



رابطة الصحافة البحرينية
Bahrain Press Association

ANNUAL REPORT
2018



Bahrain 2018

The Kingdom of Closed Doors



Bahrain 2018... The Kingdom of Closed Doors..

Ninth annual report
Freedom of press in Bahrain 2018

Bahrain Press Association

Organization concerned with defending
freedom of expression in Bahrain

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Bahraini journalists have undergone hard times during 2018 as the authorities continue their fierce war on the remaining available outlets of the freedom of expression.

Security authorities have taken full control of the media sphere after shutting down “Al-Wasat” newspaper to keep the press in the hands of pro-government newspapers, which are mostly replicas of the Official Gazette.



Similarly, the blockade of the social media spheres, which became deserted spaces, continues as tweeters resort to hiding behind the pseudonyms and allegory in an environment where expressing critical views is a risk. Bahrain has never witnessed such hard times, even in the toughest periods, such as the national safety period.

Despite the darkness of this period, social media remained, and over the following years, the leading platforms of debate to exchange views and criticize government officials on matters of public concern. However, the scene has changed now as the Ministry of Interior tightens its grip on the Internet along with the continuous admission of tweeters into courts and interrogation rooms. This bitter atmosphere has been exacerbated by passing the law of political isolation, which included banning members of dissident opposition groups and independent critics from participating in elections whether by voting, candidacy or even making an appearance in various media channels.



Journalists and reports were prevented from covering the elections held on 24 November 2018 and boycotted by the opposition. Boycott advocates were also prevented from accessing the media or expressing their views—a right guaranteed by the Bahraini Constitution in Article 23. This was preceded by threats of depriving electoral boycotters of government and housing services. The Ministry of Interior has criminalized expressing opinions of boycott and threatened to pursue any calls for a boycott by any means. The arrest of a former MP actualized these threats after announcing his family’s decision not to participate in the elections.

The Kingdom of Closed Doors

The naming of the annual report of Bahrain Press Association "**Bahrain, the Kingdom of Closed Doors**" comes to refer to the dead end in the kingdom and the impasse of press freedom in the country. The state has shut its doors before the other opinion, not only in the traditional media but also in the blogosphere and social media.



In 2018, the Bahrain Press Association documented about 86 cases that represent alleged violations of media freedoms and public freedoms such as rights of opinion and expression. These violations included 21 judicial rulings, 32 interrogations, some of which involved torture, 24 arrests, and 9 cases of obstruction of work. Most prominent charges, however, included "inciting hatred against the regime," "misusing social media," "insulting a statutory body," "maltreating certain denomination symbols," "abusing and defaming by publishing," and "inciting to boycott elections."



This is no longer confined to those journalists and photographers who belong to the opposition camp; the year of 2018 also witnessed interrogations and arrests of those who are usually classified as pro-regime. Nonetheless, the rigid procedures, especially those associated with the verdicts in force pronounced by Bahraini courts, are almost exclusively against the opposition. Moreover, discrimination against the opposition was furthered by granting concessions for regime supporters in order to maneuver the implementation of judicial verdicts. Instead of imprisonment, as the case with opposition figures, they pay fines and perform social work.

In this comprehensive report, Bahrain Press Association (BPA) presents, in chronological order, incidents of violations of freedom of media, speech and expression documented in 2018.



Recommendations

The Bahrain Press Association condemns targeting journalists, bloggers, and photographers, which, it believes, has become a systematic and frequent behaviour. It is also one of the main reasons that led to the decline of Bahrain's reputation at the international level in terms of freedom of the press. The Association calls on the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and all international organizations and bodies concerned with defending freedom of opinion and expression, press and media freedoms to exert urgent pressure on the Bahraini government to:

Immediately and unconditionally release

all photographers, media professionals, and activists detained for practicing their work in covering protests or exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression;

Stop arbitrary prosecutions and arrests and judicial trials on charges of "insulting the king," "spreading false statements" made against Internet activists and media professionals. Charges such as "protesting" for photographers, "inciting hatred of the regime" for politicians, and all charges pertaining to freedom of expression must be revoked;

Secure the freedom of media and the press and to shut down the Office of Internet Surveillance in the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunication, and to abolish Law No. (47) that regulates the press, publishing, and printing in the country;

End the authority's monopoly of the television, radio and print media and enable the voice of opposition in the media, including reauthorizing the publication of Al-Wasat; and to

Invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur

on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression to schedule an urgent visit to Bahrain.

JANUARY

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2018**

01

رابطة الصحافة البحرينية
Bahrain Press Association



The Court of Cassation upheld the imprisonment of Nabil Rajab for two years over charges of "spreading false news."

The Court of Cassation (15 January 2018) upheld a two-year jail sentence against the human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, for "spreading rumors and false news." The verdict came after his participation in television interviews with foreign media in which he spoke about human rights violations in the country.



Former MP Mohammed Khalid referred to trial for "insulting a religious symbol."

The Public Prosecution (16 January 2018) interrogated the former MP Mohammed Khaled for "insulting a glorified figure of a religious sect" on Twitter and scheduled a hearing session for 30 January to consider the lawsuit. Northern District Attorney, Mohamed Salah, stated that the Public Prosecution had received several complaints from citizens about a post on social media that is deemed offensive to a symbol/figure in their sect. The Public Prosecution

investigated the incident and heard the complainants. The defendant was interrogated and confronted with the tweet in his account along with the abuse statements contained therein. He was accused of insulting a glorified figure of a religious sect based on article 310/2 of the Penal Code. The Public Prosecution ordered that the lawsuit is referred to the competent court, which will be scheduled for hearing on 30 January 2018".



A religious scholar sentenced to imprisonment on an accusation of “insulting Yazid bin Mu’awiya”

A Bahraini court (24 January 2018) sentenced a Shiite cleric to six months in prison for “insulting Yazid ibn Mu’awiya,” the Umayyad ruler who killed Hussein bin Ali, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The court charged the Shiite cleric on charges of “insulting a symbol and a glorified figure of a religious sect as he talked about him inappropriately as stated in the charge sheet.” The court estimated a bail of 100 dinars to suspend the verdict.



