August 2015, the Information Affairs Authority said that “it decided to allow the Al-Wasat newspaper to resume its work”, explaining that the decision was issued “after the newspaper promised to commit to work according to the law”.

### **Investigating Sheikh Hani Al-Banna**

The Ministry of Interior summoned on the 13th of August 2015 Sheikh Hani Al-Banna, member of the Central Committee of the Ulama (Scholars) Islamic Council, to Hamad Town’s police station. The ministry charged him with “inciting hatred against the regime”, “indirectly targeting the country’s ruler” and “targeting figures who are glorified in a sect” in a speech he delivered in July 2015. The ministry released sheikh Hani later on.

### **Photographer Baqer Al-Kamel Receives Injury**

Photographer Baqer Al-Kamel was shot on



the 14th of August 2015 while covering the protests in Sanabis, west of Bahrain, that were staged on "Independence Day". Al-Kamel sustained a leg injury caused by shotgun.

### Arresting Photographer Mohammed Al-Shaikh and Ahmad Al-Fardan

On the 28th of August 28, 2015, the security authorities arrested the photographer Mohammed Al-Shaikh, the correspondent of Agence France- Press (AFP), and photographer Ahamd Al-Fardan, the correspondent of the agencies Nur Photo and Demotix, while being in "Costa Coffee" in Budai, west of Bahrain. Their arrest came after a blast took place in Karana, although they were not on duty. The authorities released them three hours later.

### Arresting Tweeter Hussein Khamees

The security authorities arrested the Tweeter Hussein Khamees on the 6th of September 2015 over "insulting Bahrain's martyrs on social media," referring to the five Bahraini soldiers who were killed in Yemen on the 5th of September 2015 while on duty in the Saudi-led coalition. The Director-General of the Anti-Corruption,

Economic and Electronic Security Directorate said "the owner of Twitter account (Bou Khamees) who insulted Bahrain's martyrs on social media" was taken into custody.

### Arresting Tweeter Youssif Al-A'am

The security authorities arrested on the 7th of September 2015 the Tweeter Youssif Al-A'am who is a Mathematics teacher and writes posts on the social media under the name "Haji Ahmed". A security force raided his home in A'ali and confiscated all his electronic devices. The Ministry of Interior issued a statement on the same day charging him with "mocking the country's martyrs via his twitter account".

### Adjourning the Appeals Session of Al-Maskati and Abdulemam

The court of appeals adjourned on the 7th of September 2015 issuing the verdict against the two human rights activists Mohammad Al-Maskati, the digital security consultant at "Front Line Defenders", and Nader Abdulemam, the president of Ensaf (Equity) human rights organisation, in the case in which they are accused of "participating in an illegal assembly" and

over which they are sentenced to 6 months imprisonment.

The court adjourned issuing the verdict until the 2nd of November 2015 for deliberation. However, when the court held its session, it also adjourned the case until the 4th of November then to the 7th of January 2016. The minor criminal court has already sentenced the 2 activists on the 31st of December 2014 to 6 months imprisonment over “making riots and participating in an illegal assembly”, with reference to the “Self-Determination” protest that was staged on the 12th of October 2012 in the capital, Manama.

### **Appeals Session of Ali Mearaj Adjourned for the 14th Time**

The supreme court of Appeals adjourned on the 13th of September 2015 the appeals session of the online activist Ali Mearaj until the 1st of December 2015 over the case in which he is accused of “insulting the king”. Mearaj’s session was adjourned for the 14th time. The judge refused to receive the plea until the lawyer waive the presence of the public prosecution’s witness in the case.

### **Journalist Hani Al-Fardan Stands Before Court**

The “Al-Wasat” journalist, Hani Al-Fardan, stood before the first criminal court on the 14th of September 2015 over the case brought against him and its editor-in-chief Mansour Al-Jamri by the Member of Parliament Abdul Halim Murad in which they are accused of slander. The court decided to adjourn the case until the 21st of October 21 for pleading. Al-Jamri stood before the court and denied the charges raised against him. The Public Prosecution accused Al-Fardan and Al-Jamri that

“on the 5th of February they publically attributed to the victim Abdul Halim Murad facts that defame him and subject him to punishment, for they accused the MP of exporting terrorism and illegal fundraising as presented in the documents.”

