

Finishing Off The Margin



حرية التعبير

Journalism

صحافة

Freedom
Of Speech





رابطة الصحافة البحرينية
Bahrain Press Association

Bahrain: Finishing Off The Margin

Seventh annual report

Freedom of press in Bahrain 2017

Bahrain Press Association

Organization concerned with defending

freedom of expression in Bahrain

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Bahrain: Finishing Off The Margin

While the journalists in Bahrain are joining the world celebrating the «World Press Freedom Day» 2017, systematic and unjust Government policies continue to restrict what is left from the margin of press and media freedom in the country. An indication to that, at least, rising of violations to around 359 violations of basic rights such as; freedom of media, freedom of opinion, and expression.

The annual report of the «Bahrain Press Association» 2016 is entitled: «Bahrain: Finishing Off The Margin», to indicate that the Government policies today, after successfully encircling the space of the private media and twist it, turned to the rest of the margin of communication tools to twist it, and to fill any gaps that might allow producing or trading what you don't want to hear, read, or see.

The Government depended in undermining this electronic margin on terrorizing journalists, citizens, politicians, and human rights activists through security and judicial targeting and depriving them of their right to express, under the deliberate disruption of domestic and international charters pledge, as well as respect for the country's Constitution.

Since 2011 and so far, the «Bahrain Press Association» records show around 1253 violation of basic rights such as; freedom of media, freedom of opinion and expression. Detention and threatening policies indicate the strict governmental direction towards the importance of adherence to the call of the government in various domestic and international issues, as it is not entitled to journalists and politicians to adopt any point of view of opposition.

It was hoped that the authorities adopt more straight and positive policies. However, there was no progress, but it went too far and affected the rest of the margins. These strict policies caused reduced spaces of social - political dialogue which was hoped to reduce the gap between political parties, including social components that interact negatively with local and regional political developments.

The «Bahrain Press Association» extends sincere thanks to all who contributed to the completion of this report, we thank the (National Endowment for Democracy, NED - the United States of America) the funding and continuous support.

The summary of 2016

359 violations in the freedom of opinion and expression in Bahrain

Bahrain's Press Association: 2016 was a difficult year for those working in the media and all its related fields as well as the digital/internet civil press and photographers. The Bahraini authorities have tightened their grip on the permitted 'free expression' outlets. The intensive targeting of bloggers and tweeters and taking them to courts, to the extent of creating a high level of fear and caution from expressing critical opinions on social media platforms, which is unprecedented and hasn't been experienced in the last five years, including the first year of the political protests that began in 2011.



This also applied to lawyers, human rights defenders and leaders of political associations sectors. This is evident by the sudden disappearance of several prominent and outspoken accounts that are known for their daring criticism.

The control extended to private chat apps on smartphones. The recorded cases referred people for trial due to their expression of views on social networking applications such as WhatsApp. The authorities also banned the use of the application Telegram due to the difficulty in monitoring it.

The Information Affairs Authority stopped renewing the licenses of the correspondents of international news agencies and foreign media in Bahrain without valid reason.

The authorities continue its prevention of internet service that began since last June in Duraz village north of the country deliberately on a daily basis from seven o'clock until one o'clock in the morning. This is achieved by disabling communication towers and disruption on fixed lines.

The «Bahraini Association of the Press» files showed that there are about 359 recorded violations during the year 2016 relating to fundamental rights such as freedom of media and freedom of opinion and expression. These included violations of the provisions of the judicial proceedings against citizens on issues relating mainly to freedom of expression (37

cases), arbitrary arrests (22 cases), investigation and interrogation (62 cases), and the prevention of engaging in work (32 cases) in addition to many other cases. Here are the top issues that «the Bahraini Press Association» have focused on in the course of this year:

The judiciary and the courts

The second major criminal appellate court ruled on the 19th January, 2016 to support the sentence in the case against the feminist activist Ghada Jamsheer of two months'

imprisonment and a fine of 100 dinars for the charge of «insulting an employee at the King Hamad hospital on Twitter». This is her second sentence after it was reduced from one year imprisonment as the judge originally sentenced her on the charge of «libel and insult of the hospital commander «to two months sentence, bringing the total provisions confinement to four months.

The Court of Appeal had upheld on the 1st of February, 2016 the imprisonment of the former MP Khaled Abdel Aal to a year prison for «insulting the Interior Ministry» on social

network of «Twitter». The Court of Appeal also upheld on the 3rd of February, 2016 the jail term of photographer Ahmed Al-Fardan of three months on charges of «assembly».

It was decided by the Third Minor Criminal Court on the 10th of March, 2016 to imprison the tweeter Hussein Mahdi better known as 'Tacros' for 5 years and fine him 10 thousand dinars on charges of «insulting the King» on Twitter. While the first Minor Criminal Court fined a young Bahraini on the 23rd of March 2016 - the authorities did not refer to his name - 200 dinars on charges of «insulting the House of Representatives on a social networking sites.»

The five Minor Criminal Court issued a sentence on the 31st of March 2016 of two years and one month for the detainee Ebrahim Karimi and fined 2100 Bahraini Dinar on charges of «insulting the King of Bahrain and an allied country» through his administration of «Freij Karimi» account on Twitter. The local court ruled on the 21st of April 2016 a sentence of the photographer Hossam Soror to 15 years in prison for «participating in an unauthorised gathering» and «attacking the police.»

On the 9th of May 2016 the Minor Criminal Court sentenced Mohammed bin Saqr Al Khalifa, the account holder of «Minrfizhm» to 5 months in prison for the two cases in which he was convicted of «insulting two individuals on posts via the social networking site Twitter.» The court estimated the fine to be 300 dinars in order to withhold the rule in the two cases. On the 24th of May 2016, the same court sentenced him to seven months in three other cases related to «insulting and accusing certain individuals of being members of the Academy of personalities change and seeking to overthrow the regime.» The court also estimated the bail amount to be 500 dinars to stop the implementation of the three provisions.

The Minor Third Criminal Court also passed a sentence on the 24th of May 2016 of one year in prison for the preacher Sheikh Mohammed Mansi on charges of delivering a sermon that represents «an insult to the Interior Ministry.» The Supreme Court of Appeal passed on the 30th of



May 2016 a harsher sentence against the Secretary General of «Al-Wifaq» Society; Sheikh Ali Salman, from 4 to 9 years on charges of incitement to «overthrow the regime by force» and «hating a certain sect» and «non-compliance with the law.» The local court ruled on the 31st of August 2016 to jail the internet activist Hamid Khatim for two years on charges of «publishing statements inciting hatred of the regime and harm to the King» on Twitter. The sentence was reduced to one year following an appeal. The Lower Criminal ninth Court sentenced on the 30th of August 2016 the e-activist Taiba Ismail to one year in prison and fined 1000 Bahraini Dinar on charges of «insulting the king and publishing Tweets that would destabilise peace and security in Bahrain.»

On the 7th of September 2016, the Second Appellate High Court

supported the first degree imprisonment rule in the doctor Said Samahiji case on charges of «insulting an allied country (Saudi Arabia)» and «public incitement to non-compliance with the law and regulations» and «the public call to participate in marches and unlicensed assembly/gatherings» on Twitter.

On the 26th of October 2016, the Court of Appeal amended the sentence of the former Secretary General of the Association of the National Democratic Unionist Fadel Abbas on charges of «spreading false news that harms the military operations» from five years to 3 years in prison. While on the 29th of November, 2016 the Minor Criminal Court sentenced the journalist Faisal Hiatt to 3 months in prison for «insulting religious symbol and the infringement on one of the Mullahs « on Twitter. The Supreme Court of Appeal amended on the 12th of November, 2016 the first degree imprisonment of 3 years rule instead of five years of the tweeter Yusuf Al-Aam known on Twitter as «Haji Ahmad» on charges of «insulting to participating forces in the storm attack» and «broadcasting statements that are damaging and spread panic among people at a time of war.»

Arrests file

On the 16th of March 2016 the Ministry of Interior arrested the admin of «Arabian Nights» account on social networking sites for «disseminating pornographic videos.» It was announced by the public administration in combating corruption, economic and cyber security on the 17th of March, 2016 that it had arrested two people - without referring to their names- after both had «publishing a video which its content was considered by the interior ministry as an insult to one of mullahs/clerics in Bahrain.» On the 17th of April, 2016 the public prosecutor arrested the imam of Zahra mosque, the Shia cleric Sheikh Mohammed Mansi, 46, for a week pending investigation on charges of giving a speech that contained «inciting hatred against the regime» and «insulting the Interior Ministry.»



The public prosecutor arrested on the 20th of April 2016 the vocalist Sayed Hassan Alawi Alshahrkani for a week pending investigation on charges of «insulting the King and the national flag and slogan» upon his recitation of a poem at a memorial service in the Shehrkan area. The security authorities arrested on the 7th of June, 2016 the artist Khalil Al-Madihoon after being summoned for an investigation at the Local criminal investigations building on charges of «posting comments on Instagram.» The internet activist Mohammed Al- Aaloyat was also arrested on the 7th of July 2016, the footballer who plays for 'Nadi Al Sotra' sport club is facing charges of «insulting the king» he was then referred to the Public Prosecutor's Office, where it was decided that he will be detained for seven days pending investigation. On the 26th of July 2016 it was revealed by the fight against cyber crimes Management the arrest of a number of people – it did not announce their names – the reason of the arrest was cited as «the misuse of social media by publishing incitement materials including offenses punishable by law.» The public prosecution held on the 7th of August 2016 the Shia cleric Sheikh Issa Al-Momen for 7 days pending investigation, this is due to a sermon he gave at the Al-khaef mosque in Al-Deer. The management of the Sunni Waqf summoned a sermon orator / imam on the 18th of August 2016 a - but did not disclose his name - to

inform him of his arrest for public speaking and the order to sign a pledge in which he agrees to abide by the ethics of religious discourse. The public prosecution also arrested the prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, on the 29th of December 2016, and was kept in custody for a full week after he was charged with a new case «broadcasting news and data that are false and malicious rumours about the internal situation of the kingdom which would undermine its prestige.» On the 31st of October, 2016 the General Prosecutor's Office jailed the Shia cleric Sheikh Hani Al-Banna 15 days after he was accused of «inciting hatred of the regime and incitement to break the law» and charged.