Interrogating Sawsan Al-Shaer on charges of “insulting the Bahraini people.”

On 25 January 2018, the Bahraini Public Prosecution summoned Al-Watan newspaper journalist, Sawsan Al-Shaer, after receiving three complaints against her. Sheikha Lulwa bint Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa and lawyer Fatima Al-Hawaj filed charges against the journalist to the public prosecutor. They accused her of insulting the Bahraini people after she described the people of Bahrain in the TV show “On My Responsibility” on the official television as “Mowgli,” the cartoon character that features the jungle boy. In the show, she said that the Bahraini citizen “has been ruined; no home that cultivates the personality traits, nor is there a [responsible] neighborhood, a system, law, or traditions.” She also added that the Bahraini “lacks the national consciousness.”



02



Secretary-general of "Al Wahdawi" association summoned for tweeting opinions

The Cyber Crimes Department of the Criminal Investigation Department (21 February 2018) summoned the Secretary-General of the opposition Al Wahdawi front, Hassan El-Marzouq, for investigation. According to the association, he was interrogated over charges of "posting tweets that incited demonstrations," before he was released on the same day.



Nabeel Rajab was sentenced to 5-year imprisonment for criticizing torture and war on Yemen

The Higher Criminal Court (21 February 2018) sentenced the prominent human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights to 5 years for condemning torture in a Bahraini prison and the Saudi airstrikes in Yemen. The new penalty is added to a previous sentence of two-year imprisonment. The new ruling is based on Rajab's tweets about Saudi-led military operations in Yemen and alleging torture in the Jaw prison. Rajab was convicted under Article 133 of the Criminal law that includes "broadcasting false news during wartime," Article 215 "offending a foreign state publicly" (Saudi Arabia), and Article 216 "insulting statutory bodies." That came after he spoke to the media in March of 2015 about the excessive use of force by the security forces to quell unrest in the Jaw prison.



**Six tweeters detained
for managing a Twitter account**

On February 24, 2018, security authorities arrested six tweeters, including a former Bahrain TV anchor, a police officer, and a member of the Cyber Crimes Unit, who were accused of “defaming people over social media.” The arrested are Mohammed Al-Shorouki, Abdullah Yousif Al-Maloud, Khalid Mohammed Mohammed, Rashid Saad Al-Dosari, Fahad Saleh Al-Shammari, and Abdul Aziz Mohammed Matar. Authorities accused them of managing the account of “Naeb Taeb” (a repentant MP).



**Three months for Al-Shorouqy
for insulting MP Mohammed Khaled on Twitter**

(28 February 2018), a Bahraini court sentenced the former ‘Bahrain TV’ anchor Mohammed Al-Shorouki to 3 months and a bail of 100 dinars to suspend the verdict over charges of insulting the former MP Mohammed Khaled. Khalid filed a report against Al-Shorouqi for “offending and insulting him through his Twitter account.



**Al-Wasat newspaper cleared up
after nine months of closure**

Al-Wasat newspaper (27 February 2018) cleared up its offices in Abu Saiba in preparation for handing over the building to the owner 9 months after the newspaper was shut down. Bahrain suspended the newspaper on 5th June 2017 after accusing it of “publishing an article that offended a sister Arab state,” in reference to an article by the writer, Qasim Hussein, in which he reviewed events in the Moroccan city of “Hoceima.”



03

The Appeals Court upheld sentencing 'al-Jaziri' and 'Ma'raj' and revoking their citizenship.

The Appeals Court (7 March 2018) upheld the sentence of journalist Mahmoud Al-Jaziri of 'Al-Wasat' newspaper to 15 years and the internet activist Ali Ma'raj to 25 years along with revoking their citizenship on charges of "joining a terrorist cell." They, among others, were convicted by the court for creating and participating in the 'Basta Group'; A WhatsApp group formed to discuss issues pertaining to the public affairs.



Editor-in-chief of the "El-Watan" summoned following a complaint filed by an MP

(March 2018) The Public Prosecution summoned Al-Watan's editor-in-chief, Youssef Al-Benkhalil, following a complaint filed against him by an MP. MP Anas Bouhandi lodged a complaint with the Public Prosecution against the editor-in-chief of the newspaper for publishing a news report titled "The people of the Sixth district of Southern governorate thank the Minister of Justice for the removal of Anas Bouhandi from the Imamah of Ghatam Mosque" on 11 February 2018. The Public Prosecution released Al-Benkhalil with a proof of residence, after interrogating him.

Jalila El Sayed Amin detained from the courtroom

Security authorities detained (21 March 2018) Jalila El Sayed Amin from the courtroom after an appeal court upheld a sentence to one year in prison and a fine of 1,000 dinars. The authorities accuse El Sayed of "running an account on a social media criticizing the government." As soon as the verdict was issued, El Sayed was arrested from the court to complete her sentence of 10 days after her arrest in 2015 and was released after 11 months and 20 days in January 2016.



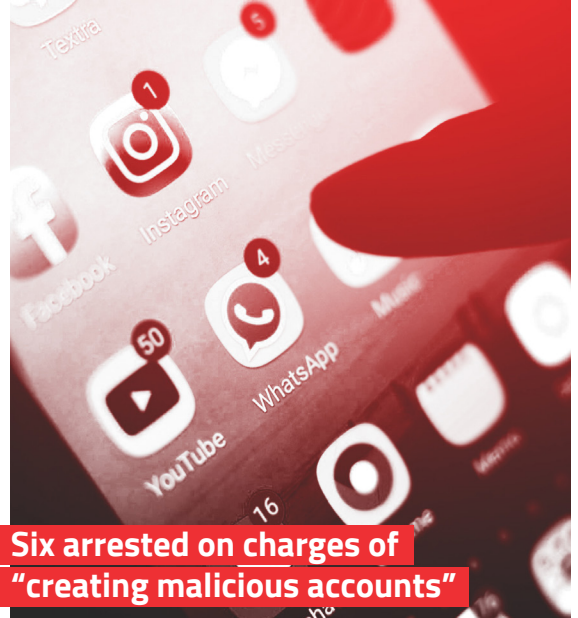
Interior Minister vows measures against social media users

