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SUMMARY PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (C) OF
THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1 *

Bahrain

The present report is a summary of 12 stakeholders' submissions¹ to the universal periodic review. It follows the structure of the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council. It does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nor any judgement or determination in relation to specific claims. The information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes and, to the extent possible, the original texts have not been altered. Lack of information or focus on specific issues may be due to the absence of submissions by stakeholders regarding these particular issues. The full texts of all submissions received are available on the OHCHR website. The periodicity of the review for the first cycle being four years, the information reflected in this report mainly relates to events that occurred after 1 January 2004.

*The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

A. Institutional and human rights structure

1. On 11 November 2007, the Cabinet announced the creation of a Human Rights Commission in Bahrain but no appointments have been announced, as reported by the International Federation for Human Rights, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the Bahrain Human Rights Society (FIDH/BCHR/BHRS) in a joint submission. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS requested Bahrain to form a National Council for Human Rights based on the Paris Principles in consultation with civil society organizations pursuant to its pledge as a candidate to the HRC in 2006 and in application of the recommendations issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/BHR/CO/7) and the Committee against Torture (CAT/C/CR/34/BHR) in 2005.² This is echoed by the National Committee for Martyrs and Victims of Torture (NCMVT).³

II. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations

1. Equality and non-discrimination

2. Bahrain has no codified personal status laws governing marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance, as reported by Human Rights Watch (HRW). Family court judges, who are generally conservative religious scholars with limited formal legal training, render judgments according to their own reading of Islamic jurisprudence. They have consistently favored men in their rulings and are unapologetically adverse to women's equality.⁴ Such concerns were echoed by the Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR) and FIDH/BCHR/BHRS.⁵ In this regard, HRW recommended that Bahrain codify family laws and ensure that those laws do not discriminate on the basis of gender, that they afford women equality before the law, and are consistent with international human rights standards.⁶

3. ACHR reported that article 5(b) of the 2002 Constitution provides that in pursuit of seeking equality with men in political, social, cultural and economic spheres, women cannot break the provisions of Islamic Sharia laws.⁷ According to ACHR, gender discrimination in public life and employment is distinctively visible. Women receive significantly lower remuneration than their male counterparts and the average wage preference of men over women was 63 Bahraini Dinar (BD) in Government and 147 BD in the private sector. ACHR added that migrant workers, especially women domestic workers, are subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude when faced with exorbitant recruitment and transportation fees, withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, non-payment of wages, and physical or sexual abuse.⁸

4. The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) noted that according to the Bahraini citizenship law of 1963, children of a Bahraini mother are deprived of Bahraini citizenship if their father is of a different nationality, violating article 9 CEDAW that "states parties shall grant women equal rights with men with respect to the nationality of their children."⁹ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS made a similar observation.¹⁰

5. Despite the persistent demands by civil society organizations and some MPs to legislate against all types of discrimination, Parliament has also failed in such attempts, according to FIDH/BCHR/BHRS.¹¹ The latter also noted that the Government continues to follow a de

facto policy of discrimination on sectarian and political grounds and that there is discrimination against Shia'a in the Government administration. Shia'a represent 18% of high ranking jobs in all Ministries, though they make up two-thirds of the population.¹² Interfaith noted that Shi'a Bahrainis, traditionally not allowed in the Defence and Security Ministries are now further disadvantaged in virtually all other ministries and functions of the state.¹³ ACHR added that strategic and important ministries in the Government continue to be held by Sunni royal family members.¹⁴ These issues were echoed by HAQ: Movement of Liberties and Democracy- Bahrain (HAQ).¹⁵ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS requested that the Government implement the recommendations issued by CERD in 2005 in this respect.¹⁶