Investigation and interrogation

An investigation was conducted by the public prosecution on the 3rd of January, 2016 with the editors of «Al-Watan» newspaper; Yousif Al-binnkhalil and «Al-Bilad» Mo'nes Al-murdi for «publishing a press statement that contained defamation against an MP and abuse» The security authorities also summoned on the 28th of March 2016 the renowned Bahraini poet Ahmed Al Ajmi for an investigation at the Nabih Saleh police station after delivering a poem at the headquarters of the «Waad» association in solidarity with the former secretary-general Ibrahim Sharif.

The public prosecutor summoned the journalist Naziha Said; a correspondent at TV «France 24» and radio «Montecarlo» International on the 16th of July, 2016 for a hearing on «filed a lawsuit by the Information Affairs Authority against her, where she is accused of practicing journalism without a license.» The prison authorities questioned on the 22nd of December 2016 the detained activist Nabeel Rajab in connection with an article that was attributed to him and published by the French newspaper «Le Monde» which contained what was described as «false data and rumours and fabricated news» about the Gulf states. The public prosecution questioned on the 10th of November, 2016 the lawyer in the field of human rights Mohamed Al-Tajir in relation to the charges of «insulting state institutions» and «incitement to hatred of a religious sect» and «misuse of communication device.» The public prosecutor also summoned on the 24th of November, 2016 the journalist Ahmed Redha for interrogation on charges of «assembly.» The public prosecution also questioned on the 23rd of November, 2016 the head of the now defunct Nursing Society, Dr. Rula Al-Saffar on charges of «inciting hatred against the regime and threatening the civil peace.» And it summoned on the 23rd of November, 2016 the human rights activist Ibtisam Al-Sayyaegh for an investigation related to the charge of «incitement to the hatred of the regime and its

disdain and destabilise the state security and threatening civil peace.»

On the 17th of November, 2016 the public prosecutor summoned Hussein Redha; a member of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, for investigation on charges of «inciting hatred against the regime and broadcasting false news that threatens the civil peace.» And it summoned on the 13th of November 2016, a member of the opposition; Ibrahim Sharif for interrogation on charges of «giving a permit to a foreign newspaper that contains statements which offend the constitutional system of the kingdom.»

The 'Ashura' season (from 2nd to the 12th of October, 2016) witnessed many summons and interrogation of dozens of heads of Hussainiyat and Shi'a mosques, religious singers and platform preachers, there were about (32) summons and (9) cases of the prevention of the preachers' movement.

The prevention of engaging in work

On the 7th of January, 2016 the Media Affairs Authority banned the local «Al-Wasat» newspaper of broadcasting and displaying videos on «YouTube» because it claimed that the newspaper's license «does not include displaying broadcast news videos.»

The security authorities stopped and detained on the 14th of February, 2016 four American

journalists, who are; independent journalist Anna Thereseday and the imaging team during their coverage of the protests on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of protests on the 14th of February.

On the 7th of April, 2016 the security authorities prevented both journalists Hasan Jamali; a photographer for the «Associated Press» of America and Naziha Said; a correspondent for «France 24» channel, from attending the press conference by the US Secretary of State John Kerry in Manama, citing the «expiration date of their license.»

The customs authorities at Bahrain International Airport confiscated on the 10th of April, 2016, Special painting machines and other equipment belonging to 18 journalists, a cameraman and reporters from Bahrain and abroad after they had covered the military training of US forces that are stationed in Bahrain. They were eventually released at a later date.

The media Affairs Commission refused on the 31st of May, 2016 to renew the license of Hasan Jamali which enables him to practice journalism as a reporter for the American news agency «Associated Press».

The media Affairs Commission also refused on the 7th of June, 2016 to renew the license of Naziha Said which enables her to practice journalism as a reporter for Radio «Montecarlo» international. On the 29th of June, 2016 the

Bahrain International Airport authorities also stopped her from traveling.

On the 7th of July, 2016 the security authorities prevented the journalist Ahmed Reda from leaving Bahrain through the airport, where he had intended to travel to a Gulf state.

The Information Affairs Authority rejected on the 22nd of September, 2016 the renewal of the French news agency (AFP) photographer's; Muhammad Al-Sheikh license the). It also rejected on the 30th of September, 2016 the renewal of the international agency «Reuters» photographer; Amer Mohammed's license.

The security authorities arrested on the 6th of December, 2016 the staff of the «Arab TV» channel, which broadcasts from London during their coverage of the Gulf summit that was hosted by Manama on the same day. It was also announced by the Qatari channel «Al Jazeera» on the 6th of December, 2016 that the Bahraini authorities have prevented their crews from covering the GCC summit. The authorities also prevented on the 6th of December, 2016 a correspondent from the «CNN» site in Arabic in Manama, the journalist Mohammed Al Ghasara, of covering the same summit.

The Bahraini Press Association condemns the targeting of journalists, bloggers and photographers which it believes has become a systematic and widespread behaviour and one of the main reasons that led to the decline in

Bahrain's reputation at an international level in terms of media freedom. The Association also demands that the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and all international organisations and bodies involved in the defence of freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the press and media to immediately intervene and exert pressure on the government for the following:

1. The immediate and unconditional release of all the detained photographers, journalists and activists who were imprisoned because of their work in covering the protests or in exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression.
2. The halt of prosecutions, arbitrary arrests and judicial trials on charges of «insulting the king» to Internet activists and journalists and the charge of «assembly» for photographers and «inciting hatred against the regime» for politicians, and everything related to the reduction of freedom of opinion and expression in the country.
3. Allowing the media and press freedoms in the country and the closure of the Office of censorship on the Internet at the Ministry of Communications and the abolition of the labour law No. (47) for the regulation of the press, publishing and printing in the country.
4. Ending the monopoly of power of the media and television and radio and introducing independent media that provides/offer an alternative opinion.
5. Invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on enhancing and protecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression and schedule an urgent visit to Bahrain.





Journalist Mahmoud Al-Jaziri is forced to stand on his feet for 3 consecutive days.

The journalist's family told "Al-Wasat" newspaper that Mahmoud Al-Jaziri (1st January, 2016) that he was forced to sign a confession after he was exhausted by fatigue, which stated that he admits to belonging "Al-Wafaa" party. Al-Jaziri (17 years old) was also forced to stand on his feet for three consecutive days while blindfolded. On the dawn of the 28th of December, 2015 the Bahraini security forces stormed into Al-Jaziri's home and took him to the criminal investigations building. On the 4th of January, 2016 the public prosecutor decided to imprison him for a period of thirty days pending an investigation. His charges were announced publically across official state run TV channel which were being a member of terrorist cell, financing terrorist activities and having a connection with a foreign country.

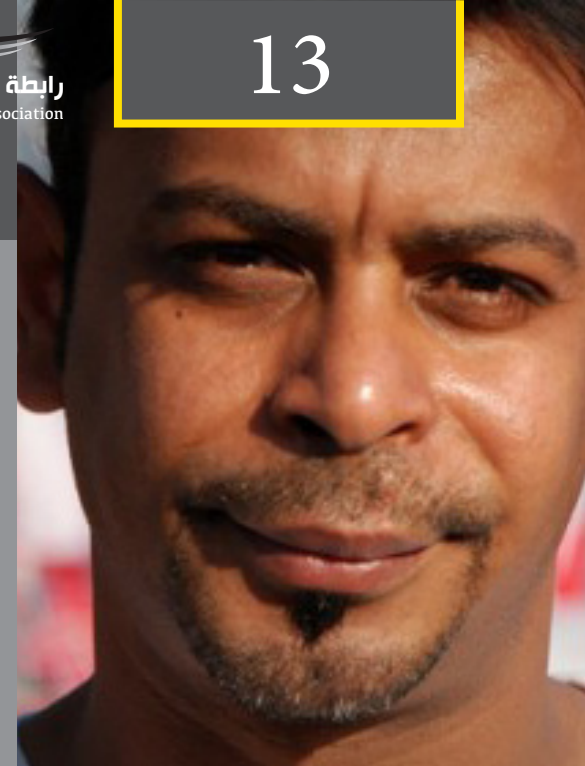


Ali Al-Miraj's appeal is postponed for the 17th time

The Supreme Court of Appeal postponed on the 5th of January, 2016, for the 16th time the case of the internet activist Ali Al-Miraj, where he is accused of "insulting the King" to the 31st of January, 2015. In a previous session the judge had rejected the lawyer's plea until the lawyer waived his request to bring the public prosecution witness in the case. On the 31st of January, the appeal was again postponed for the 17th time.

The Criminal Court held on the 7th of January, 2016, the second session of tweeter Youssif Al-Aam who writes on social network sites using the name "Haji Ahmad" with more than 11 thousand followers to his account. The session was chaired by the judge Mohammed bin Ali Al Khalifa. Al-Aam was arrested on the 7th of September 2015, as he was accused of "abusing the forces that are involved in the Decisive Storm" and "broadcasting statements that could damage and cause panic among the people in time of war" and "making jokes of the nation's martyrs through his Twitter account."





Tweeter Nadr Abd-Alimam is set free and the postponement of Secretary General of the “Al-Wahdawi” appeal.