On 25th March 2018, Bahrain's Minister of Interior Rashid Al Khalifa announced a crackdown on what he described as "unprecedented, electronic chaos" caused by some social media accounts, noting the Kingdom's readiness to enact new laws to counter its negative effects. Al-Ayyam newspaper quoted him saying, "We monitor these accounts, risks lie in the inaccuracy of information published, both about people or institutions, all of which do not serve the cohesion of the home front." He added "Actions taken were able to identify some individuals managing these accounts, while still pursuing others. We will be monitoring closely and apply the penalties imposed against any violator, even if it requires legislating new laws to keep abreast of the latest crime and its increasingly negative impact on the groups of society and its national fabric." The Minister added that "Some social media accounts that were created recently involved in many violations. They claimed that they were managed by the Bahraini Royal Court before it was discovered that they were issued from abusive sites and had no relationship with the Royal Court or any other official institution in the Kingdom of Bahrain."



**Photographer “El-Moussawi”
imprisoned for ten years
and his citizenship is revoked**

The Bahraini Court of Appeal (27 March 2018) upheld a 10-year sentence against the press photographer Sayed Ahmed Al-Moussawi and revoking his citizenship. Al-Moussawi’s sentence can be appealed before the Court of Cassation, whose rulings are considered to be decisive. On November 22, 2015, the first instance court sentenced Al-Moussawi to 10 years in prison and his nationality was revoked. Al-Moussawi was arrested from his home in Al-Daraz at the dawn of February 10, 2014, and his cameras and other electronic equipment were confiscated. However, his trial began 10 months after his detention. Al-Moussawi later told his family that he was tortured during the detention.



**Six arrested on charges of
“creating malicious accounts”**

(30 March 2018) the Ministry of the Interior announced the arrest of six people on charges of “creating malicious accounts and spreading offensive, inflammatory and seditious comments.” The arrested electronic activists are Abdulaziz al-Shamri, Mohammed Al-Sharqawi, Abdul Aziz al-Shawoush, Zafer al-Zayani, and Ahmed al-Bankhalil.

**Three imprisoned
for miscommunication
and posting pornographic clips**

(30 March 2018), the Public Prosecution announced the detention of 3 people for 7 days in 3 separate cases over charges of “spreading offenses on the social media.” The chief public prosecutor, Fahd Al-Buainain, said: “The Department of Combating Cybercrime has received a number of reports on the misuse of social media sites.” He added that the competent prosecution embarked on investigations immediately after receiving the reports. The first incident involved posting pornographic clips on the social media program (WhatsApp) by a Bahraini citizen. When interrogating the accused, he admitted to possessing pornographic clips on his own phone, publishing and promoting them on social media.” He added that “the second incident is related to the abuse of using social media (Twitter). After interrogating and confronting the accused with evidence, he admitted providing an abusive account with information about certain people, their private life and posting them in those accounts.” The third incident included “a person posting videos on social media (YouTube) that included insulting others. He was interrogated and confronted with evidence against him.”



**A cyber activist is arrested
for misusing social media**

(26 March 2018), The Public Prosecution arrested an electronic activist who allegedly misused social media. The chief prosecutor of Muharraq governorate, Hussein Khamis, said that “The Public Prosecution has begun its investigation of an incident involving a person’s misuse of telecommunication devices by posting on “Twitter” content that is offensive and abusive to others.” “Accordingly, the cybercrimes department conducted the necessary investigations to reach the account holder, and by questioning the accused, he acknowledged the charges against him,” he added. The Public Prosecution issued a seven-day detention order for the completion of the investigation proceedings in preparation for a referral to the competent court.





Ayman Mohammed Khalid arrested on charges of misuse of social media

(14 April 2018), the Bahraini Ministry of Interior announced the arrest of Ayman Mohammed Khaled, the son of the former MP Mohammed Khaled, for "leaking information on social media that affects the personal lives of others." Director General of the General Directorate for Combating Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security said, "Ayman Muhammad Khaled Ibrahim was arrested while trying to leave the country, following his abuse of social media and leaking data and information about others' personal lives on social media." He pointed out that the legal procedures are in process for referring the case to the Public Prosecution.



Tweeter Mohammed El-Zayani summoned

The Cyber Crimes Unit (17 April 2018) summoned the Tweeter and the former colonel in the Bahraini Army Mohammed Al-Zayani for interrogation. Al-Zayani mentioned on his 'Instagram' that the Department of cybercrime interrogated him in a case that turned out to be "personal." He added that "the case was based on a personal complaint, and no official entity had a relationship," noting that "the matter is over," as he put it.

Mohammed Khalid was sentenced to 3 month-imprisonment and 300-dinar bail to suspend the verdict

(18 April 2018) A Bahraini court sentenced the former MP Mohammed Khalid to 3 months in prison and a bail of 300 dinars to suspend the verdict after he was convicted of "insulting figures of a particular religious sect" on Twitter. On his 'Twitter' account, Khalid insulted Imam Mahdi bin Hassan, the last Imam of the Shiite community, which represents the majority of the population in the country. The head of the prosecution, Abdulrahman Al-Maawda, acting chief of the Northern governorate Prosecution, said that "the third minor criminal court sentenced him to three-month imprisonment. A bail of 300 dinars is estimated to be imposed to suspend the verdict against a tweeter".



Nabeel Rajab prevented from drinking water

(19 April 2018), Adam Nabeel Rajab, the son of prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, the head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, stated that his father had been forbidden to drink water for 24 hours with the rest of prisoners. He also noted that "the Jaw prison administration prevented them from reading books and kept them inside their cells for 23 hours/day."

The Court of Justice vows actions that may lead to the dismissal of public employees for social media misuse

Civil Service Bureau head, Ahmed bin Zayed Al-Zayed (24 April 2018) threatened to take actions against the misuse of social media by public sector employees. He warned against "cases of impotence on social media and abuses by some Bahraini employees ... and their violation of public morality and behavior in a rude and morally inappropriate manner contrary to the requirements of a public job, through the violation of national security and abusing people, sects and religions in the Kingdom of Bahrain." He added that "any civil service employee who commits an offense in this regard will be legally held accountable. Actions will be taken, and disciplinary sanctions will be applied to staff members who prove their irregularities. These sanctions may reach dismissal from service in accordance with the schedule of violations and penalties, provided for in the executive regulations of the Civil Service Law."



