

# WORKING HAND-IN-HAND

to secure the rights of the individual



What is the simplest, yet symbolically and emotionally accurate representation of an individual? The human hand.

Our theme represents a union between the government of Kingdom of Bahrain and several individual sections of Bahrain's society, illustrating a distinct diversity, yet implying that despite differences, people are working together towards a common goal. Through the success of this union, the Kingdom aims to grant its people the privileges they rightfully deserve, helping them counter the evils of society.

Although this is just the first phase of four, the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people have made several constructive developments, working hand-in-hand: For a positive change, for a better future.

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Summary report on follow up to and implementation  
of the outcome of the universal periodic review

Bahrain  
June 2009

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

This first summary periodic report is submitted by Bahrain in fulfillment of one of its voluntary commitments during its first universal periodic review for human rights that was adapted in June 2008.

In late 2007 by system of draw, Bahrain was the very first country to undergo the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) which took place on 7 April 2008. Bahrain prepared its initial UPR Report adopting a transparent, inclusive and participatory approach involving a media campaign and culminating in a National Stakeholders Consultation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the newly established UPR Steering Committee, was responsible for preparing this Annual Periodic Report, with the support of UNDP, and following a consultation with key stakeholders.

Bahrain views the universal periodic review as a continuing four year process which affords an opportunity to highlight positive measures adopted to give effect to human rights and to assess challenges and constraints to their realisation. This periodic report therefore not only reviews the positive developments that have taken place over the course of the past year, since June 2008, but also identifies continuing challenges and limitations, and assesses progress made in adopting and implementing a national plan of action to implement the recommendations made to, and the voluntary pledges adopted by, Bahrain, in the course of the first universal periodic review.

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

### (a) Methodology

Reflecting the understanding of the universal periodic review as a continuing process, the preparation of this first Annual Summary Report to follow up on the Universal Periodic Review involved a combination of methods including collection of information from government departments, consultation with government officials, judiciary and civil society organisations on draft report, comments on draft report, and approval of final text of report, by the Committee on the implementation of the Universal Periodic Review and dissemination through the web and print and broadcast media nationally of the contents of the report.

### (b) Process for Preparation of the Report

Bahrain had announced during its initial Universal Periodic Review that it would provide an annual update on follow-up to the outcomes and recommendations. Accordingly, the UPR Committee - comprising both governmental and non-governmental representatives (see further below) established by Bahrain following the Universal Periodic Review - was mandated with drawing up the first Annual Summary Report. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs on behalf of the Committee then engaged in the following activities:

- Collection of information for the State report from government and non-governmental agencies;
- Convening a consultation within the UPR Steering Committee on the draft report which includes representatives of government and civil society stakeholders.
- Releasing the key points addressed in the final report to the media in Bahrain and disseminating the same through the web ([www.upr.bh](http://www.upr.bh)) in both Arabic and English.

**3. BAHRAINI CONSTITUTION AND  
POLICIES, LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS  
FOR THE PROMOTION AND  
PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS  
(continued)**

**(a) State Authorities and Human Rights**

Mentioned in detail in Bahrain UPR report 2008.

**(b) Domestic laws on the promotion and protection of human rights**

A number of important legislative measures were taken during the year impacting on civil, political, economic and social rights:

- King of Kingdom of Bahrain has passed law number (19) for year 2009 regarding passing the family law (first section) and that is post to the law being approved by the legislative authority. Bahrain is working on achieving social consensus to pass the second section of the law. This law aims at regulating the family relations that includes marriage, divorce, custody, etc. A move which had been urged by women's organisations and others for over two decades.
- During the year, in May 2009, and in a historic and unprecedented step, designed to improve working conditions for migrant workers, government put article 25 of Labour Law into force, this article allows foreign workers to work for another employer without taking permission from the previous employer. This law will come into force in August 2009.
- In March 2008 Press Law was approved by the Cabinet and it is now pending consideration with the House of Representatives. The main feature of this law is that it abolishes imprisonments as a punishment for journalists.
- In order to facilitate legal proceedings and also to protect individual privacy, the courts have adopted Law number 13 for year 2007 for sending information about court appeal through post, instead of sending court staff for this purpose.
- Bahrain has also taken the necessary constitutional measures for the ratification of the United Nations Convention Against Corruption.