The Court of Appeals acquitted on the 7th of January 7, 2016, the tweeter Nadr Abd-Alimam of the charge of “gathering a mob assembly”. The Court of First Instance had ruled that Abd-Alimam and others to serve six months in prison and a fine of 100 dinars in the case of forming a gathering in the capital Manama. However, the appeals court decision came to abolish this ruling. Furthermore, the Court of Appeals postponed on the 10th of January, 2016 the case of the Secretary-General (former) of the Association of the National Democratic “Al-Wahdawi” Fadel Abbas to the 3rd of March to inform the prosecution witness. It was decided by the fourth major criminal court to sentence him to five years in prison on charges of “broadcasting false news and malicious rumours” and “propagates sensational publicity that could harm the military operations of the Armed Forces.”



Hussain Habil’s appeal is annulled due to the prison’s administration delay in informing him.

“Joe” Central Prison Administration informed the photographer Hussain Habil on the 12th of January, 2016 that the sentence he received in April 2014 to one year in prison in the case of “gathering an assembly of people” had its appeal ended as a result of their delay in informing him.

Both chief editors of “Al-Watan” and “Al-Bilad” newspapers are called in for questioning.

The public prosecution questioned on the 3rd of January, 2016 both chief editors of “Al-Watan” Youssif AL-Binkhalil and Moaans Al-Mardi of “Al-Bilad” newspapers against the backdrop of the filed reports that have been submitted by MP Rooa Hayki who claimed that both newspapers published a statement issued by four deputies/ MPs on the 13th of October 2015. The questioning lasted for an hour where both faced the charges of “publishing of a press release that includes defamation against the MP as well as insulting her” but they have denied the charges against them and so the General Prosecutor’s Office released them with the insurance of their place of residence.



The postponement of the Secretary General of “Al-Wifaq” Sheikh Ali Salman’s appeal

The Court of Appeal postponed on the 14th of January, 2016 the trial of the Secretary General of “Al-Wifaq” Society, Sheikh Ali Salman, to the 30th of March, 2016, so as to allow the defence team to make their speeches regarding the charges against the detainee which are “insulting a statutory body” and “inciting the breach of the laws” and “working to overthrow the regime” Which were all denied by Salman, who in his plea he stressed his commitment to striving in accomplishing a constitutional monarchy in Bahrain.

The dismissals of journalists and reduction of salaries in three Bahraini newspapers

Three state run newspapers; “Al-Ayam” and “Al-Watan” and “Gulf News” have dismissed numerous journalists during the month of January 2016, and reviewed the contracts of journalists and other staff under the pretext of austerity. “Al-Watan” newspaper closed the printing press and the dismissal of all the employees there, in addition to reducing the journalists’ salaries by 40 to 60 per cent. While the “Al-Ayam” newspaper laid off employees and reduced the wages of others. As did as state run “Gulf News” in dismissing workers of ‘Al-Bilal’ company which is owned by the newspaper. Among the journalists who had their salary decreased, is the main columnist of “Al-Watan” newspaper Hisham Al-Zayani and Sawsan Al-Shaar and Faisal Al Sheikh and Najat Al Mudhahki. Al-Zayani wrote on his twitter account on the 17th of January, 2016 that he had to “stop writing in the newspaper after his salary was cut by 60 per cent.”





“Al-Senkees” is transferred to the military hospital after the deterioration of his health.

The family of Abdul Jalil Al-Senkees the activist and leader of the “Al-Haq” movement said on the 19th of January, 2016 that he was urgently transferred from “Joe” central prison to the military hospital due to deterioration in his health following a hunger strike. They also reported that the proportion of potassium in Al-Senkees blood was very low as a result of his refusal to eat for more than 300 days in protest at the ill-treatment suffered by “Joe” prison detainees. On the 28th of January his family stated that he has stopped the hunger strike after 313 days.

The court supports the imprisonment of tweeter Ghada Jamsheer

The Second Criminal High Court Appeal upheld on the 19th of January 2016 the verdict against the tweeter and feminist activist Ghada Jamsheer of two months imprisonment and a fine of 100 dinars for the charges of “attacking an employee at King Hamad Hospital, with words that tarnish his honour and reputation on Twitter” The court reduced her second sentence of one year in prison on the charge of “libel and insult to the hospital’s director” to just two months imprisonment, bringing the total period of her imprisonment to four months. On 31st of January the court dropped the right to appeal the judgment after Jamsheer failed to attend the hearing.



الوسط

"Al-Wasat" newspaper is prevented from using "YouTube"

It was stated by "Al-Wasat" newspaper on the 25th of January, 2016 that it had received a telephone call from the Ministry of Information Affairs informing them that they are banned from using the global social network site "YouTube." This comes after the ministry banned "Al-Wasat" newspaper on the 7th of January, 2016 of broadcasting video clips on the pretext that the newspaper is working according to the Legislative Decree No. 47 of 2002 in relation to the regulation of the press, printing and publishing "and that its license does not include licensing the activity of broadcasting and displaying news videos". In the statement it is claimed that the ban will only be for the current period until the "completion of the draft of the media law, which hopefully will address the regulation of audio-visual activities."

House of Representatives/ Parliament reports 15 tweeters to the prosecutor

The House of Representatives of Bahrain reported on the 26th of January 2016 about 15 complaints to the public prosecutor to fight corruption and economic and cyber security against tweeter on social networks who are accused of "defamation and insult to the Council of Representatives." The Parliament being the legislative institution had submitted 10 filed reports to the public prosecutor, while MPs submitted in their personal capacity, about 5 filed reports. Among those that were reported to the public prosecutor was a known mosque preacher after clip of him was posted on his Instagram account.



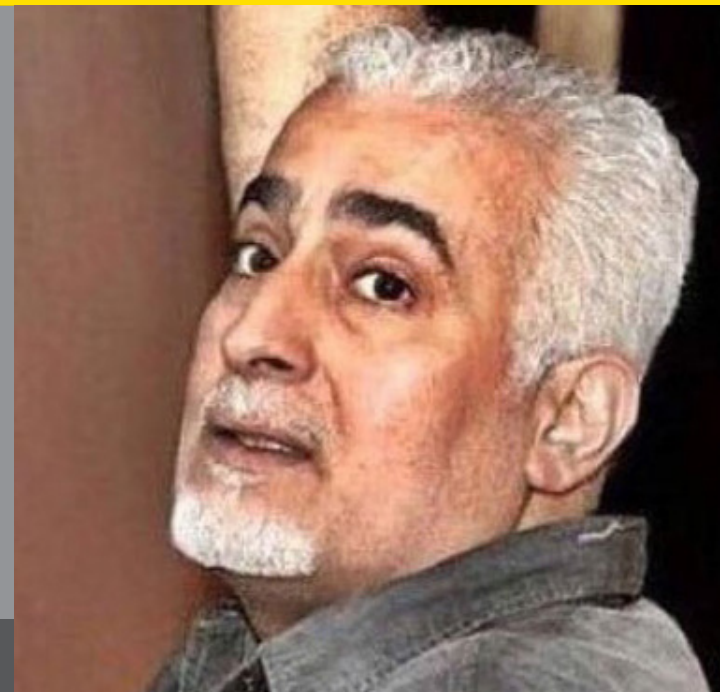


Doctor Saaed Samahiji's trial is postponed

The ninth Minor Criminal Court heard on the 31st of January, 2016 the case of doctor Saaed Samahiji who is accused of "insulting an allied country" and "public incitement to non-compliance with the law and regulations in Bahrain" and "a public call to participate in marches and unlicensed gatherings" through the means social network. The lawyer Talal Ayoubi said that he had "asked the court to provide him a copy of the case papers and so he can study it and reply and release Samahiji due to his old age and the illnesses he suffers from plus the fact that he has denied what was attributed to him." Ayoubi added that the court postponed the case until the 4th of February, 2016 with continued imprisonment. When the session was held it got postponed again to the 17th of February after the lawyer requested the attendance of the prosecution witness.

The Start of tweeter Ibrahim Karimi's trial

The fifth Lower Criminal Court began on the 31st of January, 2016 the trial of tweeter Ibrahim Karimi who has had his nationality revoked on charges of "abuse of social media" and "attacking the leader of an allied country". They also charged him with managing "Freij Karimi" an account on "Twitter." The lawyer Fatima Abdul Hadi said that Karimi "had denied the charges against him before the court." The court decided to adjourn the trial to the 7th of February 2016 yet on that date it got postponed again to the 15th of February, then again to the 13th of March 2016, and this was after the lawyer had requested the attendance of the prosecution witness.



The release of tweeter Jalela Al-Sayed with the continuation of the proceedings against her

The Bahraini court decided on the 31st of January, 2016 to release the detained tweeter Jalela Al-Sayed Amin after nearly a year in prison with the continuation of the case. It also decided to defer the consideration of the lawsuit of accused along with the internet activist Ali Al-Mkabi to the 21st of February, 2016. Al-Sayed was detained on the 10th of February, 2014 after a vast number of troops surrounded her house and confiscated her electronic devices. Al-Sayed along Al-mkabi face charges of managing a Twitter account under the name "the defiant media."



Majid Milad's case is on trial

The Second Criminal Court of Appeal decided on the 31st of January, 2016 to order the case of Majid Milad; the former leader of the local Manama Council and former member of the opposition team for dialogue with the government, a member of the secretariat of the 'Al-Wifaq' Association to a court hearing on the 16th of February, 2016. The court of first level convicted Milad and remanded him in custody for two years on charges of incitement to non-compliance with the law. The lawyer Youssif Rabe'a attended with the appellant Majid Milad and presented his plea where he requested the release of his innocent client.





A Year imprisonment for deputy Khaled Abdel Aal because of tweet

The Court of Appeal upheld on the 1st of February, 2016 the imprisonment of former MP Khaled Abdel Aal of one year for "insulting the Interior Ministry" on the social network site of "Twitter". Abdel Aal was convicted in the first degree court and sentenced to a whole year in prison for posting Tweets on his "Twitter" account regarded as "an insult to the Ministry of the Interior."