Photographer Baqir Kamel is arrested at a shopping mall

On 27th April 2018, 'National Geographic' photographer Sayed Baqir Al-Kamil was arrested by security authorities while shopping at a mall in the capital city of Manama. He was taken to the Criminal Investigation Department. After being isolated for two days away from anyone, he was told that he had been sentenced to two-month imprisonment and that he should appeal the verdict and pay a fine if he wanted to be released. He was released two days after signing an appeal to his sentence.



05



**Two years for blogger
Sayed Ali Al-Darazi on charges of
"inciting hatred against the regime"**

The Fifth Minor Criminal Court (9 May 2018) sentenced tweeter Sayed Ali Al-Darazi to 2 years in prison for tweets that incite hatred against the regime. The court convicted him of "using social media platforms, particularly Twitter, to publish 200 tweets over five years inciting hatred against the government of Bahrain and insulting the king and the royal family," the judge allegedly stated.



**The Appeals Court upholds a decree
on former MP Mohammed Khalid**

(29 May 2018) A Bahraini court sentenced the former MP Mohammed Khalid to three months in prison and a bail of 300 dinars to suspend the verdict after he was convicted of "insulting figures of a particular religious sect" on 'Twitter.' On his Twitter account, Khalid insulted Imam Mahdi bin Hassan, the last Imam of the Shiite community, which represents the majority of the population in the country.



06



The Court of Cassation upholds fining journalist Naziha Saeed

The Court of Cassation (4 June 2018) upheld a 1000-dinar fine against the 'Radio Monte Carlo' and 'France 24' correspondent, Naziha Saeed, for "working without a license." The court upheld paying a fine of 1,000 dinars.

The Appeals Court upholds the five-year sentence of Nabeel Rajab

(5 June 2018), the Court of Appeal upheld a prison sentence of 5 years against the human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, head of Bahrain Center for Human Rights for criticizing torture in a Bahraini prison and the Saudi airstrikes in Yemen. Rajab was convicted under Article 133 of the Criminal law of "disseminating false rumors during wartime," article 215 "offending a foreign state publicly" (Saudi Arabia), and article 216 "insulting statutory bodies." The charges were based on his statement to the media in March of 2015 about the excessive use of force by the security forces to quell unrest in the Jaw prison.



Photographer Hassan Qambar was arrested

(12 June 2018), security authorities arrested the photographer Hassan Qambar, who was sentenced to more than 120 years after a police crackdown in Nuwaidrat. Qambar is active in the field of photography and posting news through social media. The security services have been hunting down Qambar since 2013 when he was sentenced to prison for more than 120 years, and his nationality was revoked. Eyewitnesses said that Qambar was taken by an ambulance to an unknown destination.



The execution judge refuses to replace the penalty of Mohammed Al-Shorouki

(20 June 2018), the execution judge refused to substitute the sentence of Mohammed Al-Shorouki, the former anchor at Bahrain TV for community service after the court sentenced him to 3 months in prison for insulting the former MP, Mohammed Khalid, on 'Twitter'. Al-Shorouki's request to appeal his sentence was not the first. He was convicted of two-month imprisonment in another lawsuit. The execution judge agreed

to replace his sentence while the second incident was rejected. Al-Shorouki was convicted of "publicly insulting the victim shaming his honor and consideration." "He intentionally disturbed the victim through misusing the public transport and communications." The 5th minor criminal court sentenced him to 3 months in prison. The court estimated 100 dinar-bail to suspend the verdict.



Najah Yousef sentenced to 3 years in prison for opposing Formula One

A Bahraini court (25 June 2018) sentenced the cyber activist Najah Ahmed Yousef to 3 years in prison for running an online account that protested the "Formula One" race in her village in Bahrain. Najah told the court, "The security forces assaulted me physically, tried to tear my clothes, touched my sexual organs and threatened to rape me. However, this did not affect the course of the trial.

Journalist Mohammed Al-Ghasra was summoned

Security authorities (26 June 2018) summoned journalist Mohammed Al-Ghasra, the administrator of 'Delmon Post' website for interrogation concerning news published about the Jaafari Endowment Administration. Awqaf Head, Mohsen Al-Asfour, filed a lawsuit against Al-Ghasra accusing him of "harming his reputation." The incident is that the journalist posted on his website two stories; the first was "about the table on which Al-Asfour is presiding over his meetings which were not circular and protocol. It is not familiar, but it is similar to the ones of courtrooms or the House of Representatives in which the president is on

one direction, and the rest of the members are on the opposite direction, making himself in a better position than the rest of the members," as posted on the website he runs. The second lawsuit is related to the hall of Al Magsha, whose name was changed to the Sheikh Muhsin Al-Asfour Hall. Al Matam Al Magsha owns the land. It was built by the funds of Al Matam's Awqaf. How could the hall be named after him during his four-year service as a public employee? Most people of Al-Magsha, according to the post on the site, are also opposing this naming. The lawsuit was referred to the Public Prosecution after hearing the accused.





The Bahraini Ministry of Information has launched a massive campaign on the sale of Al-Jazeera's—funded by the Qatari government—'beIN Sports' receivers. The Ministry announced in a statement (19 July 2018) that it would "continue to implement its decision of June 13, 2017, that bans importing 'beIN Sports' receivers and stopping the sale and renewal of its subscriptions". The ministry reported that it "has recently stepped up its inspections of shops that sell receivers in order to deal with them in accordance with the laws and regulations in force in the Kingdom of Bahrain, whether the Al Jazeera network's receivers or illegally encoded receivers which broadcast illegally." The ministry justified its decision on the grounds that Al-Jazeera's beIN Sports is starkly involved in suspicious cases linked to supporting terrorism and extremist groups and promoting the discourse of sedition, hatred, and extremism in the region. The Qatari channels deviated from the sports message aiming at harming the reputation of Arab countries and offending them."