6. ACHR noted that in the private sector, Shi'a tend to be employed in lower paid, less skilled jobs. Educational, social, and municipal services in most Shi'a neighborhoods are reported to be inferior to those found in Sunni communities. ACHR also noted that proposals to include the Ja'afari traditions of Shi'a Islam in school curricula continue to be rejected by the Bahraini Ministry of Education. ACHR added that Shi'a are presented in a negative light in the Islamic curriculum of Bahrain. They are presented as non-believers. According to ACHR, Shi'a also face discrimination in matters of land allocation, provision of public funding, building permits and/or authorizations for refurbishment in places of worship and mosques.¹⁷ HAQ and Interfaith raised these concerns as well.¹⁸ HAQ also underlined that additional discriminatory measures include harsh constraints on Shi'a marriages and reproduction, finding employment and settling, and encouraging Shi'a migration for employment purposes outside Bahrain (reference is made to Bahraini recruitment offices in Qatar and UAE).¹⁹

2. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

7. Amnesty International (AI) expressed concerns about the resumption of the use of the death penalty after more than ten years of de facto abolition, noting that Bahrain had not carried out any executions between 1996 and December 2006. According to AI and HRW, in November 2006 the King ratified the death sentences of three foreign nationals, a foreign national found guilty of murder and two other foreign nationals. All three were executed by firing squad in December 2006. At least two death sentences were passed during 2007.²⁰

8. Concerns were also expressed by HRW regarding the enactment of new legislation encouraging the use of the death penalty in Bahrain. The 2006 counter-terrorism law as well as a new Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law, enacted in August 2007, prescribe the death penalty for certain offenses. The counter-terrorism law allows the death penalty for anyone convicted of committing or planning terrorist acts.²¹

9. By way of recommendations, HRW highlighted that Bahrain should resume its de facto moratorium on executions and restrict any application of capital punishment to the most serious crimes, and to consider removing capital punishment from all legislation where it is currently prescribed.²² AI advocated that the Government should repeal all provisions allowing for the death penalty and immediately declare a moratorium on all executions.²³

10. AI continued to express concerns in relation to Bahraini legislation which does not explicitly prohibit the use of torture and ill-treatment by the police, and which does not give a clear and comprehensive definition of torture. Grave concerns have been expressed at Decree 56/2002 which contains a blanket amnesty for alleged perpetrators of torture. HRW highlighted that Bahrain should clarify publicly that Decree 56/2002 does not apply to grave crimes such as torture.²⁴ Similarly, AI recommended that the government amend legislation to

explicitly prohibit the use of torture and ill-treatment, and amend Decree 56/2002 to ensure it does not provide a blanket amnesty for alleged perpetrators of torture.²⁵ Additionally, AI raised concerns about the lack of specific legislation making redress available to victims of torture and recommended the enactment of legislation in this regard.²⁶

11. According to ACHR, security forces continue to practice torture as a part of law enforcement. Despite classifying torture as a penal offence, instances of torture have been noted. Security forces also indulge in unrestrained and indiscriminate use of force than is usually necessary to maintain law and order. ACHR added that victims of police beating reported that the Riot Fighting Forces (RFF) shot them with rubber bullets from a distance of only 3 meters although they could have been easily arrested.²⁷ The NCMVT stressed the need to follow up on all recommendations adopted by United Nations Committee Against Torture in 2005.²⁸

12. ACHR noted that arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions are in violation of the constitutional guarantees for personal freedom [Article 19 (a)] and the right not to be arrested arbitrarily [Article (b)]. This would also apply to minor students according to ACHR. Victims were also held incommunicado.²⁹ HRW highlighted that Bahrain should endorse the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and counterterrorism, proposing amendments to the 2006 counterterrorism law in order to, inter alia, bring the period allowed for detention without charge or judicial review into line with international standards.³⁰

13. According to FL, human rights defenders continue to face high levels of insecurity and are victims of various forms of repression, such as arbitrary arrest, judicial proceedings based on false or unfounded charges of ‘encouraging hatred of the state and distributing falsehoods and rumours, threats, physical assaults, ill-treatment, torture and numerous other acts of harassment by the authorities and government security forces.’³¹ ACHR and FIDH/BCHR/BHRS echoed similar concerns.³² According to FL, many human rights defenders are constantly under surveillance by the authorities.³³ AI added that human rights defenders have also been charged in the past with crimes such as “insulting the judiciary”, “defamation and slander of a family court judge”, and other charges which are believed to be politically motivated.³⁴