### **(c) Official bodies and government institutions with competence for human rights**

The principal new body charged with overseeing the enhancement of capacities to address human rights, in the particular context of the follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review, is the UPR Steering Committee.

In 2007, the Cabinet decided to establish a National Human Rights Institution to independently deal with and investigate complaints, if any, on human rights violations brought to its attention by both Bahrainis and expatriates. In this connection, the UPR Steering Committee during 22-24 July 2008 held a workshop on Paris Principles and Best Practices, in coordination with OHCHR. In October 2008, the government started a process of consultations on draft legislation to establish the National Human Rights Commission. It is expected that the National Human Rights Commission may be established by the end of 2009.

In 2008, Bahrain adopted a comprehensive national action plan on the implementation of outcomes, recommendations and voluntary commitments of the Universal Periodic Review. A representative of the Office of High Commission for Human Rights attended the launch of this plan in Bahrain.

Bahrain is currently examining the idea of creating an inter-ministerial human rights mechanism to guarantee the implementation of the recommendations made by the international treaty bodies to which Bahrain reports, and in the meantime has established the UPR Steering Committee which has a similar monitoring function.

Bahrain put a draft of a national action plan on human rights education, with among others, expert input from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

### **(d) Non-governmental organisations**

Non-governmental organisations and associations continue to be regulated by Decree Law No. 21 of 1989. In 2009, the total number of registered associations and organisations was 406, including clubs and societies.

#### *Voluntary pledges*

Further to its commitment to supporting non-governmental organisations through legal and other instruments so as to develop a constructive dialogue with these organisations and other stakeholders, Bahrain in September 2008 held a capacity building workshop for NGOs and government officials on human rights and the preparation of a human rights database. The workshop aimed to train the participants on how to collect information related to the UPR in order to protect and promote human rights. More workshops are to be conducted at the last quarter of this year for civil society through the UPR Steering committee.

#### 4. COMMITMENTS AND PLEDGES OF BAHRAIN IN REGARD TO HUMAN RIGHTS

##### **(a) Ratification of International Human Rights Treaties**

Bahrain abides by the Charter of the United Nations and has acceded to the main United Nations human rights treaties and to numerous International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

Bahrain is committed to contributing to the current process of human rights standard -setting at the United Nations and to participating in United Nations human rights forums where human rights standards are discussed and participated recently in the Durban follow up Conference.

Consultations are ongoing regarding the adoption of Optional Protocols to certain treaty bodies. Some steps have also been taken to create awareness about these instruments. A workshop was organised by the UPR Steering Committee regarding the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. This was attended by officials of the Ministry of the Interior and of Justice and also by the office of the General Prosecutor, and parliamentarians.

##### **(b) Reporting to UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies**

Bahrain submitted its joint first and second report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in November 2008. Supreme Council for Women has put a procedural plan to follow up on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations and to prepare for the upcoming report.

Bahrain has submitted its second and third joint periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and is expected to undergo a review by this treaty monitoring body imminently though no date has been fixed as yet.

In order to strengthen implementation of its obligations under human rights treaties, Bahrain has established a high level UPR Steering Committee, with representation from all relevant Ministries and agencies, as well as key civil society organisations, to carry out coordination and follow-up activities.

##### **(c) Special procedures of the Human Rights Council**

Bahrain has duly responded to the letters received from United Nations special procedures and mechanisms during the period June 2008 to May 2009.

In May 2009, the Special Rapporteur on unlawful detention and the Special Rapporteur on the Enhancement of Human Rights in relation to Terrorism sent a questionnaire regarding an international study on unlawful detention, and the concerned authorities are taking the necessary measures to respond to this by 15 June 2009.

The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism had provided comments on Bahrain's law on this subject. The concerned authority in Bahrain are currently reviewing the comments.



WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER FUTURE



4. COMMITMENTS AND PLEDGES  
OF BAHRAIN IN REGARD TO  
HUMAN RIGHTS  
(continued)

Bahrain has, continued to do the following:

- continues to participate actively in meetings of the Economic and Social Council and its various commissions and in the General Assembly and Security Council.
- continues to participate actively in follow-up to the proceedings of relevant conferences, including the review of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination held in Geneva on 20-24 April 2009 Bahrain Delegation emphasised on Bahrain's rejection of the basis of racism and racial discrimination and that Human rights were universal and as such it was essential to strengthen cooperation among all countries of the world in order for the fundamental principles of human rights to be known around the world.

## 5. REPORT ON THE VOLUNTARY PLEDGES

MADE BY BAHRAIN IN 2006 WHEN ELECTED TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND IN 2008 DURING THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS

### (a) Pledges to improve the human rights situation on the ground in Bahrain

Further to pledges to implement human rights treaties, made in the reports that Bahrain has submitted to the relevant treaty bodies, Bahrain has begun to review its national laws and policies in the light of these instruments through the UPR Steering Committee such as the Juvenile Law.

Bahrain is continuing to run training courses on human rights for law enforcement officials and the judiciary, the latter includes a focus on the CEDAW Convention.

Continuing discussions and consultations are ongoing regarding a draft law regulating the work of non-governmental organisations.

Concrete steps have been taken to improve human rights on the ground in relation to civil, political, economic and social rights. Thus, in April 2009, the King of Bahrain pardoned 178 political prisoners, who were all then released. Those released include Hassan Meshaima'a, the leader of opposition Organisation al-Haq and Mohammad Moqdad, a religious leader.

As previously mentioned, in the first such measure in the MENA region, Bahrain put article 25 of Labour Law into force, thus removing the dependence of migrant workers on their employers in relation to their immigration status, and increasing the scope for them to obtain legal protection and redress and to work freely.

And as previously mentioned in a significant development for the protection of rights within the family, Bahrain also adopted a codification of personal law (Part1), which will enable individuals to know with certainty the content of laws affecting their rights within the family, and contribute to fairer decision-making in relation to family disputes.

### Capacity Building

Further to the pledge to strengthen capacities in order to ensure effective implementation of its obligations under the international human rights treaties, Bahrain has established a UPR Steering Committee which in close cooperation with the UNDP, is focused on enhancing the capacity of relevant institutions and agencies within Bahrain, including civil society organisations.

In October 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with the Center for Legal Studies and Consultancies at the University of Bahrain and the United Nations Development Program in Bahrain, held the first workshop for the designated database taskforce, chosen by their counterparts from the UPR Steering Committee. All representatives of human rights stakeholders are currently in the process of collecting information on human rights issues, each in the field of their specialisation.

The UPR Steering Committee in cooperation with the University of Bahrain's Center for Legal Studies and Consultations, conducted a training program in international law, constitutional law and human rights, between 1 March to 4 June 2009 for participants from various stakeholders.

**5. REPORT ON THE VOLUNTARY PLEDGES**  
MADE BY BAHRAIN IN 2006 WHEN  
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COUNCIL AND IN 2008 DURING THE  
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS  
(continued)

A National Workshop on Paris Principles and Best Practices was held on 22-24 July 2008 in coordination between Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, UNDP Bahrain and the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights in Geneva. All political societies and human rights societies were invited to this workshop as well as the governmental bodies in Bahrain. Expert presentations tackled issues related to mandate and independence, promotion of human rights, including education and advisory services, role of NHRIs in advancing the rule of law, in the context of the imminent establishment of such an institution in Bahrain.

To strengthen the capacity of national institutions and government agencies to address human rights in relation to health, and to focus on the concerns of vulnerable groups, namely prisoners, the UPR Committee held workshops, on 13 and 14 May 2009 in collaboration with WHO, on the right to health, and in collaboration with the ICRC on the rights of prisoners and prison management on 3-4 June 2009 and is going to hold a workshop in collaboration with UNESCO before the end of 2009.

In June 2008 under the patronage of H.M. King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain a national conference on mainstreaming women's needs into development (gender mainstreaming), the conference title had the theme of "True partnership between men and women in national development...How?" The conference aimed at creating awareness of the importance of mainstreaming women needs into development process and how to plan and analyse to implement some ministries plans based on gender mainstreaming. The Supreme Council for Women is currently working on implementing the recommendations of this conference in coordination with government and nongovernmental institutions. Main features of what has been done are as follows:

- The Supreme Council for women is organising various workshops in this field.
- The Council signed on a cooperation agreement with UNDP and that includes a pillar regarding mainstreaming women's needs into development processes. This pillar focuses on implementing strategies and projects to empower women.
- The Council is working now to establish an "equal opportunities" unit within the official institutions.
- An announcement was passed by Ministry of Finance to consider women's needs in budgeting of ministries.