08



**Editor-in-Chief of
'Al-Watan' newspaper
Yousef Al-Bankhalil
was summoned**

(14 August 2018), the public prosecution summoned the editor-in-chief of Al-Watan newspaper, Yousef Al-Bankhalil, for investigation following a complaint filed by 'Al-Khair Bank' after he published an advertisement that the bank deemed abusive. The prosecution decided to release him with a proof of residence. The editor-in-chief Yousef Al-Bankhalil denied all charges and confirmed that it was "a paid advertisement and the newspaper is not responsible for its content. That was evident in a statement published later by the newspaper clarifying the issue." After an hour-long interrogation, the public prosecution charged Al-Bankhalil with three accusations. The first is "making the bank an object of scorn and punishment by means of publishing in a newspaper." The second is shaming the bank's honor and reputation. And finally, inciting hatred against a group of Al-Khair Bank's staff and managers." Al-Bankhalil denied these charges and the newspaper's responsibility for the content of the advert, emphasizing that "newspapers do not interfere with the content of a paid advertisement."



**Clergyman Al Aradi
sentenced to 6 months for
"publishing abusive tweets"**

(26 August 2018), the Higher Criminal Court sentenced Shi'ite cleric, Sheikh Mohammed Saeed Al Aradi, to six months in prison on charges of "publishing abusive tweets." It ordered that the punishment be replaced by a social work that the court did not identify what exactly it is. Security authorities arrested Al-Aradi on 20th July 2018. The head of the northern governorate prosecution, Mohammed Salah said: "The Public Prosecution received a report from the Department of Combating Electronic Crimes about a person (Sheikh Mohammed Saeed Al-Aradi) publishing offensive tweets on his account on a social media platform." He added that "the prosecution began investigating the incident and interrogated the defendant who admitted that the account is his own. The prosecution has faced him with the tweets in the account and the statements of abuse contained therein." The prosecution ordered to be held for seven days pending investigation after he was charged with "insulting the symbol of a glorified figure of a religious sect based on article 2/310 of the Penal Code." On 8th August 2018, the minor criminal court considering the case decided to release him until the hearing on 26th August for final judgment. after a month of detention in custody, Al-Aradi denied what was attributed to him and justified his writings as "nothing but a discussion of scientific research, which he referred to on Twitter."



Anchor Mohamed El Shorouqi fined 50 dinars for disturbing a former MP

(28 August 2018), the higher Criminal Court (in its appellate capacity) decided to fine anchor, Mohamed El Shorouqi, 50 dinars on charges of “deliberately causing the inconvenience to the victim (former MP Mohammed Khalid, member of the Islamic Minbar Society), by misusing the means of communication.” The court acquitted him of the claims that “the victim was publicly disgraced in his honor and reputation by describing him in the language mentioned in the documents.” The first instance court sentenced him to three months in prison for the two charges, while the appeals court only fined him 50 dinars for the inconvenience caused to the former MP. The penalty enforcement judge refused to request the replacement of the sentence presented by the appellant anchor attorney.



ebtisam Alsaegh

🕒 February 4



اعتقال المواطن البحريني #محمدخاتم من قبل
مليشيات مدنية في سيارة مدنية (كورولا رصاصي)
كانت تنتظر حضوره عند مبنى الحكومة مكان
احتجائه، و نقل إلى جهة مجهولة وسط قلق على
مصيره.

<https://t.co/uEuZRXPjHy> #البحرين



Mohammed Khatam jailed for “inciting hatred against the regime”

The Bahraini Public Prosecution (29 August 2018) ordered that Bahraini citizen, Mohammad Khatam, be detained for one week after being charged with “inciting hatred against the regime.” Khatam was arrested on the 27th of the same month after a protest in front of the old government house in the capital Manama requesting his return to work, from which he was fired more than five years ago. In front of

the former government building, he held up a sign saying “I am a Bahraini citizen, I do not have the sustenance of myself, nor my wife and children’s sustenance. Where do I go, the king of the country?” He broadcast a video recording in which he asked the government to return him to his work. Khatam was released on September 4 after his health had been deteriorated and was transferred to Salmaniya Hospital.

SEPTEMBER



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09



(6 September 2018), The Minister of Interior Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa issued a circular to the provinces to stop any publications a day after the grandson of the Prime Minister, Khalifa bin Ali Khalifa Al Khalifa, launched an electronic magazine called "El Janoubia Times." On its website, the Ministry of Interior said that "the minister issued a circular to the provinces, halting the issuance of any paper or electronic publications, newspapers or magazines in the