Jailed photographer Ahmed Al-Fardan's sentence of 3 months is upheld

The Court of Appeal upheld on the 3rd of February, 2016) the sentence of jailed photographer Ahmed Al-Fardan of three months on charges of "assembly", a charge that was formerly denied by Fardan before the court. The third Lower Criminal Court presided over by Judge Jaber Al-Jazar and the Secretariat of Hammad Hussein ruled on the 17th of February, 2015 the detention of photographer Ahmed Al-Fardan for 3 months with a fine of 100 dinars to withheld the implementation of the sentence. Fardan complained before the judge of being tortured while in detention, explaining that he was carrying out his work of photography for the Italian agency "Noor Photo".



A crew of American journalist are arrested

On the 14th of February, 2016, four American journalists were arrested by the security authorities while covering a demonstration that was commemorating the fifth anniversary of the 14th of February protests. The four Americans are independent journalist Anna Terese-Day and her camera crew, according to a statement issued by Day's family. The Interior Ministry claimed in a statement that one of the four detainees was «caught in disguise during his participation with a group of hooligans in Sitra.»

5 years imprisonment for the account holder of «Bo Khamis»

On the 18th of February 2016 the Supreme Criminal Court sentenced the cyber activist Hussein Khamis to five years in prison due to a case in which he is accused of broadcasting false statements during a time of war combats on a Twitter account named «Bo Khamis». The phone which he used in his activities was confiscated and the news was published in a local newspaper. The Public Prosecutor's Office charged the accused of an alleged offence that occurred in September 2015, when he «deliberately and during a period of was issuing statements that were of a propaganda nature that were intended to disrupt the military preparations and the military operations of the armed forces, which caused panic among the people and weakened the nation's morale by spreading such words. Plus he openly incited hatred and disdain for a certain group/sect of people».



A ruling of five years imprisonment for the tweeter «Haji Ahmed»

An imprisonment of five years was ruled by the first grand criminal court against the tweeter Yousef al-Aam; the account holder of 'Haji Ahmed', as he is accused of «insulting the forces that are involved in the 'Decisive Storm', by broadcasting statements that hurt and terrify people during a time of war». The phone which he used in his activities was confiscated and the news was published in a local newspaper. The prosecutor's office informed the defendant that on the night of 4th of September, 2015, that he «deliberately, during a time of war, broadcasted statements and carried out provocative propaganda to destabilises and damage the preparations to defend the Kingdom of Bahrain and the military operations of the armed forces and cause general panic among people».

The head of jury for «Al-Wefaq» is accused of insulting the regime

On the 22nd of February, 2016, the Public Prosecutor's office charged the jury of the opposition Islamic National Accord Society (Al-Wefaq), with «inciting public hatred and disdain for the regime», after a talk he gave on Friday (12th of February).



A sentence of one year imprisonment for Ibrahim Sharif

On the 24th of February the 4th Grand Criminal Court sentenced a leading opposition leader and a former secretary-general of 'Waad', Ibrahim Sharif, to one year in prison. Sharif was convicted of «undermining the constitutional order in the country in a contempt nature.» He was acquitted of the charge of «promoting the change of constitutional order in the country, contrary to the provisions of the Constitution and the law and the use of illegal means in a speech he gave at the memorial service of martyr Hossam al-Haddad in Muharraq.»



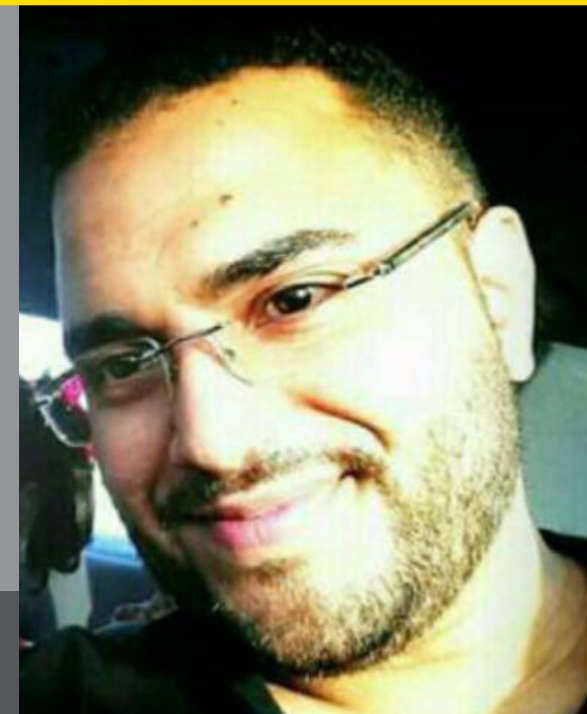


To postpone the appeal hearing of the photographer Sid Ahmed al-Moussawi

The Court of Appeal held on the 2nd of March its first session to consider the sentencing of photographer Sid Ahmed al-Moussawi, who was jailed for 10 years for on the ground of "establishing a terrorist cell over the phone." The court decided to postpone the hearing until 27th April. Al-Moussawi was arrested on 10th February, 2014 without a warrant and was charged, in addition to the charge mentioned, he is also charged with "gathering in an illegal assembly" and "riots."

The postponement of Hassan Jassim, the tweeter's trial

The local court postponed the 4th of March session of the case of tweeter Hassan Jassim Ahmed (28 years) where he is accused of "insulting a range of people" and "insulting the King" on the social networking site "Facebook" dated back to the 4th April. During the session that was attended by the Prosecution witness who said that he gained the information from a confidential source while the lawyer requested a technical examiner to verify the claim. The hearing was postponed again until the 4th of May. Ahmed was arrested on the 21st of November, 2015 after a raid on his home with an arrest warrant for his wife, who was also arrested after they searched the house and confiscated; three mobile phones, two laptop computers and an Internet connection router. Ahmed and his wife, were both questioned separately on the issue of a Facebook account and some pictures of a political nature that were published on the said account.



Tweeter Hussein Mehdi sentenced to 5 years in prison

It was ruled by the third Minor Court Criminal on the 10th of March 2016 to imprison the tweeter and owner of the 'Takroz' account on twitter, Hussein Mehdi for 5 years and fine him 10 thousand on charges of "insulting the King", and ordered the confiscation of his phone. This is the first ruling of its kind after the amendment of Article 214 of the Penal Code, which ruled to tighten the sanctions imposed on those who insulted via public means the King of Bahrain or the Kingdom's flag or national emblem, so that "the punishment shall be imprisonment for no less than one year and no more than seven years plus a fine of no less than one thousand dinars but not exceeding ten thousand dinars."

The postponement of Ali Maaraj's appeal hearing for the 18th time.

The Supreme Court of Appeal postponed on the 7th of March, 2016 the internet activist Ali Maaraj's appeal for the 18th time in the case where the defendant is accused of "insulting the King" after his lawyer had presented his case. It was decided to have the appeal hearing on the 5th of April 2016.

The owner of "Arabian Nights" account is arrested

It was announced by the Interior Ministry of Bahrain on 16th of March 16, 2016 the arrest of the director of "Arabian Nights" account on a social network site. It stated on its official page on "Twitter" that they have arrested the owner of said account but did not reveal his name after the accused had "spread pornographic videos."

The postponement of tweeter Ibrahim Karimi's trial

The fifth Minor Criminal court postponed on the 4th of March 2016 the trial of tweeter Ibrahim Karimi, who had his nationality revoked and is accused of "abusing the usage of social media" and "launching verbal attack on the leader of an allied country" and managing the account "Freij Karimi" on "Twitter" up to the 17th of March. The court rejected a call for the intervention of a technical examiner, being satisfied with just what the prosecution witness had to say. During the hearing on the mentioned date and after the defence lawyer represented his case the appeal was postponed again until the 31st of March.

Two arrested on charges of “insulting one of the religious clerics”

It was announced by the Public administration in combating corruption and economic security on the 17th March, 2016 that it had arrested two people – without publishing their identities – after published a video clip that was deemed insulting to one of the religious clerics in Bahrain without direct reference to the actual religious cleric. While the lawyer of the detainees stated that the video “had been published without the prior knowledge of her clients, noting that the video was intended as private viewing for a small group of their friends and was meant as a joke and light relief”.

A citizen charged with insulting the House of Representatives is fined 200 Dinar

The First of the Lower Criminal Court fined on the 23rd of March, 2016), a young Bahraini 200 dinars on charges of “insulting the House of Representatives on a social media site.” The case dates back to when the young man posted on his “Instagram” account phrases the court deemed “offensive to the House of Representatives,” which led them to launch a lawsuit against him by the general prosecution, and was then referred to Court, which sentenced him to with the above decision.



The postponement of 5 appeals of the owner of “Minrfazhm” account

The High Criminal Court II postponed on the 25th March 2016, five appeals of the owner of “Minrfazhm,” account; Mohammed bin Salman bin Saqer Al Khalifa, who is accused of libel and slander across the social network site “Twitter” to a session to be held on 19th April 2016 for a final hearing. Prosecutors assigned to the accused, five charges of defamatory and misuse of public communications equipment and was convicted in all of the charges and given a financial fine of 500 dinars for each individual charge, but he appealed against all the sentences before the court of appeal. According to his confession he admitted that he owns the account “Minrfazhm” and another one called “Union of Qadisiyah” which aims to post about the “defence of Bahrain and combating coup plotters,” as he claimed.