**(b) Pledges regarding regional cooperation on human rights**

In fulfillment of its pledge to further regional cooperation on human rights, the UPR Steering committee chair and mofa members, met with a delegation from the United Arab Emirates on 23 October 2008, and presented their experience with the UPR process. The presentation focused on three aspects, namely process adopted by the Ministry in preparing its first Universal Periodic Review, the nature of the interactive dialogue for the Human Rights Council, and finally,

the steps taken to implement the pledges, voluntary commitments and recommendations after the report is adopted. Bahrain also received a request from Kuwait to discuss UPR related issues.

On 19 and 20 November 2008, Bahrain hosted a conference for the Middle East and North Africa region for some 100 international and national participants, entitled, "The Regional/ International Conference on Cooperative UPR Experiences: Past, Present and Future". All countries participating were invited to portray their country's experiences during their Universal Periodic Review. In addition to 19 countries of the MENA region, the Deputy President of the Human Rights Council, senior officer of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Amnesty International also participated. The conference aimed to benefit countries expected to undergo the UPR process and to enable them to learn from the experience of those who had already taken part in the process. Speakers were from Argentina, Morocco and the United Kingdom.

Bahrain continues to participate actively in the Dialogue among Civilisations and the Alliance of Civilisations, and is committed to supporting the work of the recently appointed High Representative of the Secretary-General for the Alliance of Civilisations.

### **(c) Pledges regarding cooperation with the United Nations human rights system in general and the Human Rights Council in particular**

Bahrain is committed to strengthening the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council as a mechanism for international dialogue and cooperation on human rights.

Prior to its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Bahrain had adopted an *Action Plan on Implementation of Bahrain's Pledges, Commitments and UPR Outcomes* which sought to: a) strengthen national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights, b) enhance the protection of vulnerable groups and c) promote the further realisation of specific human rights in Bahrain. Implementing this *Action Plan* requires accelerated development and strengthening of a wide range of human rights capacities in Bahrain.

Since the Universal Periodic Review process undertaken by the Council in respect of Bahrain in June 2008, the Kingdom of Bahrain has sought to cooperate with the Council in efforts to establish itself as a credible and effective mechanism for international dialogue and cooperation on human rights, helping member states meet their human rights obligations through dialogue, capacity building and technical assistance. In furtherance of this aim, Bahrain has entered into institutional arrangements with the UNDP in July 2008 under a project titled "Supporting Implementation of Bahrain's Universal Periodic Report (UPR) Action Plan". This project provides support and assistance on implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the *National Action Plan*.

REACHING OUT TO EVERYONE



**5. REPORT ON THE VOLUNTARY PLEDGES**  
MADE BY BAHRAIN IN 2006 WHEN  
ELECTED TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS  
COUNCIL AND IN 2008 DURING THE  
UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS  
(continued)

In a unique measure, designed to improve the human rights situation on the ground through implementation of Bahrain's voluntary pledges and commitments, as well as UPR Outcomes, Bahrain has, under the auspices of the said Project, established the UPR Steering Committee in order to establish a transparent and participatory national process which involves key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, responsible for improving the situation of human rights on the ground. This high-level Committee, headed by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, includes representatives of the Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, Health, Information, Interior, Justice and Islamic Affairs, Labour, and Social Development; the Supreme Council for Women, General Prosecution, the Bahrain Bar Association, Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions, Women's Union, Bahrain Society for Human Rights, Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society, Transparency Society and Society for the Support of Democracy as well as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the LMRA and the Centre for Informatics, as well as the Regional Representative of the UNDP.

The Committee has taken steps to publicise and promote dissemination of the Report of the Human Rights Council and related documents arising from the UPR process in Bahrain through a dedicated website ([www.upr.bh](http://www.upr.bh)) and through discussions broadcast on the electronic media with the concerned Minister regarding the outcomes of the initial UPR of Bahrain held in June 2008, and published in the national press, and through consultations convened by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government authorities and non-governmental organisations.