14. HRW, NCMVT and the AHRC noted some of the prominent human rights defenders who have been victimized.³⁵ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS also noted cases of other activists being harassed by the police to the extent of being physically attacked during protests or while in custody. Others were prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment based on offences against the state security by the public prosecutor for criticising and publicising a public scandal known as the BandarGate report; one was prosecuted and sentenced to one year imprisonment for reprinting critical essays on the Government during the elections in November 2006.³⁶ FL noted others who have faced acts of harassment and intimidation by the authorities and government security forces.³⁷

15. FL urged the authorities to prioritize the protection of human rights defenders in Bahrain and to: conduct an independent inquiry into the source of threats, ill treatment, torture, and all forms of intimidation and harassment directed towards all those human rights defenders mentioned in its report; and ensure that all human rights defenders in Bahrain are free to carry out their human rights activities free from persecution. FL also recommended that Bahrain invite the United Nations Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders to visit the country.³⁸

16. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIECP) noted that corporal punishment is prohibited in schools under the Code of School Discipline, promulgated by the Ministry of Education in Ordinance No. 549/168-1/1992. However, corporal punishment is lawful in the home.³⁹ In this regard, the GIECP recommended that Bahrain introduce legislation as a matter of urgency to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including in the home.⁴⁰

17. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS reported that sexual harassment and domestic abuse against women is commonplace, with very little institutional support for victims and that spousal rape is not considered a crime according to Bahraini law.⁴¹

3. Administration of justice and the rule of law

18. According to NCMVT, the Constitution provides for a nominally independent judiciary; however, they reported that the judiciary is not independent; courts are subject to Government pressure regarding verdicts, sentencing, and appeals, and there have been allegations of corruption in the judicial system.⁴² ACHR added that under Article 33 of the 2002 constitution, the King is the head of the Higher Judicial Council, the body responsible for nomination of judges and which also supervises the work of the courts and public prosecutors. ACHR concluded that, in practice, the King can hand pick the judges.⁴³

19. During the year, NCMVT reported, there were no known instances of officials being punished for human rights abuses committed.⁴⁴ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS added that the judiciary (both courts and public prosecution) has refused to examine cases lodged by victims of State abuses, thereby highlighting the need for securing the independence of the judiciary towards the ruling establishment.⁴⁵ According to HRW, decree 56/2002 confers immunity from investigation or prosecution of individuals, including government officials, for offences committed prior to 2001 and the Government has cited this decree on several occasions as the basis for refusing to undertake criminal investigations against former officials who were the subject of complaints by citizens, alleging that those officials had subjected them to torture. HRW indicated that such use of Decree 56/2002 is inconsistent with Bahrain's obligations as a State Party to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.⁴⁶ NCMVT also raised this issue.⁴⁷

20. As NCMVT noted, in 2006, it, in cooperation with the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, other NGOs, and members of the national Assembly formed 'The Coalition for Truth, Equity and Reconciliation'.⁴⁸ However, despite the urgent need to form a national committee for truth and reconciliation as demanded by civil society organizations, FIDH/BCHR/BHRS reported that the Government claims that there is no need for such a committee because they have addressed the issue of the victims of the past.⁴⁹