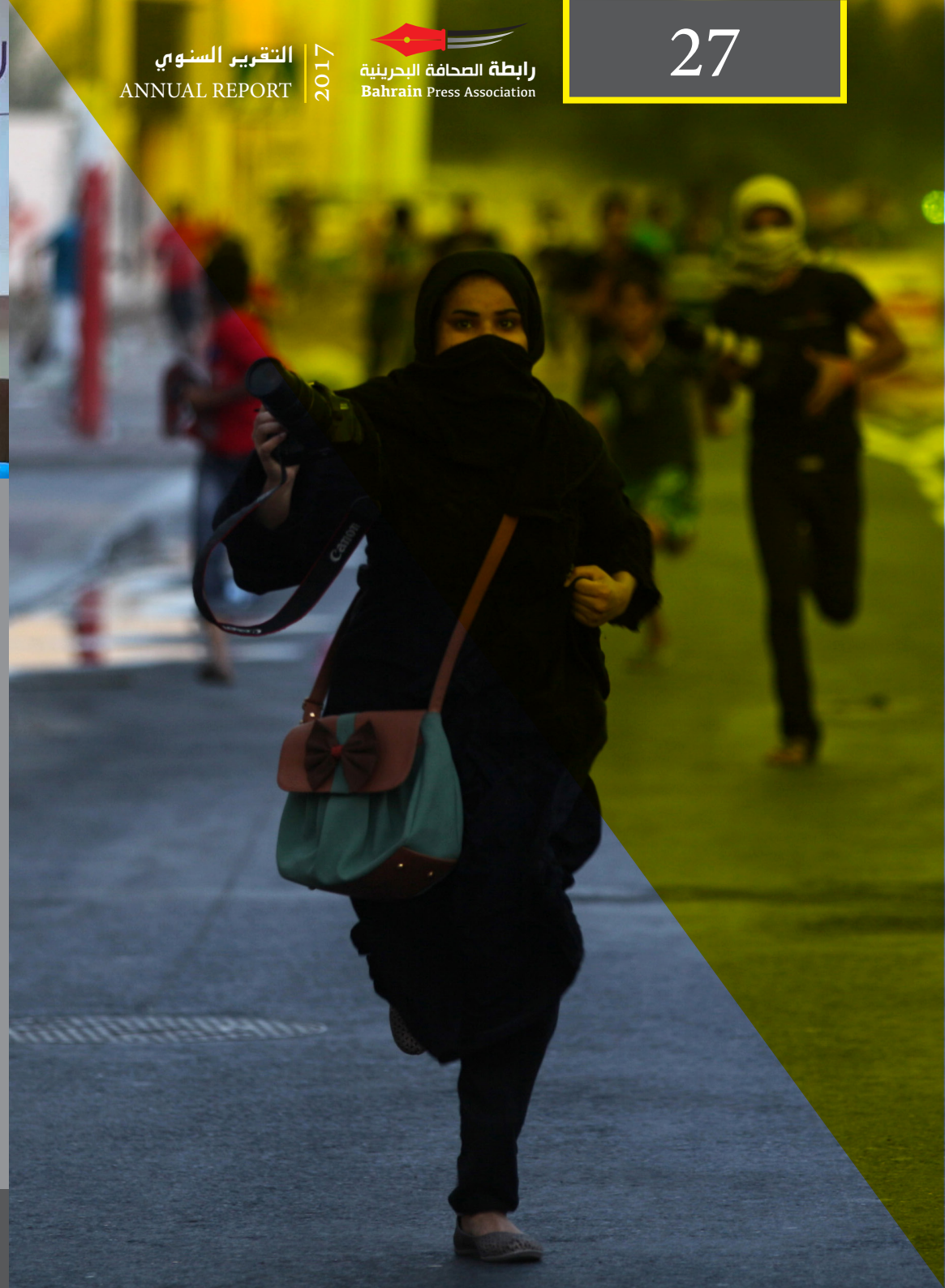


The poet Ahmed Al Ajmi called for investigation

The security authorities summoned the well known Bahraini poet Ahmed Al Ajmi on the 28th March 2016, and interrogated him in Nabih Saleh police station. This summon came after he delivered a poem on the 24th of February 2016 at the headquarter of 'waad' association in a program that included a stand of solidarity with the former Secretary General of the Association of Ibrahim Sharif.

Tweeter Ibrahim Karimi is jailed for two years

The five Minor Criminal Court sentenced on the 31st of March 2016 the detainee Ibrahim Karimi to two years and a month in prison as well as imposing on him a fine of 2100 Bahraini Dinar. Karimi was convicted on charges of insulting the king of Bahrain and allied States through his administration of the "Freij Karimi" account, despite his denial of the charges.





Doctor Said Samahiji sentenced to a year imprisonment

The Lower Criminal Court the ninth ruled on the 7th of April 2016 a year in prison for doctor. Said Samahiji after being convicted of "insulting an ally country" and "public incitement to non-compliance with the law and regulations in the Kingdom of Bahrain" and "public call to participate in marches and unlicensed gatherings". This ruling came after he published a tweet on his account on the social network site of "Twitter" in which he criticised the Saudi regime's execution of Saudi cleric Nimr al-Nimr. The trial was postponed more than once at frequent intervals on the 7th of March 2016 and the 23th of March 2016 and on the 4th of April 2016 before the court ordered his conviction.

Preventing correspondents from the "Associated Press" and "France 24" to cover "Kerry's" Conference

The security authorities prevented on the 7th of April 2016, Hasan Jamali a journalist along with a photographer for the agency of "Associated Press" of America, and Naziha Saaïd, correspondent for "France 24" channel from attending a press conference held by the US Secretary of State John Kerry during a visit to Manama. The authorities explained the ban due to "the end of their work permit."

Confiscation of 18 filming equipment that belongs to the press

The customs authorities at Bahrain International Airport confiscated on the 10th of April 2016, the privately owned filming equipment as well as other equipment that belongs to 18 journalists and a cameraman and a reporter from Bahrain and abroad after they covered the military training of the US forces that are stationed in Bahrain. The authorities then released the equipment after long hours of delay without an explanation.





A Shi'a religious man, Sheikh Mohammed Mansi is held

Prosecutors ordered on the 17th of April, 2016 the prosecution of the imam al-Zahra mosque Sheikh Mohammed Mansi (46 years) the Shi'a cleric, for a week pending investigation on charges of "inciting hatred against the regime" and "insulting the Interior Ministry" on the basis of delivering a speech criticising the way that the Ministry of the Interior deals with religious scholars over investigation and recall. Mansi received the summon on the 15th of April 2016, that requested his immediate presence from the South Hamad Town Centre, where he was detained for two days prior to his appearance in front of the public prosecutor, he was questioned at the centre until midnight about the content of a speech/sermon he gave on Friday at the mosque of al-Zahra in the Hamad Town area.

The photographer Hossam Serror sentenced to 15 years in prison

The local court sentenced on the 21st of April 2016 photographer Hossam Serror to 15 years in prison for "participating in an unauthorised gathering" and "attacking the police."

Vocalist Sayed Hassan Alawi arrested because of a poem

The security authorities arrested on the 20th of April 2016 the vocalist Sayed Hassan Alawi Al-shahrkani after being summoned to be investigated with at the centre of the roundabout 17 in Hamad Town. The General Prosecutor decided to keep him in custody for a week on charges of "insulting the king and the national flag and slogan" after delivering a eulogy to in the area of Shahrkan.



Prosecutors: 61 reports from Parliament against tweeters

Ahmed Al Dosari; the first lawyer for general prosecution stated on the 25th of April that the prosecutor "has received from the Chairman of the House of Representatives from July 2015 to the 24th of April 2016 about 61 filed reports against owners of personal accounts on social networks and has asked launch criminal cases against them for the contents of their publication on these accounts which goes beyond the protocol of freedom of opinion and expression that is guaranteed by law as it represents a direct insult to the legislative authority of the House of Representatives."

He pointed out that the public prosecutor "began its investigation in all such filed reports, which has led them to know the identity of 8 accounts' user and referred two of the accused to the criminal court on charges of insulting the House of Representatives."

One was sentenced to three months imprisonment but the sentence will be suspended if 50 dinars is paid, while the other accused received a fine of 500 dinars, and the remaining 6 cases are still under investigation. Three other filed reports were shelved, for lack of information about the actual culprit and his associates' identities, the Council also waived two of the mentioned filed reports yet investigations are still underway to detect identity of the perpetrators in the rest of the reports."





Tweeter Hassan Jassim's trial postponed

The local court postponed on the 4th of May 2016 the case of tweeter Hassan Jassim Ahmed (28 years) who is accused of "insulting a range of people" and "insulting the King" on the social network site "Facebook" on the 7th of June 2016. The court decided to call in the prosecution witness.

The Appeal courts supports the imprisonment of "Karimi" for two years

The High court of the Second Criminal Appeal upheld on the 4th of May the imprisonment sentence of Ibrahim Karimi who had his nationality revoked and sentenced to two years and a month as well as fined 2100 dinars in the case of insulting an ally country and incitement of the regime and in possession of an electric detonator. It has already been ruled by the Court of First the sentence of Karimi for a year and a fine of 2000 dinars on the charge of first and second "insulting the king and inciting hatred against the regime", he was imprisoned a year with effect from Article three which demonstrates "insulting an ally country" she sentenced him months and a fine of 100 dinars for Item IV "possession of an electric detonator."

Prison sentences against "Minrfizhm" but without implementation if a fine is paid

The Lower Criminal Third Court decided on the 9th of May 2016 to imprison Mohammed bin Saqr Al Khalifa, the owner of "Minrfizhm" account, for five months. In two new cases he was convicted of "insulting two figures through posts that he had published on social network site 'Twitter', and also accused of betraying his homeland and inciting the government's overthrow". The court ruled that the payment of 300 dinars fine would stop the implementation of his punishment in the two cases. On the 24th of May 2016, the same court sentenced him to seven months in prison for three other cases that were related to allegations that have been made to the public prosecutor by people who claim that he "insulted them and accused them of being members of the so-called Academy of change and seeking to overthrow the regime in Bahrain,". The court ruled that that a fine of 500 dinars will ensure that all 3 sentences will not be implemented; the first sentence against the accused was two months of imprisonment and a fine of 200 dinars, the second sentence was two months imprisonment and a fine of 100 dinars, and in the third sentence 3 months imprisonment and a fine of 200 dinars.

The postponement of tweeter Yusuf Al-Aam's trial

The Criminal Court postponed on the 8th of May 2016, the trial of tweeter Youssif Al-Aam, who uses the name of "Haji Ahmad" on social network with more than 11,000 followers. During the session it was decided to postpone the hearing to the 26th of June, 2016 to bring in a prosecution witness. When the hearing date arrived and after the lawyer had given her speech it was again decided to postpone the hearing to the 27th of October 2016.