The Committee's stated mission is to establish an information data-base on human rights within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review; to enable participation of different sectors in society in exchanging views and opinions regarding the promotion and protection of human rights; to promote human rights culture in the Kingdom of Bahrain; to promote internationally the efforts of the Kingdom of Bahrain in the field of human rights and to establish an educational tool for the reader and researcher.

Bahrain Steering Committee cooperated in capacity building programs with WHO and is to cooperate with UNESCO within this year.

Bahrain remains committed to the principles of transparent and open consultation, dialogue and cooperation with all members of the Human Rights Council. In response to Bahrain's invitation, a representative from the High Commissioner for Human Rights attended as an observer at the first workshop conducted by the UPR Steering Committee on applying Human rights based Approach to Development, held on 29 May 2008. Further to another invitation from Bahrain, the President of the Human Rights Council visited Bahrain during 16-20 May 2009 and met high level officials and H.E the Prime Minister.

With respect to the pledge to examine the possibility of issuing an annual or a periodic national report on the human rights situation on the ground, Bahrain hereby submits this annual report on steps taken to follow up on the outcome of the universal periodic review, as an initial measure to assess the impact on the human rights situation on the ground.

## 6. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION ON THE GROUND

### (a) Children

In 2001, the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued its concluding observations on Bahrain's first report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The date for review of Bahrain's second report, which has been submitted in 2009, has not as yet been set. Measures to improve the situation of children include the following:

- With respect to the recommendation to undertake a comprehensive review to ensure consistency between domestic laws, administrative regulations and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Consultative Council, through the recently established Standing Committee on Women and Children, and the National Assembly have discussed proposed laws on children's education, the enactment of a children's law, children's rights and two draft laws submitted by the Government on the protection of children and amendments to the juveniles.
- With respect to the recommendation regarding increasing the age of criminal responsibility, the Shura, or Consultative Council, in cooperation with UPR Steering Committee, is currently working on preparing a draft law to raise the age of juveniles to 18 instead of 16, and to provide for punishment of juveniles through a rehabilitation and reform institution
- The Government allocated approximately BHD 1.5 million for children for the year 2007/2008
- In the Summer of 2007 more than 7000 children benefited from children's clubs through entertaining and educational programs. Children also had the chance to participate in events and activities outside Bahrain.
- With a budget of 3.5 Million Bahraini Dinars, Bahrain is working on establishing a Center for children and coordinating with an international company to establish this Center according to the highest standards.
- In April 2009 the first stone for the biggest children's center in the Gulf Region was laid that will facilitate children to practice social, educational, scientific and sports activities.



#### **(b) Women**

As mentioned previously, King of Kingdom of Bahrain has passed law number (19) for year 2009 regarding passing the family law (Part 1) and that is post to the law being approved by the legislative authority. Bahrain is working on achieving social consensus to pass the second section of the law. This law aims at regulating family relations that includes marriage, divorce, custody, etc. A move which had been urged by women's organisations and others for over two decades.

Consultation is in process regarding Supreme Council for Women Recommendations to putting needed conditions to amend the citizenship law in a manner that would abolish the suffering of the children of Bahraini women who are married to non Bahrainis.

In June 2008 under the patronage of H.M. King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain a national conference on mainstreaming women's needs into development (gender mainstreaming), the conference title had the theme of "True partnership between men and women in national development...How?" The conference aimed at creating awareness of the importance of mainstreaming women needs into development process and how to plan and analyse to implement some ministries plans based on gender mainstreaming in order to include those plans in government plans and programs. Bahrain is working now on establishing an "equal opportunities" unit within the official institutions.

The Supreme Council for women continues its efforts in supporting divorced women through a fund and to provide legal assistance to women in need of it. Moreover, and upon a recommendation of the Supreme Council, a law was passed by the Minister of Housing regarding granting divorced women with children the right to benefit from housing services.

6. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION  
ON THE GROUND  
(continued)

**(c) Migrant workers**

In the first such step taken across the Middle East and North Africa region, Bahrain revised the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, the first country in the Middle East to make such concrete reforms that will allow the migrant worker according to Article 25 to work with a new employer without taking the permission from the previous employer.

This Law will take full effect from 1 August 2009. Under this change, the Government's Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), rather than employers, would sponsor migrants' work visas. Migrants will be able to apply to the authority to change employers. Bahrain will also cap the number of migrant workers entering the country. It is expected, as noted by Human Rights Watch, that this change will 'dramatically improve the status of most migrant workers' and 'improve working conditions'. The sponsorship system had required migrants' work visas and immigration status to be linked to their employers.

A new labour law has been put together after consultation between the Ministry of Labour, Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Some of the main features of this law include: a) giving the right to strike through peaceful means; b) increasing the age of children entitled to work from 14 years to 15 years in accordance with the ILO; c) regularising women's working hours at night, in accordance with ILO rules and regulations d) increasing maternity leave from 45 to 60 paid days and e) giving the right to a working woman to obtain six months unpaid leave following delivery. The law also provides for the right to annual leave and sick leave for workers and makes reforms in the complaints system.

In June 2008, Ministry of Labour, confirmed that there would be no relaxation of laws banning work outside during the hottest hours of July and August, refusing appeals to change the laws for contractors and construction firms. A leading contractor was fined for making 128 workers work during the noon-4pm ban.

In 2009, Bahrain Government announced a prohibition on workers being transported in uncovered vehicles.

Special complaints mechanisms had been set up for workers; as reported by the Ministry of Labour to the CEDAW Committee, it had set up a complaints mechanism, with a telephone hotline, and received 91 complaints from migrant and domestic workers between January and August 2008.

With respect to its voluntary pledge regarding intensification of inspections of workers' housing and of checks on its suitability in terms of security, health, habitability and compliance with the applicable laws and decrees, Bahrain has through the Ministry of Labour completed a number of inspections over the past year.

**(d) Trade unions**

Some stakeholders have commented on trade unionism in Bahrain, mentioning: The importance of the prompt signing and ratification of the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), and the ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and of revising and amending the labour laws to bring them in line with international standards.

Bahrain is reviewing the possibility of amending Article 10 of the Trade Unions Act to grant government workers the right to form trade unions in line with international standards.

**(e) Human rights defenders**

No new organisations of human rights defenders have been registered during 2009.

## 7. CHALLENGES

### CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSES TO THE HUMAN SITUATION ON THE GROUND

#### **(a) The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination:**

Bahrain is fully committed to implementing the international convention for elimination of racial discrimination and to cooperate with the committee with this regard. Bahrain submitted its sixth and seventh report to the committee in 2005 and it was reviewed in 2007. With regards to Bahrain's pledge to pass a law regarding racial discrimination, Bahrain is looking seriously into the possibility of passing this law in consultation with the concerned authorities.

#### **(b) The Committee against Torture**

Bahrain is committed to studying the concluding observations made by the Committee against Torture, in particular in respect of the legal system, the removal of inappropriate restrictions on the work of non-governmental organisations, especially those dealing with issues related to the Convention and other comments.

In this context, on 6-7 April 2009, the UPR Implementation Committee convened a national workshop on 'The Criminalisation and Prevention of Torture in the light of the Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol' in collaboration with the Association for Prevention of Torture. The outcomes of the workshop included that Bahrain would look into the possibility of incorporating the definition of torture in the Convention into its national law, and also of signing the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. The Workshop also noted the importance of such training workshops being continued for law enforcement officials.

Further to its pledge to ask the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for assistance in developing and improving human rights curricula and training courses, Bahrain has contacted the OHCHR for cooperation in this field. And further to its voluntary pledge, Bahrain issued an invitation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to attend the regional workshop on the UPR.

#### **(c) The Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):**

In November 2009, Bahrain reviewed its official first and second report before the CEDAW committee. The civil society has also submitted the shadow report. Upon recommendations of the committee, the supreme council for women put a procedural plan to follow up on the implementation of the report and prepare for the upcoming one. One of the main achievements was passing the family law (Part 1). Currently consultations are going on regarding the Supreme Council's suggestions on conditions to grant citizenship to children of Bahraini women married to non Bahrainis. Supreme Council continues to work on studying the reservations on the convention that are not related to the Islamic Shari'a in order to remove the restrictions when it comes to compliance with the constitutional law and a clear social position.