### **Adjourning the Sentence of Photographer Ahmad Al-Mosawi**

The high criminal court adjourned on the 17th of September 2015 the case of the freelance photographer Ahmad Al-Mosawi in which he is accused of “photographing anti-government protests” and “distributing SIM cards to terrorist protestors”. The court decided to adjourn the case until the 28th of October and was then adjourned until the 1st of November. The court, once more, adjourned announcing the sentence until the 23rd of November 2015.

### **Bahrain’s Cabinet Passes Law Restricting the Media Institutions**

The Bahraini cabinet approved on the 21st of September 2015 a draft resolution regarding the measures of supervision and censorship on the media’s content in which all the audio, read and electronic media means are obliged to comply with a number of restrictions and measures when practicing media work and on top; the sovereignty of Bahrain’s kingdom and respect of its regime, figures, institutions and its statutory bodies.

The decree also obliges the media institutions “not to broadcast and publish any information or news that affect the Kingdom’s relations with other countries, to respect the religions, not to demean the national and religious identity and not to damage the national unity and social cohesion.”





## Harsh Sentences against 4 Photographers.

Pains of Hussain Hubail leads him to the Hospital  
and torture case of Nazeeha Saeed closed



Nazeeha Saeed

**The records of Bahrain Press Association for October and November 2015 revealed the authorities' ongoing violations against the photographers who endangered their lives in order to document the violations made by the security apparatuses.**

Harsh sentences were issued against four photographers. The court handed down a 3-year jail term to the photographer Hossam Srour. Meanwhile, it handed down 10-year jail term sentences to each of the photographers Ahmad Zainuddin, Mostafa Rabie and Ahmad Al-Mosawi. Photographer Sayed Baqer Al-Kamel was summoned to investigation and photographer Hussain Hubail was transferred from his prison cell to the

hospital after his health deteriorated. In these two months, the torturing case of Nazeeha Saeed, correspondent for France 24 and Radio Monte Carlo, was closed. Nazeeha received a letter from the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) stating that the case "lacks evidence" although there are witnesses and medical reports that proves her being subjected to torture. Tweeter Hussein Khamees, known as "Bou Khamees" was sentenced to one full year



in prison after his conviction on slander charges. Meanwhile, the court of appeals upheld a one-year jail term against the human rights defender Ghada Jamsheer and ordered to halt the execution for 3 years.

“Bahrain Press Association” condemns the authorities’ ongoing repressive measures against the photographers, media people and Internet activist that it uses as punishment against them for covering the protests or exercising their right of freedom of expression via the different media means.

## Summoning Photographer

### Sayed Baqer Al-Kamel

The Public Prosecution summoned on the 18th of October 2015 the photographer Sayed Baqer Al-Kamel to give his testimony about a car blast in Al-Maqsha. Al-Kamel was carrying out his work as a

photographer in the village on the 19th of April 2014 before an explosive blasted it. According to the ministry of Interior, the blast resulted from a locally made bomb that was planted in a car. The blast left two dead people and one injured.

## Photographer Hussain Hubail Transferred to Hospital

The photographer Hussain Hubail was transferred to the Al-Salmaniya Medical Complex on the 10th of November 2015 to undergo tests after his health deteriorated. Hubail, who suffers from the following symptoms; heart muscle contraction, shortness of breath and high blood pressure, felt a sudden fatigue. His family said that they visited him two days after the seizure on the 12th of November 2015 and saw that his health was not getting any better, on the contrary, he was tried and couldn’t move.

## **10 and 3-Year Prison Terms Handed down to 3 Photographers**

On the 11th of November 2015 a Bahraini court sentenced 3 photographers to imprisonment. The court handed down a 3-year jail term to the photographer Hossam Srour. Meanwhile, it handed down 10-year jail term sentences to each of the photographers Ahmad Zainuddin, Mostafa Rabie and Ahmad Al-Mosawi. The court accused them of being involved in setting fire to a security patrol vehicle. The photographers; however, denied the charge, stressing that they were subjected to torture to say incriminating confessions.