The first session of vocalist Sayed Hassan Alawi trial is held

A local court held its first hearing session on the 17th of May 2016 of vocalist Sayed Hassan Alawi Al-Shahrkani's trial on charges "insulting the King, national flag, and emblems" in a poem. It was decided to postpone the hearing to the 19th of May 2016. The security authorities had arrested on the 20th of April, 2016 the vocalist Al-Shahrkani after being summoned for questioning at the centre of the roundabout 17 in Hamad Town after delivering a eulogy in the area of Shahrkan.

Sheikh Mohammed Mansi is sentenced to one year in prison

The Lower Criminal Court the third sentenced on the 24th of May 2016, the preacher Sheikh Mohammed Mansi to one year in prison on charges of delivering a sermon that represents "an insult to the Interior Ministry." Mansi denied the charges, saying that the "phrases that are mentioned characterises the reality and is part of the freedom of opinion and expression that is guaranteed by the Constitution and the law." The prosecution has stated that it "has completed its investigation into an incident that involved the preachers who is banned from public speaking (Mansi) delivering a sermon despite the ban that is in place against him. The contents of his speech included aspects that are deemed as criminal offenses, and he has been in custody but referred yesterday to appear before the Minor Criminal Court III. "

Increasing the sentence of Sheikh Ali Salman, from 4 to 9 years

The Supreme Court of Appeal ruled unanimously the views of the Court members on the 30th of May, 2016 a harsher sentence against the Secretary General of "Al-Wifaq" Society, Sheikh Ali Salman, from 4 to 9 years. The court decided to accept the appeals to cancel the appellant's verdict and to punish Sheikh Ali Salman with a sentence of 7 years, which was assigned to him for the first charge of "his attempt to overthrow the regime by force" and the second "hared of a sect" and the third "non-compliance with the law" Plus the endorsement of the two year imprisonment ruling for "insulting a statutory body" bringing the total sentence to 9 years. The defence team described the ruling as a "surprise", stressing that the "speeches that were the reason of Al-Sheikh's conviction are in fact evidence of his innocence not guilt."



The refusal of Media Commission to renew the license of “The Associated Press” reporter

The Media Affairs Commission refused on the 31st of May 2016, to renew the license to practice journalism for the American news agency “Associated Press” reporter, Hasan Jamali. And he has received a rejection reply to his application to renew his license as a reporter for the agency.

The postponement of Ibrahim Sharif’s appeal hearing

The Supreme Court of Appeal held on the 31st of May, 2016, its first hearing in the resumption of Ibrahim Sharif’s case, the leading figure in the opposition and former secretary general of ‘Waad’ Society regarding the ruling against him of a year in prison for the charge of “inciting hatred towards the regime”. The court decided to postpone the hearing of the appeal to the 15th of October, 2016, which means that Sharif will end his exact sentence of a year, prior to the second session of the appeal.



Radio “Montecarlo” correspondent refused work permit and prevented from travelling

The Media Affairs Commission rejected on the 7th of June 2016, the renewal of Naziha Saeed’s license to practice journalism as a reporter for Radio “Montecarlo” international. Saeed received the refusal to renew her accreditation as a correspondent for the radio. On the 29th of June, 2016 the Bahrain International Airport authorities stopped her from traveling and also prevented her from trying to travel via the Wasit bridge in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia’s “the King Fahd” bridge. It turned out later that there is no decision to stop her from traveling when the authority in question was asked.

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Fadel Abbas case to be postponed

It was decided by the Supreme Court of Appeal on the 13th of June, 2016 to postpone the resumption of the detainee Fadel Abbas, Secretary General of assembly, “Al-Wahdawi” case, which he was sentenced to five years in prison, to the 28th of June 2016 and on that day it was decided to postpone the hearing again to the 28th October.



Tweeter Teeba Ismail is arrested and her home raided

The security authorities arrested on the 26th of June, 2016) Teeba Ismail, the mother of two, from her home after a raid at dawn without showing a warrant. The General Prosecutor’s Office later decided to detain her for a week on charges of “insulting the king” and “the incitement of hatred against the regime” through an account on the social network site “Twitter” under the name of “Nabila Mushaima Salman.”



The first hearing session is held of “Al-Wast” reporter Mahmoud Al-Jaziri’ trial

A local court has held the first hearing session on the 28th of June, 2016, of Al Wast newspaper’s journalist, Mahmoud Al-Jaziri trial, on charges of “belonging to Al-Wafa party” and “joining a terrorist cell.” It was decided to postpone the hearing to the 28th of September 2016.

Al-Jaziri was arrested on the 28th of December, 2015 and transferred to the Criminal Investigation building where he was forced to stand on his feet for three consecutive days.



The arrest of Khalil Al-Madehon the artist

The Security authorities arrested on the 27th of June, 2016 the artist Khalil Al-Madehon after being summoned for questioning at the criminal investigations at the Adlayah building. It was decided to refer him to the public prosecutor after he was charged with writing comments on the social network site “Instagram”.

Appeal ruling in favour of five years imprisonment of tweeter Hussein Mahdi

The Court of Appeal upheld on the 30th of June, 2016 its first sentence of 5 years imprisonment for tweeter Hussein Mahdi the owner of “Takroz” account on “Twitter”, on charges of “offending the king.” He was also fined 10 thousand dinars.



The Release of Former Head of the Capital Municipal Council

On July 1, 2016 the security authorities released al-Wifaq Society leader and former Head of the Capital Municipal Council Majeed Milad after completing his sentence of one-year imprisonment. The First Degree Court had sentenced Milad for two years of imprisonment for “delivering political speeches” before the Court of Appeal reduced the sentence to one year of imprisonment.



Journalist Ahmed Radhi Banned from Travelling

On July 7, 2016 the security authorities banned journalist Ahmed Radhi from travelling after he had intended to fly to another Gulf country from Bahrain International Airport. Radhi was told to review the Criminal Investigation Directorate. The journalist tweeted that he was “previously banned from entering Saudi Arabia and forcibly returned from the United Arab Emirates,” speculating that the reason was likely related to the “security orders issued by the Ministry of Interior.”



The Arrest of Internet Activist Mohammed al-Alaiwat

On July 7, 2016 the security authorities apprehended internet activist Mohammed al-Alaiwat while at his workplace in Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Company (ASRY) in al-Hidd. Al-Alaiwat, who is also a football player at Sitra Sports Club, was referred to the Public Prosecutor after two days of investigation at the Criminal Investigation Directorate. Al-Alaiwat was accused of “insulting the King” through a private twitter account the directorate believed he administered. The Public Prosecutor ordered to detain him for seven days pending investigation.

The Release of Ibrahim Sharif

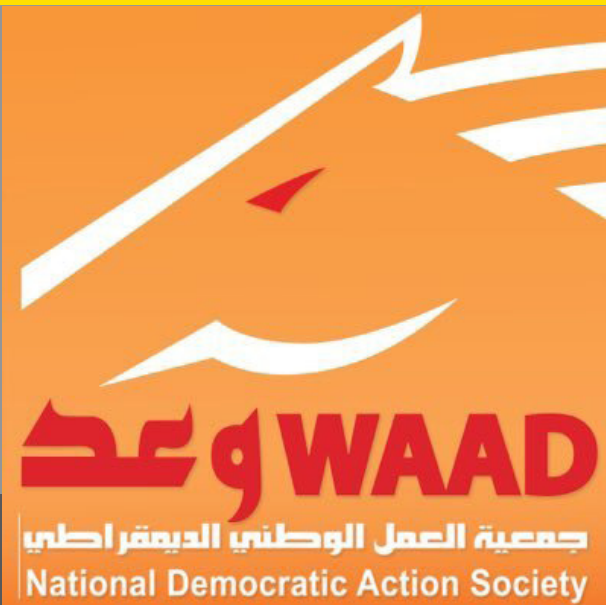
On July 11, 2016 the security authorities released prominent oppositionist and former Secretary-General of Waad Society Ibrahim Sharif after he was sentenced to one-year imprisonment for “inciting hatred against the regime.” Sharif was arrested after he delivered a speech in which he warned the government that “the situation is likely to explode once against due to its ongoing security measures.”



The Information Affairs Authority Refers Journalist Nazeeha Said to the Public Prosecutor's Office

On July 16, 2016 the Public Prosecutor interrogated Nazeeha Said, a correspondent for France 24 television channel and Radio Monte Carlo, following a notification received from the Information Affairs Authority. Journalist Said stated through her twitter account that she was questioned over “a case filed against her by the Information Affairs Authority for practicing journalism without a license.” The authority, in its turn, stated on July 17, 2016 that it referred Said to the Public Prosecutor for “illegally taking up the role of a correspondent for foreign media,” adding that “no one is above the law.”





Waad Society Banned from Holding a Seminar

The Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs banned the oppositionist National Democratic Action Society (Waad) from organizing a seminar in its headquarters on July 20, 2016. The society reported that “based on a communication received by the Secretary-General on Tuesday, July 19, 2016; a letter from the Societies Affairs Office; a letter from the Political Societies Affairs Office at the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs on Wednesday, July 20, 2016, regarding a discussion seminar Waad was planning under the title “Iran from the Inside;” and the Ministry’s order to refrain from holding the event, Waad apologizes for cancelling its seminar.”

One-Year Imprisonment for Hameed Khatim for Insulting the King on Twitter

On July 25, 2016 the security authorities apprehended internet activist Hameed Khatim while he was in his house in Samaaheej, east of the capital. The security forces raided his house at dawn and took him to a police station without presenting an arrest warrant. He was immediately taken to investigation, in which he was accused of publishing “statements inciting hatred against the regime and offending the King” through his private twitter account. On August 31, 2016 a local court sentenced him for two years of imprisonment over the mentioned charge. However, the Court of Appeal reduced this sentence to one year on Wednesday, November 16, 2016.