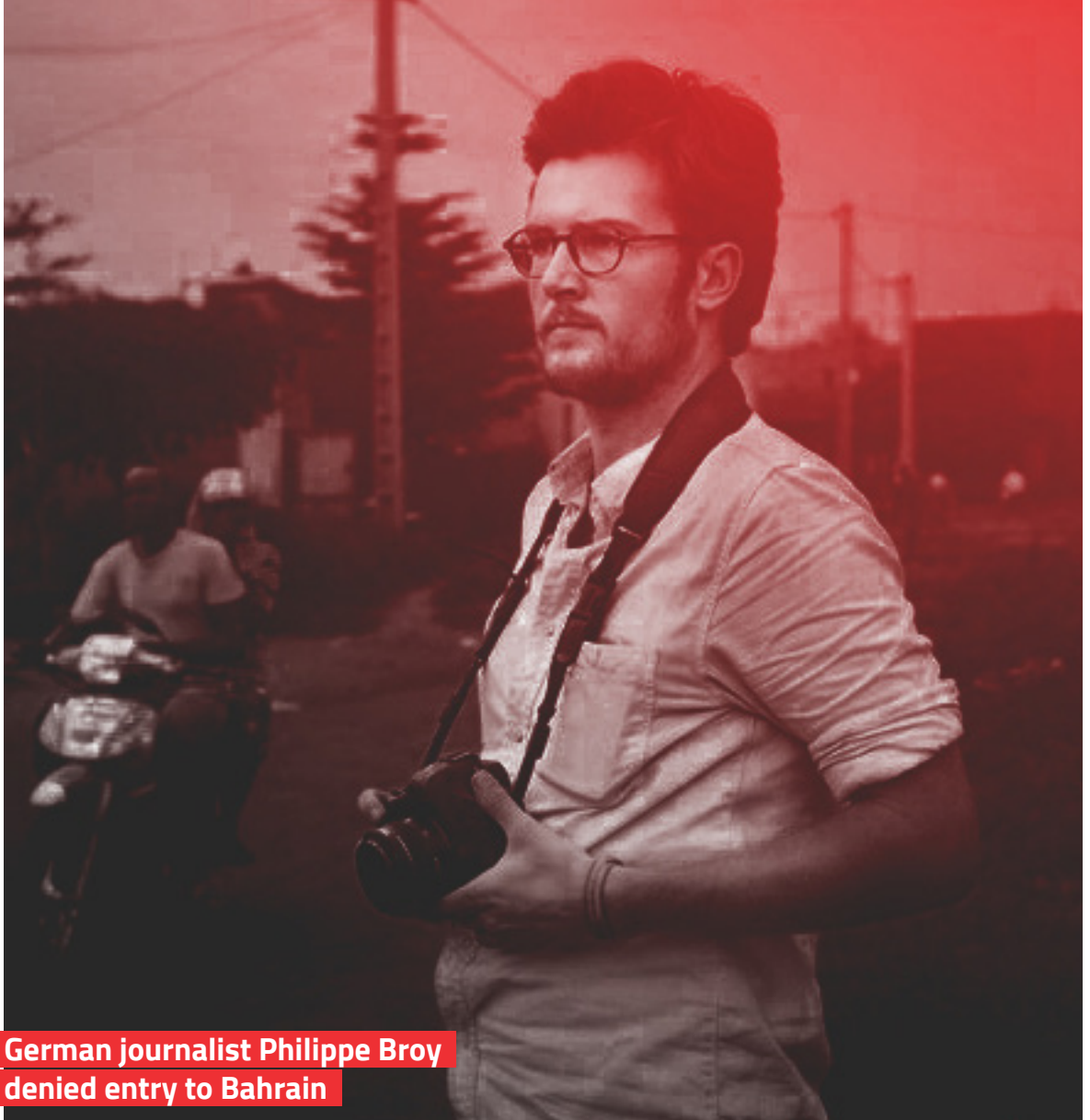
name of the governorate, until finalizing the legal and administrative procedures in this regard." The governor of Southern governorate mentioned at the opening ceremony of the magazine that the "governorate adopted this extraordinary idea (El Janoubia Times Magazine) in order to communicate with the citizens through a comprehensive weekly newspaper that enables the valued reader to be acquainted with the pivotal role that the governorate plays."



52 summons and arrests of participants in Ashura celebrations

During the period (10 to 20 September 2018) which coincided with Ashura, a special religious event celebrated by Bahrain's Shi'a citizens on an annual basis, security authorities summoned about 24 people including clergymen, singers, and heads of funeral ceremonies. They were accused of "inciting hatred against the regime," "insulting Yazid bin Mu'awiyah" and "glorifying terrorism" by delivering religious sermons during this occasion, which usually lasts for 10 days starting from Muharram 1st. The summoned included: Sheikh Ali Al Jafari, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Sheikh, Sheikh Mounir Matouq, Sheikh Yassin Al Jamri, Sheikh Hani Al Bina, the religious singer, El-Sayed Hussein Al-Maliki, the religious singer, Mehdi Sohwan, Sheikh Mehdi Al-Karkani, El-Sayed Sadiq Ali Gharifi, El-Sayed Mohieddin Al-Mishal (summoned 3 times during Ashura season), Sheikh Majeed al-Sahlawi, Sheikh Bashar al-'Ali, Sheikh Muhammad al-Riyash, the religious singer, Abdullah Sabah, El-Sayed Kamil al-Hashemi, Sheikh Jassim al-Dimistani, Sheikh Abdel-Azim Al-Mahtadi El-Bahrani, Sheikh Abdul Amir Mal Allah, the religious singer, El-Sayed Mahmoud Al-

Wadai, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Reish, the religious singer, El-Sayed Hussain Aqeel, head of the funeral procession of Martyrs of Mirza Al-Fardan, head of the funeral ceremony of Al-Bunni Abdulla Ahmad and the two administrators in the funeral procession of Imam Al-Rida in Al-Malikiyya village, Mohammed Bu Humaid and Abdullah Buraashid. The public prosecution sentenced the last two to 15 days in prison pending investigation on charges of incitement against the regime". The public prosecution ordered that Hussainate preacher, Sheikh Hany El-Benaa and Sheik Yassin El-Jamry be arrested and sentenced to 15 days in prison pending investigation on the same charges. The Public Prosecution ordered the arrest of 27 Bahraini nationals pending investigation for 15 days on charges of praying on the tenth night in Manama downtown. On 18 October 2018, the Public Prosecution decided to refer the head of the funeral procession of Ras Rumman, Shaker Al Majed and the religious singer, Sayed Mahmoud Al-Wadai to the Higher Criminal Court.



German journalist Philippe Broy denied entry to Bahrain

(15 September 2018), security authorities at the Bahrain International Airport prevented German freelance journalist Philippe Broy, a Middle East specialist, from entering the country. The authorities deported him from the airport on a plane to the Jordanian capital "Amman" where he resides without giving him any reason for this action.





The Ministry of the Interior vows actions against those who disseminate news about elections boycott

(6 October 2018), the Bahraini Ministry of Interior threatened that it would take the necessary measures against any news or messages calling against participation in the parliamentary elections and referring those involved to the Public Prosecution. The Ministry of Interior stated, "The security services take the necessary legal measures in the course of dealing with any observations or reports they receive from citizens who obstruct participation in voting and the electoral process." The Ministry added, "The

General Directorate for Combating Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security monitors any news or messages calling for non-participation in the elections by fraudulently using telephone numbers. Legal actions will be taken against those involved in these issues referring them to the Public Prosecution. It also takes the necessary measures to secure the movement of the voters in order to ensure that they practice their electoral rights with ease."