21. According to NCMVT, in late 2005, while the Government permitted limited visits to prisons, it did not allow visits to short-term detention facilities by independent human rights observers.⁵⁰ NCMVT reported that in late December 2005 the Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS) made two visits to Jaw prison, which houses 450 to 500 inmates. The authorities did not respond to the organization's findings and recommendations. BHRS was also scheduled to visit the country's women's prison in Isa Town on February 25, but Interior Ministry officials postponed the visit indefinitely for administrative reasons and it has not been rescheduled. On 10 August, the quasi-governmental Supreme Council for Women (SCW) conducted a visit of the country's women's prison in Isa Town.⁵¹ Following the visit, NCMVT noted, General Secretary Lulwa Al Awadhi called publicly for the Supreme Judicial Council

to look into sentences that were overly severe for the crimes committed. There was no publicly released SCW report on the visit. Juveniles are housed separately from adults until the age of 15. In 2004 the Ministry of Social Development announced plans to open a separate center for the care of juvenile delinquents, but had not done so by year's end. NCMVT added that although International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) officials visited the country during the year, they did not request prison visits; Bahrain Red Crescent Society officials confirmed that ICRC officials had not visited prisons for several years, since the release of all political prisoners in 2000.⁵²

22. ACHR stated that Bahrain requires technical cooperation for the reform of the administration of justice sector.⁵³

4. Right to privacy

23. The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), in a joint submission with others, noted that Bahrain maintains criminal sanctions against sexual activity between consenting adults. Bahrain's Penal Code of 1976, Legislative Decree No. 15, provides: "Buggery is an illegal act punishable by 10 years of imprisonment maximum."⁵⁴

5. Freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and right to participate in public and political life

24. ACHR and FL reported that the 2002 Constitution of Bahrain provides for freedom of speech and of the press, but the Government limited the exercise of these rights.⁵⁵ According to HRW and FL, the existing Press Law (47/2002) contains measures that unduly restrict press freedoms, such as prohibitions on insulting the King and on reports that "threaten national unity."⁵⁶ HRW specified that the country now has two independent daily newspapers, but other dailies as well as Bahrain's radio and TV stations are state-run.⁵⁷ According to HRW, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), and FL, journalists exercise a considerable degree of self-censorship, particularly on issues such as corruption implicating the ruling family.⁵⁸ HRW noted that the Shura Council passed draft legislation in May 2007 that removed criminal penalties for journalistic offenses, but as of November 2007 the Government had not forwarded the draft for consideration by the elected National Assembly. The authorities continue to use Law 47/2002 to restrict coverage of controversial matters, particularly issues such as official corruption.⁵⁹ RSF called on the lower house of Parliament to pass the press law amendments proposed by the Upper House. These could have repercussions throughout the region.⁶⁰ HRW highlighted that Bahrain should amend the Penal Code to remove all criminal penalties for alleged libel offences.⁶¹

25. In mid-November 2006, authorities arrested two individuals for attempting to distribute leaflets calling on Bahrainis to boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections, according to HRW. On 30 January 2007 a court sentenced them to respective prison terms of six months and one year for possession and dissemination of materials that could "damage the public interest." The Government released them several weeks later, apparently following a pardon from the king.⁶² HRW added that in 2007 the Government intensified its harassment of a women's rights activist following an April letter she addressed to Sheikh Hamad calling for the dissolution of the Supreme Council for Women (chaired by the King's wife) for failing to do more to advance the status of women in the Kingdom.⁶³

26. The Government tried to step up censorship of online publications in 2005 by requiring registration of Bahraini sites with the Information Ministry, but this has not yet been enforced,

according to RSF.⁶⁴ According to FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, the State has blocked several websites unfavourable to the Government such as Aldemokrati.com, Aloysif Bolger, Haq movement, Bahrain On Line and Bahrain Human Rights Center.⁶⁵ HRW recommended that the Government halt the prosecution of journalists and other writers solely for expressing views critical of Government policies, and cease blocking Internet sites.⁶⁶

27. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS reported that books and publications require pre-licensing from the Directorate of Printing and Publication, Ministry of Information and that several Bahraini authors have been denied the right to publish their books.⁶⁷

28. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS highlighted that there are many restrictions on access to information of many aspects of state affairs and top-ranking officials. There is no law for the right and access to information. Some members of the previous Parliament initiated such a law, but the Government was against its introduction. Some current Members of Parliament asked the Government to provide them with relevant information on lands granted by the King to some top officials, but they were denied such information by the Ministry of Justice. Information on mass naturalization was also denied.⁶⁸