The Arrest of a Number of Twitter-Users

On July 26, 2016 the Ministry of Interior arrested a number of individuals, whose names were not revealed, for what it called "misuse of social media by publishing inflammatory materials involving violations punishable by the law." The Cyber Crime Directorate reported that it "recorded numerous accounts on social media that publish inflammatory materials and messages provoking illegal sit-ins. Based on this, necessary investigations were undertaken to identify the accounts administrators and to arrest them after obtaining a permit from the Public Prosecutor."







A Religious Cleric Arrested After Delivering a Sermon Criticizing the Authorities

On August 7, 2016 the Public Prosecutor suspended the Shiite religious cleric Shaikh Essa al-Momin for seven days pending investigation after he delivered a sermon in al-Khaif mosque in al-Dair area. His son Mujtaba reported on his twitter account that “the investigation with his dad was over the content of the sermon which he delivered two days ago at the mosque” and in which he criticized the security measures that the regime is taking against Bahraini citizens and, in particular, its Shiite population. In the meantime, the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Muharraq announced on its twitter account “the detention of one of the mosque preachers for seven days pending investigation after being charged of inciting hatred against the constitutional regime.”

The Trial of a Religious Cleric for “Inciting Hatred Against the Regime”

On August 16, 2016 a local court reviewed a new case filed by the Public Prosecutor against the Head of Bahrain Shiite Clerical Council al-Sayyid Majeed al-Mishaal for “inciting hatred against the regime” after he had previously been accused of “crowding and rioting.” Al-Mishaal denied the charges directed against him, explaining that he was exercising his right to freedom of opinion and expressing his objection to the measures the government took against Shaikh Essa al-Qassim. The court postponed his trial to August 24.



The Arrest of Ghada Jamsheer

On August 15, 2016 the security authorities arrested internet activist Ghada Jamsheer at Bahrain International Airport while on her way to leave the country. Jamsheer was taken to the women's prison in Isa Town to serve her sentence after using social media to voice criticism over claims of corruption. On June 22, 2016 Jamsheer was sentenced to one year in prison following an appeal of four cases filed against her involving tweets made from her personal twitter account. She also faced 12 charges that were made in the same cases.

Sunni Waqf Suspends One of Its Clerics

On August 18, 2016 the Sunni Waqf Directorate summoned one of its clerics to suspend him from delivering sermons and sign a pledge to abide by the ethics of religious sermons as specified in Ministerial Decision number 23, which was issued in 2009. The directorate did not reveal the identity of the cleric but emphasized in a statement "the necessity of committing to the rules of religious preaching and the objectives of the Friday sermons."



Tayyiba Ismail Sentenced to One-Year Imprisonment for "Insulting the King"

On August 24, 2016 the Ninth Lower Criminal Court held its first session against internet activist Tayyiba Ismail for "insulting the King and publishing tweets that undermine peace and security in Bahrain." The court decided to postpone the case until Aug 30 for review and decision. On that date, the court issued a verdict against her with the same charge, sentencing her to one-year imprisonment and a fine of 1000 dinars.



The Court of Appeal Upholds One-Year Imprisonment against Dr. Saeed al-Samaheji

The Second Criminal High Court of Appeal ruled on September 7, 2016 to uphold the verdict of one-year imprisonment against Dr. Saeed al-Samaheji. Dr. al-Samaheji was charged of "insulting a sisterly country (Saudi Arabia), publicly inciting violation of the laws and regulations in Bahrain, and publicly calling for participation in unlicensed protests and assemblies." Dr. al-Samaheji had published statements on his personal twitter account, severely criticizing Saudi's execution of prominent Shiite religious cleric Shaikh Nimir al-Nimir.

The Court of Appeal Upholds One-Year Imprisonment Against Tayyibeh Ismail

The Second Criminal High Court of Appeal held its first session on September 5, 2016 to review the verdict issued against internet activist Tayyibeh Ismail of one-year imprisonment and a fine of 1000 dinars for "insulting the King." The court decided to postpone its session to October 19, 2016. On that date, the court upheld the first-degree verdict by sentencing Ismail to one year of imprisonment



Agence France-Presse (AFP) Photographer Denied License Renewal

On September 22, 2016 the concerned authorities refused to renew the license of Agence France-Presse (AFP) photographer Mohammed al-Shaikh. The Information Affairs Authority informed al-Shaikh that it would not renew his license to work in Bahrain. According to Provision 88 of the Press, Printing, and Publishing Law in Bahrain, "journalists working for foreign news agencies and residing in Bahrain are prohibited from practicing their profession and covering news without obtaining a license from the Information Affairs Authority, which needs to be renewed annually."

Reuters Photographer Denied License Renewal

On September 30, 2016 the concerned authorities refused to renew the license of Aamir Mohammed, a photographer for Reuters international news agency. The Information Affairs Authority informed the photographer that it would not renew his license to work in Bahrain. According to Provision 88 of the Press, Printing, and Publishing Law in Bahrain, "journalists working for foreign news agencies and residing in Bahrain are prohibited from practicing their profession and freely covering news without obtaining a license from the Information Affairs Authority, which needs to be renewed annually."



The Release of Photographer Qassim Zain al-Deen

On September 30, 2016 the security authorities released photographer Qassim Zain al-Deen after completing three years of imprisonment for covering public protests. On September 24, 2014 the Third Criminal Court had sentenced him to three years of prison and a fine of 600 dinars.

Nabeel Rajab Transferred to Solitary Confinement

On September 25, 2016 East Riffa prison authorities placed prominent human rights activist and Director of Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab in solitary confinement. His family reported that they received a call informing them about his solitary imprisonment and his subjection to insults and screaming by one of the officers at the East Riffa police center. They added that "the clothes and towels the family provided for Rajab were smeared in water and dirt and that the family was prevented from delivering a radio device to him." The security authorities arrested Rajab again on June 13, 2016 following tweets he published in 2015 against the war in Yemen.









The Arrest of Journalist Faisal Hayyat

On October 9, 2016 the security authorities apprehended journalist Faisal Hayyat after he was summoned for investigation at the Criminal Investigation Directorate in Adliyya. Hayyat was charged of “insulting one of the sects in the country through his private twitter account.” Director of the General Directorate of Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security Bassim al-Miraj stated that “the person publishing statements that insult one of the sects in the country through his twitter account has been arrested. All necessary legal measures have been taken to refer his case to the Public Prosecutor.” On October 10, 2016 the Public Prosecutor, in its turn, decided to arrest the journalist for seven days pending investigation.

Verdict Against Wahdawi Secretary-General Reduced from 5 to 3 Years

On October 26, 2016 the Court of Appeal reduced the sentence against former Secretary-General of the National Democratic Unionist Society (Wahdawi) Fathil Abbas from 5 to 3 years of imprisonment. Abbas was charged of “spreading false news and tendentious rumors and spreading inflammatory news harmful to the military operations of the armed forces.”

Playwright Director Yassir Nasir Sentenced to One-Year Imprisonment

On October 19, 2016 the Court of Appeal upheld the verdict against playwright director Yassir Nasir of one year of imprisonment on the charge of “participating in a sit-in in Diraz.” On August 31, 2016 the First Degree Court had ruled one-year detention for Nasir as part of a violent campaign against those who participated in the open sit-in at the house of religious leader Shaikh Issa Qassim.





Religious Preachers and Singers Harassed during Ashura

The Ashura season (October 22 2016 ,12-) witnessed numerous cases of harassment of Shiite participants in the Ashura religious activities, amounting to 175 cases. The security forces summoned and apprehended many religious preachers, singers, and leaders and impeded their movement. They also destroyed banners and signs made for the religious occasion and confiscated religious materials. The authorities claimed that the preachers "are practicing slander of religious figures, such as Yazeed bin Maawiyya." According to Bahrain Human Rights Forum, 32 cases were recorded of arbitrary arrests, 59 cases of destruction, 60 cases of confiscation, 14 cases of suppressing protests against forced removal of signs and the infringement on Ashura activities, 1 case of suppressing a religious procession, and 9 cases of impeding the movements of religious clerics.





Lawyer Mohammed Al-Tajir Ordered to Trial

On November 10, 2016 human rights lawyers Mohammed al-Tajir was ordered to trial for “insulting the country’s institutions,” “inciting hatred against a religious sect,” and “misusing a communication device.” The representatives of the Public Prosecutor’s Office cited al-Tajir in a private voicenote he sent through the WhatsApp phone application in which he states, “It is evident that there is a team in the Public Prosecutor and the Cyber Crime Directorate whose job is to sit in front of a computer and object to every word said about Sunnis and Saudi Arabia, expressing hatred of the regime, or insulting the King.”

3 Instead of 5 Years of Prison for a Twitter-User

On November 12, 2016 the Court of Appeal modified a first-degree rule against twitter-user Yousif al-Am, also know by his twitter name Haji Ahmed, from 5 to 3 year of imprisonment. Al-Am was charged of “insulting the military forces participating in Decisive Storm Operation and spreading information that could harm and incite fear between people in a period of war,” a charge directed towards any person who criticized the war in Yemen. The authorities claimed that they reached the defendant through “investigation” and that he confessed for publishing more than 80 thousand tweets, including what they described as “insults” of the Bahraini, Saudi, and Emirati soldiers who died in Yemen.



Human Rights Activist Hussain Radhi Summoned for Interrogation over Tweets

On November 17, 2016 the Public Prosecutor summoned Hussain Radhi, a member of Bahrain Center for Human Rights, for "inciting hatred against the regime and spreading false news undermining civil peace." Radhi reported that he was questioned for publishing through his twitter account news already published by al-Wasat newspaper and Bahrain's Mirror electronic newspaper.