A fine of 50 dinars incurred by a businessman on the charge of disturbing the head of the Chamber of Commerce via e-mail

(9 October 2018), the Minor Criminal Court fined a businessman and a member of Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry 50 dinars for disturbing the CEO and members of the former board of directors of the chamber in a lawsuit of three years earlier. The businessman, who was not named, was charged with "sending several e-mails to the CEO and board members containing statements aimed at defaming and

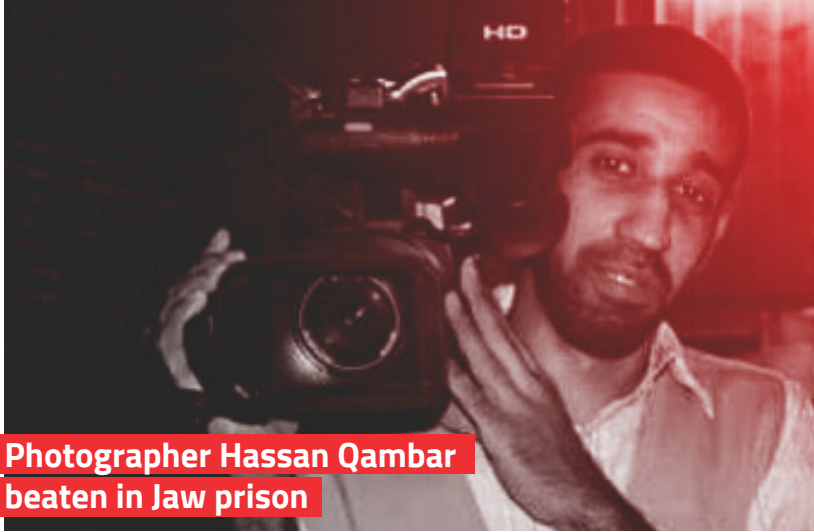
abusing them." During the investigations, he did not deny the incident but pointed out that he was "seeking to support the country and promote its progress maintaining the country's public funds." He clarified that "what he wrote was only quoting statements of some officials on the axes of spending the budget of the Chamber without tangible productivity." On 24 June 2014, The Public Prosecution accused him of deliberately causing inconvenience to the victim by misusing means of communication. The CEO stood before the court claiming the civil right and withdrawing the civil and criminal proceedings. The court fined the defendant 50 dinars and suspended the three-year sentence.



The religious chanter Mehdi Sihwan arrested for 15 days because of a poem

(14 October 2018), security authorities arrested Mehdi Sihwan, a religious singer, after he was summoned for interrogation. On 15th October the public prosecution ordered him to be detained for

15 days on charges of "inciting hatred against the regime because of a poem he read on the night of Muharram 12 during the funeral processions of South Sahla".



**Photographer Hassan Qambar
beaten in Jaw prison**

(15 October 2018), photographer Hassan Qambar complained about being beaten in the central prison of Jaw after being barred from practicing religious rites along with imposing sanctions by prison administration on those who violated orders represented in not performing such rites. Qambar, who worked as a photographer for a

number of media outlets including Arabic Russia (RT) and 'Ruptly Agency' was detained on June 12, 2018. The investigation focused on his work as a press photographer and was then sentenced to long terms of imprisonment reaching more than 100 years in various lawsuits of a political nature.



**The 'Interior' announces actions
against a 'Twitter' account**

The Bahraini Ministry of Interior (19 October 2018) announced taking legal actions against a Twitter account. The Ministry said that "this account published tweets involving insulting a statutory body." The Director General of the General Directorate of Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security said that "through monitoring and closely following what is published on social media, an account under the name of ABALKHALIFAH@ (run by Abdullah

bin Mohammed Al Khalifa) on "Twitter" was monitored. This account has been publishing tweets containing offenses under the Penal Code, including insulting a statutory body." He explained that "the investigation carried out confirmed that the person who manages this account lives abroad and does not hold the Bahraini citizenship. He is not a member of the royal family. The Director-General also noted that "the necessary legal actions are underway."

**Al-Watan editor-in-chief sentenced
to one month in prison
with suspension of verdict**

The Second higher Criminal Court (19 October 2018) sentenced the Editor-in-Chief of Al-Watan newspaper, Yousef Al-Bankhalil, to one month with verdict suspension and a 100-dinar bail. This ruling was replaced with penal labour in the lawsuit filed against him by former MP Anas Buhandi on charges of "slander and libel through publication" following publishing an article by the newspaper, attributed to the people of his constituency in the sixth district of the southern governorate. The first higher criminal court referred the lawsuit to the Supreme Judicial

Council, which in turn, referred the case to the second higher criminal court for consideration. Al-Bankhalil confirmed in the investigations of the Public Prosecution that the newspaper conveyed a letter sent by the people to the Minister of Justice, denying the charge against him for insulting and slandering the MP. Buhandi, who belongs to the prime minister's camp, lodged a complaint with the Public Prosecution against the editor-in-chief of Al Watan of the Royal Court, following publishing a news story entitled 'The people of the sixth district of Southern governorate thank the Minister of Justice for the removal of Anas Bouhandi from the Imamah of Ghattam Mosque' published in the newspaper on February 11, 2018.



التجمع القومي الديمقراطي
National Democratic Assembly

Ministry of Justice cancels a forum on the program of financial balance in the National Assembly Association

The National Assembly Association (28 October 2018) canceled a forum it had announced at its headquarters, after pressure from the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, which requested not allowing the participation of the opposition leader Ibrahim Sharif in the forum. The Association disseminated a text message to its members saying "The General Secretariat of the National

Assembly announces the cancellation of the forum on the program of financial balance that was scheduled for tonight due to the request of the Ministry of Justice in a telephone call to the Secretary General of the Assembly to ban the participation of Professor Ibrahim Sharif in the forum."



The cleric Sheikh Issa Al-Mu'min was detained

(29 October 2018) Security authorities arrested the imam of Al-Khayf Mosque in Deir district, Sheikh Issa Al-Mu'min after he was summoned for interrogation about a lecture he gave during Ashura processions. Al-Mu'min family said that he was interrogated about "an Ashura lecture in which he quoted Quranic verses that were not understood by the investigator and decided to detain him until he stands before the prosecution".