29. According to AI, in October 2006, the High Criminal Court ordered a ban on the publishing of any information relating to a report issued the previous month by Salah al-Bandar, a UK national and adviser to the Bahraini government. The report alleged that officials had planned to manipulate the outcome of the November 2006 parliamentary elections at the expense of the majority Shi'a Muslim population. Salah al-Bandar was deported to the UK the same month and later charged in Bahrain with 'illegally seizing government documents and stealing two cheques'. He denied the charges and is expected to be tried in absentia.⁶⁹

30. AI recommended that any restrictive legislation on freedom of expression and association must be repealed and brought into line with international standards.⁷⁰

31. AI reported that in 2005 Parliament approved a new law to regulate political associations and explained that this requires associations to be approved by the Minister of Justice, who can also request the Supreme Court to issue a ruling to have the association dissolved and to liquidate its finances. AI added that human rights and other groups criticized the new law as overly restrictive and called on the King to cancel it.⁷¹

32. FL noted that new counter-terrorism legislation, has contributed to further infringements on freedom of association. The Bill on 'Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts', which was signed into law by the King of Bahrain on 14 August 2006 has been criticized by Bahraini civil society and international organisations, who are concerned that it can be used to prevent civil society to associate and human rights defenders to operate free of all restrictions. Article 1 describes as terrorist any act that threatens national unity and, according to FL, the vagueness of this provision could lead to criminalisation of human rights defenders' activities.⁷²

33. The Government continued to deny legal status to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, which it ordered dissolved in 2004 after its President publicly criticized the Prime Minister, HRW reported.⁷³ Several other groups attempted in 2005 to register with the Ministry of Social Development, as required by law, but as of November 2007 had received no response to their application. In 2007, the Ministry of Social Development drafted new legislation governing the regulation of civil society organizations, but at the time of the

writing of the contribution by HRW, the Ministry had not submitted the draft to the Shura Council or the Chamber of Deputies, and refused to share the draft with affected organizations.⁷⁴ According to FL, in May 2007, a number of non-registered human rights organisations received official letters from the Ministry of Social Development asking that they cease their activities or face legal persecution.⁷⁵ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS regretted that the BCHR has remained officially closed since November 2004, despite express recommendations by CERD and CAT.⁷⁶

34. Bahraini law prohibits unauthorised public gatherings of more than five persons and public gatherings need to be notified to the Ministry of Interior twenty four hours in advance, as noted by FL. Amendments to Decree no. 18 of 1973 on Public Meetings, Processions and Gatherings that were signed into law by the King on 20 July 2006 (Law 32/2006), further increased the number of legislative constraints.⁷⁷ For example, AI explained, the definition of “public gathering” is very broad and even meetings held in private and involving a small number of people are subject to prior official notification. Article 10(b) bans demonstrations for election purposes.⁷⁸ Demonstrations organized in public places close to ‘sensitive’ places are strictly prohibited; any public meeting or demonstration has to be notified to the head of Public Security at least three days in advance; organizers and participants of prohibited demonstrations face prison sentences of up to six months and/or a minimum fine of 100 BD (approximately 200 Euros).⁷⁹ HRW added that the law stipulates that meeting organizers are responsible for “forbidding any speech or discussion infringing on public order or morals,” but leaves “public order or morals” undefined.⁸⁰ HRW highlighted that Bahrain should amend Law 32/2006 to bring its provisions into compliance with Article 21 of the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights.⁸¹