WE ARE BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

## 7. CHALLENGES

### CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSES TO THE HUMAN SITUATION ON THE GROUND (continued)

#### **(d) The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention**

With respect to the recommendations made by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, following its visit to Bahrain in 2001, Bahrain had noted in its National Report of 2008 to the Human Rights Council that the Cabinet had in 2005 transferred responsibility for the Juveniles Centre from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Social Development.

In April 2009, the King of Bahrain granted royal pardons to 178 persons, all of whom were then released from prison.

The UPR Committee held a further workshop on Prisons Management, in collaboration with the ICRC in June 2009.

Further to the pledge that law enforcement agencies will increase the number of training courses and workshops on the protection and promotion of human rights, the UPR Committee plans to hold a workshop on Prisons Management, in collaboration with the ICRC in June 2009, which will involve representatives from the law-enforcing agencies.

#### **(e) Combating trafficking in persons**

Following promulgation of Law No. 1 of 2008, concerning combating trafficking in persons, several institutions have been given mandates to implement it and to monitor its implementation. A section within the Ministry for Internal Affairs addresses the issue of human trafficking, the Ministry of Social Development runs a shelter for survivors of violence, and the *National Committee on Combatting Trafficking in Persons* (comprising government and non-government organisations) has continued to disseminate leaflets in several languages on the issue to workers on arrival in Bahrain and to operate a hotline for victims. The Committee has prepared a national plan on how to address trafficking, and is also monitoring pending cases, with action having been taken to date in one case affecting eight women to date, with the perpetrator imprisoned.

To strengthen regional and international co-operation, Bahrain hosted an international forum on combating trafficking, on 1-3 March 2009, which resulted in the Manama Declaration, calling for action at national and international levels, in both the government and private sectors, and made clear the role of awareness in preventing the problem.

*The National Committee for Victims of Trafficking* includes a unit to provide psychological and health care for women and child victims. It cooperates with heads of unions, migrant worker associations and others to provide information on rights in the spheres of work, health and others. Committee on Foreign Victims of Human Trafficking, includes representatives from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Interior, Labour, Social Development, and has a mandate to provide legal support, shelter, medical assistance, and also jobs if required. It has powers to recommend residence even beyond the case period, on the request of a woman, or to arrange for her repatriation.

Further to its pledge to begin implementing the articles and provisions of the Act on trafficking in persons, the law is into force as convicted persons of trafficking cases were sentenced to up to three and half years of imprisonment.

#### **(f) Growing realisation of economic, social and cultural rights**

According to the UNDP's Human Development Index, Bahrain ranked thirty-seventh among the most advanced States in the world as regards economic and social development. The United Nations agency, in its report, took account of standards of education and health care. The health indicators for 2008 show how the health situation has evolved.

The problem of unemployment is relatively recent and according to estimates from the Ministry of Labour, stood at less than 4% in December 2008. Accordingly, Ministry of Labour allocated BHD 500,000 for the training of unemployed Bahraini university graduates. The unemployed are covered by the Unemployment Insurance Act, which provides for the payment of monthly unemployment benefits linked to a measure to find jobs for the recipients. The Government is currently implementing a scheme to create 30,000 jobs, following a new industrial strategy, to be completed by 2015, aimed to boost export industries in the subsectors of spare parts for cars, computers, electronics and means of transport.

In an important step that aims at developing the labour Market, in 2006 Labour Fund "Tamkeen" was established. Tamkeen is an institution that aims at escalating the skills and level of Bahraini employees to reach competitive levels and to assist the private sector to become the engine of growth in society. Tamkeen was able to afford training to more than 19,000 new graduates and employees and to support more than 5000 companies and enterprises financially, logistically, and technically.

On health, number of government health centers covering Bahrain reached 22 centers and medical clinics. In 2009 Law number 8 for year 2009 regarding combating all kinds of smoking was passed. A decrease in death percentage was noted as it dropped from 6.8% to 6.6% in 2008. Number of trained staff in the health field increased from 8859 in 2007 to 9110 in 2008.