Najah Youssef's imprisonment for three years for criticizing Formula One was upheld

The Court of Appeal (29 October 2018) upheld the sentence against the tweeter Najah Youssef, who was sentenced to three years in prison for posting Facebook leaflets criticizing the Formula One race in 2017. It was stated in the sentence issued against her that she wrote: "No to Formula Racing on Occupied Bahraini Territory." She Claimed that hosting the Formula One "was no

more than a way through which the [ruling] Al Khalifa family could wash its criminal record and its brutal violations of human rights." She called for a march in support of "Freedom for Formula One prisoners" in order to draw attention to the protesters jailed for criticizing Grand Prix in Bahrain.

NOVEMBER



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2018**

رابطة الصحافة البحرينية
Bahrain Press Association





**The cleric Sayed Kamel Al-Hashemi
detained to execute a sentence of 3 years**

(1 November 2018), the Shiite cleric Sayed Kamel Al-Hashemi was arrested for enforcing a previous sentence issued against him in 2016 for 3 years on the charges of “insulting the King of Bahrain Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa in a Friday sermon at a mosque in Barbar and a funeral procession in Bani Jamra” and “incitement to hatred against a religious sect.” The second higher criminal appeal court had sentenced him earlier to two years in prison for the first charge and one year for the second charge.



**Shiite cleric
Sheikh Abdul Mohsen Mullah Attiya Al-Jamri
was arrested**

(5 November 2018), Security authorities detained Sheikh Abdul Mohsen Mulla Attiya Al-Jamri, a Shiite cleric, after being summoned for interrogation about the content of one of his religious lectures. In the following day, he was presented to the Public Prosecution who ordered his release.



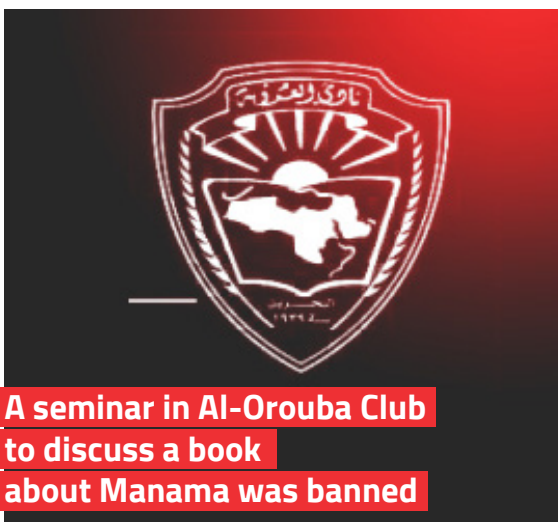
416 likes

محاكم النظام البحريني تصدر حكماً
بسجن النائب السابق علي العشيري شهراً وتغريمه
١٤٠٠ دولار على خلفية مقاطعته للانتخابات.

Former MP Ali Al-Ashiri arrested for writing a tweet about boycotting elections

The Public Prosecution (13 November 2018) arrested the former MP of the "Al-Wefaq" block, Ali Al-Ashiri, for writing a tweet in which he criticized participation in the elections. Chief Prosecutor Mehana Al-Shayji, head of the Commission on Electoral Crimes Investigation said, "The Public Prosecution has received a report from Department of Combating Electronic Crime concerning a Twitter account that advocates non-participation in upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections in a way that would compromise the freedom of voting and influence and confuse the integrity of the electoral process ... Accordingly, the Commission summoned the account owner and interrogated him and ordered his detention in a pending lawsuit, after being charged with violating the freedom of referendum and disrupting the electoral process in preparation for a referral to the competent court." The tweet for which Al-Ashiri was arrested said,

"Some are still asking; Will you vote in the elections? As if they do not live and do not follow the strained political situation in Bahrain. I am a Bahraini citizen deprived of my political and civil rights, so my family and I will boycott the parliamentary and municipal elections and "No" for the political isolation law." He was released on 27 November 2018 with the continuation of his trial.



A seminar in Al-Orouba Club to discuss a book about Manama was banned

(21 November 2018), the Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs banned a seminar at Al-Orouba Club. The seminar was to review a book published recently by the Bahraini academic Dr. Nader Kazim, titled "No one sleeps in Manama." The club announced that "he had received a letter from the Ministry of Youth requesting the seminar to be postponed, and despite the exhaustive all attempts to clarify the nature of the seminar, the ministry refused to respond to it.





TV director Qahtan Al-Qahtani arrested for a week

The Public prosecution (9 December 2018) arrested television director Qahtan Al-Qahtani for one week following an investigation against him by the Ministry of Information. Mohammed Salah, the head of Southern governorate Prosecution, said that the Public Prosecution had received a complaint from the Ministry of Information Affairs about posting an offensive message to the ministry through a social media application." He added that "The prosecution began taking legal actions immediately after the complaint and an arrest warrant against the accused was issued accordingly. He was interrogated after being arrested and confronted with the content of that message, which he confessed that he had circulated and sent to a number of artists and journalists. The prosecution ordered his detention for seven days on a pending investigation."

Al-Qahtani was charged with "insulting, slandering, insulting a statutory body and misusing telecommunication devices". On 10th December, he was released while the lawsuit is still under consideration.



Imprisonment of editor-in-chief of "Al-Watan" amended to 1,000 dinars fine

(25 December 2018), the higher Criminal Court of Appeal amended the prison sentence to community service and only fining the Al-Watan newspaper's editor-in-chief Yousef Al-Bankhalil 1000 dinars in the lawsuit brought against him by former MP Anas Buhandi. Buhandi accused Al-Bankhalil of libel and slander in public, after the latter published in the newspaper a story indicating that the People of the sixth district of Southern governorate thank the Minister of Justice for the removal of Anas Bouhandi from the Imamah of a mosque. The first instance court ruled that the penalty of deprivation of freedom should be suspended and replaced, in accordance with Law No. (18) of 2017 on sanctions and alternative measures, with penal labour.