35. HRW reported that during 2006 and 2007, Bahraini authorities, citing Law 32/2006, banned meetings and on several occasions forcibly prevented or dispersed unauthorized gatherings.⁸² NCMVT reported that in many documented cases during the last four years, citizens arrested in relation to unauthorized gatherings or protests had complained of being severely assaulted during arrest, being placed in isolation for periods from three to fifteen days, being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment during interrogation and being kept in detention for a long period during interrogation or trial. In most cases the arrestees were accused by the police of using violence but eventually found guilty of participating in unregistered organizations. In all cases, following internal and external campaigns, the detainees were released without a trial or through royal amnesty. Detainee’s access to attorneys is often restricted in the early stages of detention; attorneys must seek a court order to confer with clients.⁸³ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS added that the Ministry has never investigated such abuses or penalized the offenders and that it protects officials who abuse rights holders.⁸⁴

36. HRW noted that on September 15, 2006 police prevented an NGO from holding a public seminar on the group’s petition calling for a new constitution, on the basis that the group had not sought permission from the Ministry of the Interior. On September 22, when the group tried a second time to hold the meeting, police used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the gathering, reportedly wounding several people. In several instances the police used what appeared to be excessive force and inflicted severe beatings on persons they seized, sometimes amounting to torture.⁸⁵ On May 20, 2007 police reportedly fired rubber bullets at a gathering at which opposition political figures, including members of Parliament, were speaking, injuring the leader of the opposition National Democratic Action Society. The next evening, in an incident that HRW investigated, riot police confronted a street demonstration protesting the May 20 incident and separately seized two individuals. The officers beat both

of them severely, inflicting serious injuries on both, and authorities held one of them for more than a week in undisclosed locations while refusing to acknowledge to his family that he was in the State custody.⁸⁶ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS added that protests against the confiscation of the Al Malkia Village sea shores were quelled by anti-riot police with many casualties.⁸⁷

37. NCMVT stressed the urgent need for the Bahrain Government to halt restrictions on and harassment against, and to maintain cooperation with non-governmental organizations.⁸⁸ ACHR stated that Bahrain requires technical cooperation for strengthening of civil society organizations.⁸⁹ AI recommended that effective measures be taken to ensure that human rights defenders are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, including carrying out their peaceful activities, and be protected from harassment by law enforcement authorities.⁹⁰

38. For the first time since 1975, Bahrainis were allowed to exercise some of their rights in political life, in municipal and parliamentary elections, in May and October 2002, respectively, as reported by HAQ. It noted, however, that elections, though in appearance a democratic process, have been the subject of different State-coordinated and guided measures.⁹¹

39. According to IHRC, election constituencies are State-controlled and are drawn on sectarian as well as tribal bases to ensure the ruling family's primacy, maximize state allegiance and create an environment of sectarian tension. The composition of some districts has resulted in largest district in the northern area, mainly Shiite, containing over 12,000 citizens, while the smallest have not more than 500 voters in the southern Sunni area.⁹²

40. Furthermore, IHRC was concerned that in addition to Bahrain's 700,000 citizens, of which those aged 20 or over can vote, resident citizens of other Gulf states are also allowed to vote, including several thousand foreign Sunni Muslims serving in the Bahraini military and security services.⁹³ ACHR added that the Government is reportedly pursuing policies to alter the island's demographic balance through granting citizenship to non-Bahrainis - mainly Sunni Arabs from around the region - to mitigate Shiite dominance;⁹⁴ and through manipulating and controlling the output of any suffrage process, ensuring a winning majority by the ruling Authorities, thereby breaching the basic rights of Bahrainis to freely participate in public affairs, as stated by HAQ.⁹⁵

41. IHRC recommended that, given the discrepancy allegations surrounding the 2006 elections of unfairness and fraud, international monitoring bodies be present at the next elections in Bahrain.⁹⁶ HAQ called on the Bahraini authorities to respect citizens' political rights and consider their desire to manage their own life and wealth through a democratic constitution of their product; and calls upon the authorities to remove gerrymandering and politically motivated voting constituencies and enforcing equal representation, by one-man-one-vote concept. On this issue, HAQ urged the UN to urge the authorities to refrain from using the newly naturalized, including those whose residence in the neighbouring countries like Saudi Arabia, to manipulate and influence the outcome of any political process.⁹⁷ HAQ also urged the UN to intervene for the protection of Bahraini citizens, in particular the Shi'a, from plans of elimination and dilution of identity and loss of culture and historical heritage. This would be initiated by setting up an international tribunal commission on the scheme adopted by the Authorities to change population demography to achieve political agenda.⁹⁸

