

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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(Beirut) [Bahrain](#) should provide victims of torture with physical and psychological rehabilitation, Human Rights Watch and other human rights groups said today, based on a [letter](#) they sent to King Hamad. In particular, authorities should address the health needs of 13-high profile detainees, some of whom are suffering from the effects of torture by Bahraini interrogators in 2011.

The authoritative Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), established in response to widespread allegations of torture of detainees in 2011, concluded that two state security forces had maintained a deliberate practice of mistreatment in the aftermath of anti-government protests and a more discernible pattern of mistreatment in relation to the 13-high profile activists serving long-term sentences. BICI also documented allegations that security officials beat detainees while they were being treated at hospitals, including at the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) hospital. Some of the 13 prisoners, including Abdulwahab Hussain, have since refused to be taken to that hospital for medical treatment.

Bahrain accepted the BICI's finding that its security forces tortured people in 2011, so it should face up to its treaty obligation to help the victims recover, said [Sarah Leah Whitson](#), Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. These 13 prisoners should not be in jail in the first place, but that doesn't mean Bahrain can ignore its obligation to help them recover from torture by its security forces."

Bahrain has ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and is obliged under the terms of that treaty to make specialized services, including rehabilitation, available, prompt and accessible to torture victims in a way that avoids the risk of re-traumatizing them.

Human Rights Watch, the Gulf Center for Human Rights, Project for Middle East Democracy, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Frontline, Freedom House, Physicians for Human Rights, Fair Trials International, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Civicus, International Federation for Human Rights, and Redress wrote to King Hamad on August 25, 2014. They urged him to ensure that torture victims receive the medical and psychological care that they require and that Bahrain has made a commitment to provide. King Hamad announced in 2011 that he accepted the BICI findings in full.

BICI documented the techniques most commonly used against detainees as: blindfolding; handcuffing; enforced standing for prolonged periods; beating; punching; hitting the detainee with rubber hoses including on the soles of the feet, cables, whips, metal, wooden planks or other objects; electric shocks; sleep-deprivation; exposure to extreme temperatures; verbal abuse; threats of rape of the detainee or family members; and insulting the detainees Shia religious sect. BICI also documented allegations of beatings in hospitals, including the BDF hospital.

Two detainees told BICI investigators that they were blindfolded and handcuffed to their beds during their time in the BDF hospital. One alleged that security forces there threatened him with sexual abuse and execution, and made sexual threats against his wife and daughter. The other said that, There were many beatings at BDF. A third said he was physically tortured and verbally insulted in the BDF hospital, and another said security officers beat him with a hose. A fifth detainee alleged that a security officer pointed a gun at his head and said: We have the right to shoot anyone we want. I will empty this gun in your head.

The Bahrain authorities have failed to assess the therapeutic needs of the people whose mistreatment in detention in 2011 was documented in the BICI report.

The wife of one of them, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, told Human Rights Watch that he continues to suffer pain in his lower spine due to an assault in detention in 2011, and that he needs surgery for problems associated with the plates and screws inserted into his jaw after police officers broke it in four places during his arrest. She said prison authorities have only provided basic medical attention. The family of another of the detainees, Abdulwahab Hussain, said that his health began to deteriorate in 2013, but that he has refused treatment at the BDF hospital because he does not feel safe there.

In October 2012, the Committee Against Torture, the body of independent international experts who review state parties compliance with the Convention Against Torture, issued a general comment on article 14, which explains and clarifies to States parties the content and scope of the obligations under article 14. The committee considers that the term redress in article 14 encompasses the concepts of effective remedy and reparation and entails restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

The committee provides detailed guidance on how countries can fulfil their obligations to provide a victim of torture or ill-treatment with the most complete possible means for rehabilitation. The committee says that specialized services for victims of torture or ill-treatment should be available, appropriate and promptly accessible. These should include a procedure to assess and evaluate an individuals therapeutic and other needs in a context that takes into account the risk of re-traumatizing victims.

Human Rights Watch and the other rights groups also repeated their calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the 13 activists. They are serving lengthy prison sentences, up to life in prison in 8 cases. They were convicted although the evidence produced against them at their trial consisted only of public statements in which they advocated reforms to [curtail](#) the power of the ruling Al Khalifa family and confessions that appear to have been coerced while they were in incommunicado detention.

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