#### *The high cost of living*

In 2008 the government allocated BHD 40 million for low-income families to help them deal with the surge in prices which is affecting the whole world. The government is still in the process of creating a family bank with a budget of BHD 5 million to help needy families and low-income families become productive families.

Bahrain will continue its efforts to achieve comprehensive development, identifying the need for human rights to be seen as central to development, and on developing a human rights culture.

The UPR Committee has held a workshop on Health and Human Rights in collaboration with WHO on 13-14 May 2009.

## 7. CHALLENGES

### CONSTRAINTS AND RESPONSES TO THE HUMAN SITUATION ON THE GROUND (continued)

#### **(g) Review of laws and amendments to some laws and draft laws**

Bahrain is looking into amending some laws in order to improve the situation of human rights on its ground. A new civil society law was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies for approval and has also been put out to public consultation.

Further to its earlier voluntary pledge that the Ministry of the Interior has no objection to peaceful demonstrations provided that they are conducted lawfully and participants do not engage in criminal acts of rioting, it may be noted that there have been no new cases filed in this case against any person or Organisation in 2009.

#### **(h) Freedom of opinion and expression**

In March 2008, the Cabinet approved a new draft law that would remove criminal penalties for most press-related offences. The law is in front of the legislative authority for adaptation. The proposed law contains an article on rules of regulating electronic websites in accordance to what was agreed upon between Ministry of Information and Culture and "Reporters without Borders RSS".

The UPR Steering Committee supported publication of Amani al Maskati's book, "The UPR and Human Rights in Bahrain". It also plans to commission a documentary on freedom of expression in Bahrain.

#### **(i) Assembly and Association**

In 2008, 115 gatherings were held where the authority was informed and 458 gatherings were held where the authorities were not informed. Uptil May 2009, there have been 36 gatherings where the authorities were informed, and some 145 where they were not.

In April 2009, the King of Bahrain issued royal pardons to 178 prisoners, including prominent political leaders, such as Hassan Meshaima'a, the leader of opposition Organisation al-Haq and Mohammad Moqdad, a religious leader all of whom were released from prison and able thereafter to continue with their political activities.



#### **(j) Effective means of redress**

In its National Report, Bahrain had noted the need for more awareness of existing forms of redress, whether judicial or administrative, and their use.

With regard to administrative forms of redress, some eighty human rights violations were filed at the Ministry of Interior's complaint office in 2008.

They have been dealt with according to human rights rules and regulations and 11 complaints are still being investigated. The Ministry had set up the special office to receive complaints and suggestions from residents and citizens, had distributed 37 complaint boxes to all directorates, departments, custody and detention centres as well as rehabilitation centres and had plans to launch a website.

## 8. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The government of the Kingdom of Bahrain considers this first annual summary report on the Universal Periodic Review to be an integral part of implementation of its plan of action, in cooperation with the Human Rights Council, to protect and promote human rights in Bahrain.

The report outlines specific institutional efforts to follow up and monitor Bahrain's implementation of its voluntary pledges, in particular through the establishment of the UPR Steering Committee, and its activities to develop a capacity within Bahrain to address human rights concerns, and efforts to increase awareness regionally of the Universal Periodic Review process. It also elaborates on steps taken further to the commitments and voluntary pledges made by Bahrain prior to and during the Universal Periodic Review, and to changes in laws, policies and programmes made in this connection.

The government of the Kingdom of Bahrain anticipates further co-operation with all stakeholders over the remaining two years of this Universal Periodic Review process in order to undertake further positive developments in relation to increasing awareness of human rights nationally and regionally, and building capacities to further ensure human rights on the ground.

A large red silhouette of a hand is positioned in the center of the page, with the fingers pointing upwards. The palm of the hand is open, and within it, a photograph of a city skyline at dusk is visible. The skyline features several prominent skyscrapers, including the Bahrain World Trade Center, which is a distinctive tower with a curved, sail-like top. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, suggesting the time is either dawn or dusk. The water of a harbor is visible at the bottom of the frame, reflecting the lights of the buildings. The overall composition is centered and balanced, with the red hand shape framing the cityscape.

**BUILDING A BETTER BAHRAIN**

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