6. Right to an adequate standard of living

42. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS noted that wide sectors of the population are suffering from poverty. This is highlighted by a higher number of families seeking aid from the Ministry of Social Development and Charity Funds (estimated 10,000 families in a population of around 450,000). Though the national economy is generating tens of thousands of jobs each year, unemployment is estimated at around 15% of the population due to the fact that only 11% of newly generated jobs go to Bahraini citizens.⁹⁹ According to FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, this is because of severe exploitation and low wages of domestic and foreign workers in the private sector. Independent research indicated that a minimum income of BD350 per month for a family of 5 with home ownership is a minimum; tens of thousands of Bahrainis earn less than BD 150per month. The observed minimum wage in the Government sector is BD 200, whereas there is no minimum wage in the private sector.¹⁰⁰

43. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS added that mass naturalization motivated by securing a support base for the regime, has adversely reflected itself on the well being of the citizens relevant to state-supported job opportunities, housing, education, medication, etc.¹⁰¹

44. According to HAQ, Bahrain is on the verge of a housing crisis because of corruption and unjust distribution of wealth and land,¹⁰² An official from the Ministry of Housing stated this year that 90% of lands are privately owned.¹⁰³ HAQ recommends that the UN enforce the provision of an adequate standard of living by retrieving public lands (islands) from private hands, to enable fair distribution of wealth among citizens and respect their right to own property.¹⁰⁴

45. FIDH/BCHR/BHRS added that there is an estimated waiting list of 55,000 applications for Government-supported services (housing units, housing loans) with increasing non-delivery of such service which has created a housing crisis within the society.¹⁰⁵

46. State policy has been to encourage foreign investment, with permissive conditions on environmental criteria, in a country of only 700 sq.kms, FIDH/BCHR/BHRS reported. Highly polluting industries have caused a sharp increase in cancer and pollution-related diseases among the population, which is estimated as the highest in the Gulf region.¹⁰⁶

III. ACHIEVEMENTS, BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

47. [n/a]

IV. KEY NATIONAL PRIORITIES, INITIATIVES AND COMMITMENTS

48. [n/a]

V. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

49. [n/a]

Notes

¹ The following stakeholders have made a submission (all original submissions are available in full text on: www.ohchr.org):

Civil Society:

AI:	Amnesty International*
ACHR:	Asian Centre for Human Rights*
FL:	Frontline Defenders of Human Rights Defenders*
GIECP:	Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children
HAQ:	HAQ: Movement of Liberties and Democracy – Bahrain
HRW:	Human Rights Watch*
ILGA:	International Lesbian and Gay Association- Europe*, Helem, International Gay and Lesbian Rights Commission, ARC International, joint submission.
Interfaith:	Interfaith International*
FIDH/BCHR/BHRS:	International Federation for Human Rights* - Bahrain Centre for Human Rights – Bahrain Human Rights Society, joint submission
IHRC:	Islamic Human Rights Commission
NCMVT:	National Committee for Martyrs and Victims of Torture
RSF:	Reports without Borders*

NOTE: * NGOs with ECOSOC status.

² FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.1

³ NCMVT, p.5.

⁴ HRW, p. 4-5

⁵ ACHR, p.3; FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.4-5.

⁶ HRW, p.5-6.

⁷ ACHR, p.2

⁸ ACHR, p.2

⁹ IHRC, p.1;

¹⁰ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5.

¹¹ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.4.

¹² FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5

¹³ Interfaith, p. 1

¹⁴ ACHR, p.5

¹⁵; HAQ, p.7

¹⁶ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p. 4.