## **Special Investigating Unit Closes Torture Case of Nazeeha Saeed**

Nazeeha Saeed, correspondent for France 24 and Radio Monte Carlo, received a letter from the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) on the 15th of November 2015 stating that the unit has “stopped the investigations in the case brought forth by the journalist Nazeeha Saeed, in regards to being tortured in one of the police station due to lack of evidence.” The Bahraini Special Investigation Unit (SIU) said that it launched its investigations in the case brought forth by the journalist Nazeeha Saeed, who was tortured, however, it found that it is not possible to file criminal charges due to lack of evidence.

For her part, Nazeeha Saeed commented with surprise saying “Three medical reports, witnesses and identification of the perpetrators...How come you say there is a lack of evidence?”

## **Acquitting Journalist Hani Al-Fardan**

Bahrain’s high criminal court acquitted

on (November 17, 2015) the writer and journalist in the “Al-Wasat” newspaper, Hani Al-Fardan, from the slander charge against the Salafist Member of Parliament Abdul Halim Murad. The court said that the victim’s carried out his work with bona fide for the sake of public interest and not for personal interests, adding that, the suspects affirmed that they used the right of criticism guaranteed by the freedom of opinion and journalism. Thus, the court decided to acquit the first and second suspects of the charges attributed to them pursuant to article 225 of code of criminal procedures.

## **Sentencing Tweeter Hussein Khamees to One Year in Prison**

Bahrain’s third minor criminal court sentenced on the 19th of November 2015 the tweeter Hussein Khamees, known as “Bou Khamees” via his twitter account, to one full year in prison after convicting him of insulting the “Al-Arabiya” channel’s correspondent Mohammad Al-Arab. The Public Prosecution accused Hussein Khamees that he “in 2013 wrote expressions that insult the victim’s honour and respect” and “deliberately annoyed the victim through misusing the phone.” The court sentenced Bou Khamees to one full year in prison over the first charge and acquitted him of the second.

## **10-Year Prison Term Handed down to Photographer Ahmad Al-Mosawi**

A Bahraini court handed down on the 23rd of November 2015 a 10-year jail sentence to the freelance photographer Sayed Ahmad Al-Mosawi and revoked his citizenship. The court convicted him of “photographing anti-government’s



**Hussain Hubail**

protests” and “distributing SIM card to the terrorist protestors”.

Al-Mosawi’s family said that “he was subjected to the cruelest forms of torture repeatedly while being in detention, especially when he was investigated in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID)”.

### **Court of Appeals Upholds Sentence against Ghada Jamsheer**

The Supreme Court of Appeals upheld on the 26th of November 2015 a one-year jail term against the human rights defender and Head of the Women’s

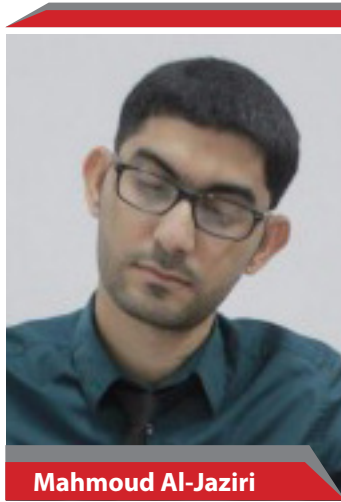
Petition Committee, Ghada Jamsheer. The court ordered to halt the execution for 3 years. The First High Criminal Court sentenced Ghada Jamsheer on the 5th of May 2015 over the charge of “assaulting a policewoman”. Jamsheer, however, denied the charge. Meanwhile, the Public Prosecution claims that this assault took place while she was in custody in September 2014, without presenting enough evidence. For his part, the attorney refuted this claim. In addition to this charge, activist Ghada Jamsheer faces the charge of “insulting a policewoman” also while being in detention.

