Bahrain | UN Committee against Torture must call out the absence of accountability for grave human rights violations

Letter · Bahrain · 16 November 2025

On 18-19 November 2025, the UN Committee against Torture will review the Government of Bahrain (GoB)'s compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which it ratified in 1998. The Committee will examine the Government's fourth periodic report at its 83rd session and will later issue recommendations addressed to the GoB. The GoB is responsible for the implementation of these recommendations.

In their October 2025 joint alternative report, 11 organisations, namely: **(1)** Bahrain Center for Human Rights; **(2)** Bahrain Forum for Human Rights; **(3)** CIVICUS; **(4)** Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights; **(5)** HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement; **(6)** MENA Rights Group; **(7)** Rights Realization Centre; **(8)** SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR); **(9)** The Advocates for Human Rights; **(10)** World Coalition against the Death Penalty and **(11)** World Organisation Against Torture, set out an assessment about the Bahraini authorities' continued violation of the Convention Against Torture.

The report notably documents recent cases of excessive use of force during peaceful protests, dire prison conditions leading to death, and the use of torture-tainted confessions as evidence in court for sentencing human rights defenders. In fact, international civil society organisations have documented multiple instances where Bahraini courts have admitted such evidence, even in death penalty cases. The report also examines the continued and prolonged use of arbitrary detention, in cases of prominent political prisoners and prisoners of conscience, such as Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Hassan Mushaima, and Dr Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, who remain behind bars.

The organisations described how the Government of Bahrain has restricted civil society and curtailed citizens' participation in public life – a meaningful and effective role in the political process – and how this effective silencing of dissent has contributed to a climate of fear and impunity. In such a context, neither individuals nor organisations dare to hold state agencies or officials accountable for torture or ill treatment, since doing so often leads to imprisonment.

> **"Civic space and accountability are enmeshed with each other,"**
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> **said Jawad Fairooz,** on behalf of the 11-organisation coalition, adding that "This shows the indivisible and intersectional nature of human rights: respect for civic freedoms is inseparable from respect for human dignity and the right to be free from torture."

The 11 organisations supported these findings with detailed testimony from former parliamentarian Jawad Fairooz, now Director of SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights, and from Ugandan former migrant worker Martin Buregyaya.

The organisations concluded that Bahrain's national human rights institutions were designed to shield perpetrators rather than deliver accountability. Our organisations urge the Committee against Torture to examine the practices of these oversight bodies closely, including their handling of complaints, prison inspections, and judicial processes, in order to determine why they persistently fail to provide redress. As activist Brian Dooley noted:

> *"[A]ccountability is rare, but it does happen [...] The message here isn't that justice will always be done, that those tortured or killed will inevitably be vindicated in Bahrain and elsewhere, or that those responsible will be found guilty in court. But it is that some perpetrators might be eventually held to account, even if it takes half a century. Perpetrators, no matter who they are, should be constantly reminded that they are not immune from justice. Bahrain's killers and torturers should not sleep easily. The law could, one day, catch up with them.*

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