¹⁷ ACHR, p.5

¹⁸ HAQ, p.5-6; Interfaith, p.1-2

¹⁹ HAQ, p.4-6.

- ²⁰ AI, p.1; see also HRW, p.1.
- ²¹ HRW, p.1; AI, p.1.
- ²² HRW, p.5.
- ²³ AI, p.3.
- ²⁴ HRW, p.5-6.
- ²⁵ AI, p. 3.
- ²⁶ AI, p.1, 3.
- ²⁷ ACHR, p.1-2.
- ²⁸ NCMVT, p.5.
- ²⁹ ACHR, p.1.
- ³⁰ HRW, p.5.
- ³¹ FL, p. 1.
- ³² ACHR, p.3, FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ³³ FL p.1.
- ³⁴ AI, p.2.
- ³⁵ HRW, p.3; NCMVT, p.4; ACHR, p.3.
- ³⁶ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p. 3.
- ³⁷ See FL, p.1-4.
- ³⁸ FL, p. 5.
- ³⁹ GIECP, p.2.
- ⁴⁰ GIECP, p.1.
- ⁴¹ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5.
- ⁴² NCMVT, p.2-3.
- ⁴³ ACHR, p.3.
- ⁴⁴ NCMVT, p.4.
- ⁴⁵ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.3.
- ⁴⁶ HRW, p.5
- ⁴⁷ NCMVT, p.4.
- ⁴⁸ NCMVT, p.5.
- ⁴⁹ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p. 3.
- ⁵⁰ NCMVT, p. 3.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² NCMVT, p.3.
- ⁵³ ACHR, p.5.
- ⁵⁴ ILGA, p.1.
- ⁵⁵ ACHR, p.3-4; FL, p.5.
- ⁵⁶ HRW, p. 2; FL, p..5.
- ⁵⁷ HRW, p. 2.
- ⁵⁸ HRW, p.2, see also RSF, p.1; FL, p.5; FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ⁵⁹ HRW, p.2; see also RSF, p.1.

- ⁶⁰ RSF, p.2.
- ⁶¹ HRW, p. 5-6
- ⁶² HRW, p.2.
- ⁶³ HRW, p.3.
- ⁶⁴ RSF, p.1.
- ⁶⁵ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ⁶⁶ HRW, p.5-6.
- ⁶⁷ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2; see also Interfaith, p.2.
- ⁶⁸ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ⁶⁹ AI, p.2; see also FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ⁷⁰ AI, p.3.
- ⁷¹ AI, p.2.
- ⁷² FL, p.4-5.
- ⁷³ HRW, p. 4.
- ⁷⁴ HRW, p.4.
- ⁷⁵ FL, p.4-5.
- ⁷⁶ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.3.
- ⁷⁷ FL, p. 4; FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.1-2.
- ⁷⁸ AI, p.2.
- ⁷⁹ FL, p.4.
- ⁸⁰ HRW, p.3; see also FL, p.4.
- ⁸¹ HRW, p.5-6.
- ⁸² HRW, p.3.
- ⁸³ NCMVT, p.3.
- ⁸⁴ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ⁸⁵ HRW, p. 3.
- ⁸⁶ HRW, p.4; see also FL, p.4.
- ⁸⁷ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.2.
- ⁸⁸ NCMVT, p.5.
- ⁸⁹ ACHR, p.5.
- ⁹⁰ AI, p.3.
- ⁹¹ HAQ, p.1-2.
- ⁹² IHRC, p.1.
- ⁹³ IHRC, p.1.
- ⁹⁴ ACHR, p.5 ; see also HAQ, p.4-7
- ⁹⁵ HAQ, p.6.
- ⁹⁶ IHRC, p.1.
- ⁹⁷ HAQ, p.6.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5.

¹⁰⁰ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5.

¹⁰¹ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5.

¹⁰² HAQ, p.3-4. See also FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p. 5.

¹⁰³ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ HAQ, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5. For additional information see HAQ, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ FIDH/BCHR/BHRS, p.5.