Tweeter "Bou Khamees" prosecuted over new charges

Arrest of the "Al-Wasat" journalist, Mahmoud Al-Jaziri, from his home and warning the "CNN" correspondent, Mohammad Al-Ghasra.



Hussein Khamees



Mahmoud Al-Jaziri



Mohammad Al-Ghasra

**"Bahrain Press Association" is following with great concern the Bahraini authorities ongoing targeting of media people and internet activists. The results of December 2015 show the ongoing harassment approach, investigations, arrest, torture and trials over fabricated charges brought against journalists and tweeters, in addition to other personnel working on providing news.**

The Bahraini authorities raided the house of the "Al-Wasat" newspaper correspondent to the Shura Council and the House of Representatives, Mahmoud Radhi Al-Jaziri, in the early morning of the 28th of December 2015 and arrested him. The authorities confiscated Al-Jaziri's mobile phone and laptop. Moreover, the Bahraini judiciary commenced the trial of the tweeter Hus-

sein Khamees, known as "Bou Khamees", over new charges, although it has issued a previous verdict against him. The judiciary has also started the trial of tweeter Youssif Al-A'am, known as "Haji Ahmed", whom the authorities raised against him flimsy charges such as "posting more than 80 thousands tweets that included insults to the martyrs of the United Arab Emirates and Kingdom



of Saudi Arabia”.

The targeting also included the correspondents of world news sites like that of “CNN”, Mohammad Al-Ghasra, who received a warning from the Information Affairs Authority after publishing a piece of news. This comes at a time when the courts of different levels proceeded in holding their sessions to prosecute journalists and other bloggers whose cases are still being adjourned.

“Bahrain Press Association” condemns the targeting of journalists, bloggers and photographers, and sees that the targeting has become a common and systematic trend. This is one of the most important reasons that led to the deterioration of Bahrain’s reputation on the international level with respect to freedom of press. According to 2015 World Press Freedom Index, published by Reporters without Borders, Bahrain occupied the 163rd rank within a list of 180 countries.

### **Adjourning the Appeals Session of Ali Mearaj for the 15th Time**

The supreme court of appeals adjourned on the 1st of December 2015 the appeals session of the online activist Ali Mearaj until

the 5th of January 2015. Mearaj’s session was adjourned for the 15th time. He is charged of “insulting the king”. The judge refused in a previous session to receive the plea until the lawyer waive the presence of the public prosecution’s witness in the case.

### **Commencing the Trial of Tweeter “**

#### **Bou Khamees”**

Bahrain’s first high criminal court commenced on the 3rd of December 2015, the trial of tweeter Hussein Khamees in the other case in which he is charged of spreading rumours during wartime via “Bou Khamees” twitter account. The court adjourned the case until the 17th of January 2016, with his continued detention, for deliberation, and presented the lawyer a copy of the case documents.

The Public Prosecution charged the suspect with “deliberately spreading rumours and false information during wartime in a manner that damaged war preparations and military operations of the armed forces”. The punishment of this felony reaches up to 10 years in prison. The prosecution also accused him of “inciting hatred and contempt

against a sect”.

## Adjourning the Appeals of Photographer Hossam Srour

The Court of Appeals adjourned on the 14th of December 2015 that appeals of photographer Hossam Srour in which he is accused of “attacking policemen”, “blasting explosives” and “participating in an illegal assembly”. The case was adjourned until the 14th of January 2016. Srour was sentenced to 3 years in prison on the 11th of November 2015 over the charges attributed to him.



## Charging the Tweeter “Haji Ahmed”

### with Posting 80 Thousands Tweets

Bahrain’s first criminal court began on the 22nd of December 2015 the trial of the tweeter Youssif Al-A’am; the holder of “Haji Ahmed” twitter account, in which he is accused of “insulting soldiers participating in the decisive storm” and “spreading information during wartime in a manner that damaged war preparations and military operations of the armed forces and that he spread fear among people”. The court decided to postpone the session until the 7th of January 2016 for pleading. The Public Prosecution accused him of “posting more than 80 thousands tweets that included insults to the martyrs of the United Arab Emirates and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia”.