Ibrahim Sharif Interrogated after Making a Statement for a Foreign Press

On November 13, 2016 the Public Prosecutor summoned oppositionist Ibrahim Sharif for interrogation over the charge of "inciting hatred against the regime" before he was released. The Public Prosecutor stated that it received "a message from the Cyber Crime Directorate that an individual (Sharif) made a statement to a foreign press that offends the Kingdom's constitutional regime" on the occasion of Prince Charles's visit. It added that "the Public Prosecutor interrogated the defendant regarding the statements he made in the presence of a lawyer, some of the content of which he denied responsibility for. He was then ordered to be released after charging him with "publicly inciting hatred against and mocking the regime".



Rula al-Saffar Summoned for Interrogation

On November 23, 2016 the Public Prosecutor held an investigation with Director of Bahrain Nursing Society Dr. Rula al-Saffar. Dr. al-Saffar was accused of "inciting hatred against the regime and undermining civil peace." She was eventually released but is banned from travelling.





Human Rights Activist Ebtisam al-Saegh Charged of “Insulting the Regime”

On November 23, 2016 the Public Prosecutor summoned Ibtisam al-Saegh and accused her of “inciting hatred against and mocking the regime and undermining the country’s security and civil peace.” Al-Saegh was later released but is banned from travelling.

Journalist Ahmed Radhi Summoned for Investigation

On November 24, 2016 the Public Prosecutor interrogated journalist Ahmed Radhi for participating in an “illegal assembly.” Radhi reported through his twitter account, “I was accused of illegal assembly, and I denied this charge completely. I was informed that they will lift the travel ban imposed on me soon, but without any confirmation.” The authorities, however, continued the ban. On December 29, 2016 Radhi stated, “I was banned from travelling through Bahrain International Airport for a third time and without a clear reason, even though the Public Prosecutor previously confirmed that it was going to lift the ban.”





Three-Month Imprisonment for Journalist Faisal Hayyat

On November 29, 2016 the Lower Criminal Court sentenced journalist Faisal Hayyat three months of imprisonment for “insulting a religious figure and slandering one sect.” The Director of the Capital Prosecutor’s Office Nawwaf al-Awadhi stated that the Public Prosecutor “received a message from the Cyber Crime Directorate, stating that an individual (Faisal Hayyat) published a tweet through his personal twitter account, including phrases that insult a religious figure as well as a religious sect, which can incite discord among the different sects of society.”

Religious Cleric Arrested for “Insulting the Regime”

On November 31, 2016 the Public Prosecutor apprehended Shiite religious cleric Shaikh Haani al-Banaa for 15 days after he was charged of “inciting hatred against the regime and inciting violation of the law.” The police station in Budayya summoned al-Banaa for investigation on Sunday, October 30 and decided to detain him to refer his case to the Public Prosecutor.





Journalists Arrested and Banned during the GCC Summit

On December 6, 2016 the security forces arrested staff members working for the London-based Arabic Television while covering the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit in Manama. The authorities also stopped a live broadcast with a guest in Bahrain who was commenting on the summit. Additionally, the Qatari channel al-Jazeera reported that the Bahraini authorities prevented its crew from covering the summit and stated via its breaking news, "The Bahraini authorities prevent the crew of al-Jazeera network from covering the GCC summit in Manama." CNN Arabic correspondent Mohammed al-Ghasra was also banned from reporting on the event.

The Release of Feminist Activist Ghada Jamsheer

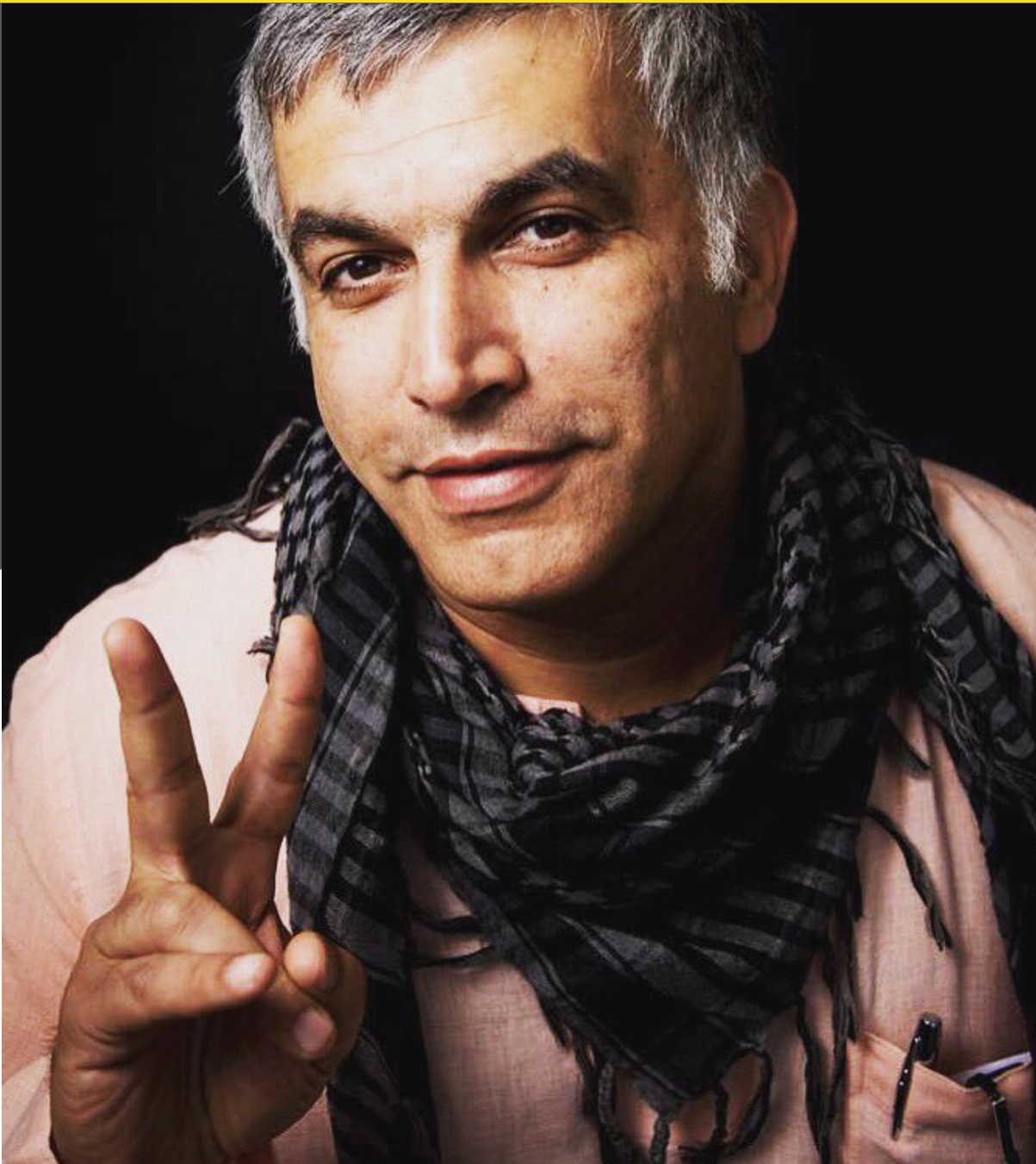
On December 12, 2016 the security forces released feminist activist Ghada Jamsheer after completing 7 months of imprisonment for four cases related to insults made on her social media accounts. According to al-Wasat newspaper, al-Jamsheer will complete her sentence by committing to community service in replacement of detention.

Nabeel Rajab Interrogated after Publishing an Article in Le Monde

The security forces investigated detained activist Nabeel Rajab regarding an article attributed to him and published by the French newspaper Le Monde. The Ministry of Interior stated on December 22, 2016 that it referred the case to the Public Prosecutor. According to the Ministry, the Cyber Crime Directorate "recorded an article published in Le Monde French newspaper attributed to Nabeel Rajab that included false information and rumors that harm the Kingdom of Bahrain and the sisterly countries of the Gulf Council and that jeopardize its interests." The Ministry also stated that Rajab denied writing the article during investigation.

The Court of Appeal Upholds the Verdict against Oppositionist Leader

On December 12, 2016 the Court of Appeal upheld the verdict against oppositionist leader Shaikh Ali Salman, Secretary-General of al-Wifaq Society, of 9 years of imprisonment. Shaikh Salman was accused of several charges, including "promoting a change in the regime by force." The court stated that it unanimously accepted the appeals, cancelled the appellant's verdict, sentenced Shaikh Ali Salman to 7 years of imprisonment for the charge (1, 2, and 3), and upheld the verdict against him of 2 years for the fourth charge, bringing the total period of his imprisonment to 9 years. The Court of Cassation overturned the 9-year rule of the Court of Appeal and appealed the case another time. The Court of Appeal, however, upheld the verdict once again.



Setting a Date for the Trial of Journalist Nazeeha Said

The Lower Criminal Court decided upon a date to look into the case filed by the Information Affairs Authority against France Press reporter Nazeeha Saeed. Saeed was accused of “practicing journalism without a license.” On December 26, 2016 the journalist stated on her twitter account that the date for her trial was set for January 16, 2017.

Nabeel Rajab Faces New Charges

On December 29, 2016 the Public Prosecutor apprehended prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab for one week pending investigation after being charged of publishing false news. The new charge came after a local court released him on the same day before the Public Prosecutor detained him for investigation. Director of the Public Prosecutor Mohammed Salah noted that “we will continue to hold the defendant pending investigation over another case reported by the Cyber Crime Directorate involving spreading and publishing false news and tendentious rumors on the internal situation in the Kingdom, which undermine its prestige.”





رابطة الصحافة البحرينية
Bahrain Press Association

Bahrain: Finishing Off The Margin

Seventh annual report

Freedom of press in Bahrain 2017

Bahrain Press Association

Organization concerned with defending

freedom of expression in Bahrain

Founded in London

9th July 2011

All Rights Received

E-mail: info@bahrainpa.org

website: www.bahrainpa.org



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