## Postponing the Trial of Ghada Jamsheer

Bahrain’s second minor court postponed on the 22nd of December 2015 the trial of human rights defender Ghada Jamsheer in the case related to posting tweets on her own twitter account regarding the corruption in King Hamad Hospital until the 9th of March 2016. The case against Ghada Jamsheer was







brought by one of the ruling family; the director of the hospital, Salman bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa, his wife Dalal Hassan Isa and one of his employees, Khalid Shayel.

### **The Information Authority Affairs Summons Journalist Mohammad Al-Ghasra**

The Information Authority affairs summoned on the 25th of December 2015 Mohammad Al-Ghasra, the CNN Arabic correspondent. The information authority affairs launched an investigation over a piece of news that he published. This is the second time that Al-Ghasra is being investigated this year. The cybercrime department affiliated to the Ministry of Interior summoned him for questioning on the 11th of May 2015 to investigate about a piece of news, related to one of corruption cases, which he published. On the 25th of June 2015, Al-Ghasra announced that he received a warning from the Information Authority Affairs regarding a local news he published on social media, although the minister of commerce affirmed the validity of the

data it contained.

### **Arresting the Journalist Mahmoud Al-Jaziri**

Bahraini security forces raided the house of Al-Wasat newspaper correspondent to the Shura Council and the House of Representatives, journalist Mahmoud Radhi Al-Jaziri, on the 28th of December 2015 and took him to an unknown location.

The house raid was carried out by masked civilians and a number of police patrol officers without presenting a search warrant. Al-Jaziri's mobile phone and personal laptop were confiscated. His arrest came a day after publishing a news story in the newspaper about the details of the appointed Shura council session, specifically what was said by the Shura Council member Fatima Al-Kooheji, who supported the withdrawal of housing units from the families of the Bahrainis who were stripped of their nationality, which sparked a campaign against her.

**Bahrain Press Association calls on the US, UK, UN and all the international organisations and institutions that are concerned with defending freedom of opinion, expression, journalism and media to urgently interfere and put pressure on the Bahraini government to:**

- **Immediately and unconditionally release all the arrested photographers and media people who are arrested for covering the protests or exercising their right of freedom of expression;**
- **Stop the judicial trials over the charge of “insulting the king and soldiers” brought against internet activists and media people, the charge of “assembly” brought against photographers and that of “inciting hatred against the regime” brought against the politicians;**
- **Allow the freedom of media and journalism and close the Internet censorship office in the Ministry of Communications;**
- **End the authorities’ monopoly over TV media and open media channels for the other opposing view;**
- **And call on the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression to schedule an urgent visit to Bahrain.**



**Bahrain: Back to Dictation**

Sixth annual report about Press  
Freedom in Bahrain 2015

**Bahrain Press Association**

Organization concerned with defending  
freedom of expression in Bahrain  
Founded in London  
9th July 2011

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# Freedom of Speech Violations in Bahrain

2011-2015

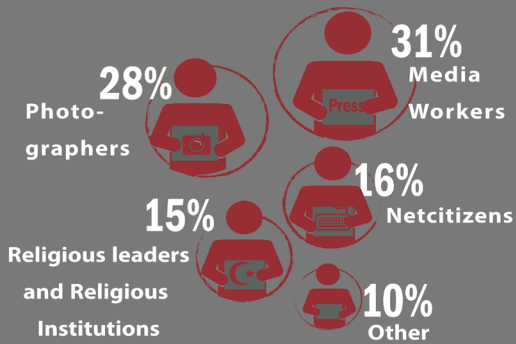
## Number Of Violations In Five Years



## Number Of Violations Per Year



### Who Is The Most Targeted?



### Number Of Social Media Related Cases



### Top Accusations In Free Speech Cases

1. Incitement to hatred and contempt of the regime

2. Misusing social media

3. Offending the King

4. Participating in assemblies

5. Offending a government institution

## Violations By Type:

