

The Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in the Arabian Peninsula



Annual Report 2008

This report documents serious human rights violations in the Arabian Peninsula during 2008
Covering events from January - December 2008

www.cdhrap.net
Email : info@cdhrap.net

Introduction

The Arabian Peninsula is a country ruled by an absolute monarchy rules in accordance with a conservative school of Sunni Islam . The king is the highest judicial authority, able to rule by decree.

Saudi regime does not permit political organizations , trade unions , independent bar associations or national elections . There is no freedom to hold protests.

The fundamental right to freedom of expression is explicitly denied and there is tight control and extensive censorship of the press and other mass media. Traditional democratic institutions do not exist in the country.

Any criticism of the ruling family or challenge to the government invariably results in retaliatory action involving the violation of basic human rights.

The Saudi regime engages in systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of human rights particularly the freedom of religion or belief. It persists in severely restricting all forms of public religious expression other than the government's interpretation and enforcement of Sunni Islam and it subjects to the pressure of the conservative religious establishment, which retain predominance in governmental and judiciary affairs , has opposed the recent reforms.

Despite Saudi government allegations to institute reforms, but many of these promises remain just promises that have not yet been reflected in the promulgation and implementation of tangible protections for human rights. The policies that would advance reforms have not yet been realized.

The Saudi regime has attempted to present itself as a promoter and defender of human rights , but its actions belie its own reprehensible conduct at home-conduct which runs afoul not only of international standards, but also of Islamic law and its own domestic law. It also attempts to provide an adequate foundation for the protection of basic human rights , but it fails to protect those rights.

It has not established adequate measures to implement universal human rights standards and to provide enforceable remedies to the alleged victims.

The autocrat Saudi regime has not simply fallen back on coercion to fend off global pressures for change—though repression remains a visible and potent element in the arsenal of the government . The restrictive laws and practices have left his record extremely poor.

In practice the Saudi regime has no tolerance for religious minorities and their rights to freedom of worship. Sectarian discrimination against religious minorities occurs widely in the Arabian Peninsula which injuries to dignity imposed upon people as a consequence of their belonging to another minorities. Extreme sectarian ideologies have helped to create and then reinforce the inequalities.

Due to adopting the Wahhabi version of Islam by the Saudi regime , and sponsoring notorious security forces , all these reasons resulted arrest , harassment and detention of people who practice religions other than the officially sanctioned Sunni Islam (Wahhabi sect). Sometimes they are barred from traveling and refer them to trial under dubious charges.

The members of the (Commission to Promote Virtue and Prevent Vice) , also known as or the religious police (Al-Mutawwa'in), exercise largely unchecked power by the governmental powers. They watch the proper moral behavior, harass and abuse Saudi citizens of both sexes. They have broad discretion to harass anyone not meeting arbitrary standards of propriety.

Al-Mutawwa'in require the public behavior to comply with the conservative school of Sunni Islam which violates universal human rights standards and has resulted in discrimination and human rights violations against members of indigenous Muslim communities who follow other schools of thought, such as Shi'a Muslims, Ismailis, and non-conforming Sunnis, as well as both Muslim and non-Muslim expatriate workers.

Shiite minority continues to subject to sectarian discrimination and it is perceived as an inferior group, this was used to justify blocking access to enjoy with international human rights standards.

The Saudi regime did not take steps to improve inter-sectarian relations. Its measures were modest, and tensions are rising and generally deepening confessional divisions throughout the country or spearheaded an effort to promote tolerance and diversity.

The adherents of Shiite minority subject not only to severe political repression , but also to discrimination in employment, education, and government services . They are marginalized by Saudi regime . Shiites remain under-represented in official positions, and students complain of open hostility from Sunni instructors. Jobs in the police and military are rare.

Saudi regime in all continents have whipped up anti-Shiite sentiment. They continue to face obstacles to the free and open observance of their faith.

Shiites and members of other religious minorities are not able to practice freely their beliefs in public and are at risk of arbitrary arrest, detention and deportation

even if they do so in private. Shiites also at risk arrest if they possess their religious books or commemorate their religious events.

The Saudi judiciary is not independent and it is subject to influence by the Executive. The Saudi criminal laws are arbitrary and facilitate human rights violations against the prisoners and detainees .

The Saudi police mistreats prisoners, arbitrarily arrest and detain persons, hold detainees in prolonged pretrial detention. Torture and abuse of detainees by police, security personnel, and prison guards remained common and persistent. They practice all kinds of torture with the detainees due to the fail of the criminal justice system to provide safeguards to the detainees .

Many detainees are still suffering at the hands of the governmental torturers.

The incommunicado detention , the poor criminal system and the lack of independent mechanisms for reporting torture and investigations into allegations, all foster a climate of impunity.

There are no national elections, except the local elections which were held in the year 2005 .

Women face discrimination and violence at the hands of the state. They are prevented from fully exercising their fundamental human rights. Women in the Arabian Peninsula are treated as second-class subject with different legal rights from men. Women have only severely-restricted freedom of movement.

The application of the Wahabbi interpretation of Islam, violates the human rights of women, including with regard to freedom of speech, movement, association, and religion, freedom from coercion and access to education . The Saudi government practices discriminatory measures aimed at the destruction of many of the human rights guaranteed to women.

Saudi regime does not adopt nearly all of the important human rights treaties and conventions in the world. It has a lamentable record of formal adoption of the major international human rights agreements and has adopted no other major international agreements relating to human rights.

The Constitution

There has been no written constitution in the country. The Quran and the Sunna constitute the effective constitution of Saudi regime , but the country is governed according to a series of royal decrees in March 1992 called them (**The Basic Law of Government**) , which sets out the system of government , and it governs

issues not discussed in the Quran, but its authority is subordinate to the monarchy and the religious establishment.

The basic law does not provide citizens the right to change the government and citizens could not exercise this right in practice through free elections .

The king is the head of the regime and he performs legislative and executive functions. He can introduce new laws, amend existing laws or reinterpret them through a royal order. He can also approve and amends international treaties, agreements and regulations by decree. He approves all decisions of the Council of Ministers.

The article 44 of the Basic law of government states that :

" the king shall be the point of reference for the judicial , the executive and the regulatory authorities."

There are no institutional checks on royal authority. In practice there is no accountability and the king has wide-ranging discretion.

The king is the head of the Council of Ministers. He can veto any decision of the Council of Ministers. He appoints and removes deputy prime ministers, ministers, and other members of the Council of Ministers by royal order. The article 57 (a) of the Basic Law stipulates that :

" the King appoints and relieves deputies of the prime minister and ministers and members of the Council of Ministers by Royal decree."

Although the Basic Law gives authority for the Council of Ministers to take any suitable step to issue a law or regulation as the article 19 of the Ministers Council Law states that,

" the Council of Ministers will plan the internal, external, financial, economic, educational and defense policies and all the public affairs of the state, and oversee their implementation. It will look into the decrees of the Consultative council. It will have executive power and it will be the point of reference for financial and administrative affairs in all the ministries and other governmental bodies".

But at last it will require the approval of the King as Prime Minister.

The king is the commander in chief of the armed forces. He appoints officers and revokes their duties.

On October 20, 2006 the Saudi regime formed a committee of princes (known as the Allegiance Institution, includes the sons and grandsons of King Abdul Aziz)

to vote on the eligibility of future kings and crown princes. According to the rules of the committee , it can vote for one of three princes nominated by the king.

Saudi regime lacks a standard legislature. It only has a Consultative Council which consists of 150 members selected by the king , its members serve for four-year terms. The Consultative Council can be restructured and dissolved by the king.

Saudi Arabia held its first local elections nationwide in 2005, but women were not allowed to vote or run for office .

The Consultative Council (Majlis Ash-Shura)

The Consultative Council was an advisory body set up in 1993 as an unelected body to advise the government with 150 members and a chairman all appointed by the king for four-year terms .

It is proposing laws for the cabinet to approve, reviewing and amending draft legislation passed its way by cabinet and calling some ministers to appear to explain policy.

A lot of people among them what are called reformers want the appointed council to be at least partly elected in what would be a revolutionary move for the conservative kingdom towards parliamentary monarchy.

Journalists are not allowed inside the chamber to follow daily debates and television usually only offers coverage if the king delivers a speech there. There are no women members and only two from the minority Shiites Muslim community, who many among the traditional Wahabi Sunni clerics regard as heretics.

The Judicial System

The Saudi judiciary is not independent , though the basic law of the government provides for an independent judiciary, as the article 46 states that:

'The judiciary is an independent authority. There is no control over judges in the dispensation of their judgments except in the case of the Islamic Shari'ah.'

but the current policy undermines that independence. The judiciary is subordinated to the authority of the executive authority which has undue influence on judicial appointments. The King appoints the Minister of Justice the

supreme Judicial Council, the Judges of the Court of Appeals, and every other judge in the country. These judges also may be removed at any time by royal decree.

The Saudi criminal laws are arbitrary, grossly inconsistent with international human rights standards and fall far short of internationally recognized safeguards. They facilitate human rights violations against the prisoners and detainees. The criminal laws give excessive powers to the arresting authorities. They are also vague and open to wide interpretation by judges who follow the strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islamic law as a guideline for criminal sentencing. This school of thought requires specific harsh punishments for certain crimes and was regarded as especially rigid by most Muslim jurists.

All crimes are punishable by Shari'a penalties. They are tried at the discretion of the judge. Judges' discretionary power over the categorization of offences and punishments stems directly from the absence of clearly defined codes for such offences and punishments.

Judges are guided mainly by Shari'a laws on crimes and punishment which are subject to different interpretations by different Islamic jurists and they are also free to choose to apply any punishment according to the Islamic school that they follows .

The criminal justice system operates behind closed doors. It can not deliver fair and unbiased decisions. Vaguely worded laws facilitate the arbitrary administration of justice, and the imprisonment of individuals on political or religious grounds.

The courts are not independent and impartial tribunals and they do not give people an opportunity to a fair hearing. Defendants are denied access to legal counsel and the right to mount their own defense .

The Saudi judiciary is corrupt , judges are corrupt , they are acting with impunity, they can do what they want because nobody can control them . The Saudi judiciary revealed an unequal application of the law as applied to both Saudi citizens , so , judges have on occasion acceded the power and influence of the royal family and their associates. Moreover, members of the powerful families, are not subject to the same legal constraints as other Saudi.

The Saudi law does not explicitly define which rights citizens may confidently exercise and which conduct is criminal. The lack of codification undermines the existing judicial institutions and increases the potential for abuse.

The Saudi Judicial law does not guarantee a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal. The detainees are treated differently by

reason of their religious beliefs or social standing. Those detained who enjoy a high social status are less likely to suffer violations of their human rights.

In political cases, trials not only are closed but are secret as well. There are no trials at all for those suspected of political offenses, they were subjected to sham trials to legitimize the arrests. Because the trials of political defendants are secret, the defendants are unable to challenge before a higher tribunal the lawfulness of their arrests, imprisonment, or convictions. They are kept in strict incommunicado detention without access to lawyers, family, or friends.

Behind closed doors, defendants, including those charged with capital offences, face questioning by the judge or judges without a lawyer or a legal representative present.

The hearings can last between a matter of minutes and two hours, and verdicts can be delivered in one or two sessions.

Failures in the Saudi criminal justice system

In January 2008 the appeal court in Riyadh affirmed the Juf court's judgment which forcibly divorced a lawfully married couple (Fatima 'Azzaz, 34 year old and Mansour al-Timani) in absentia which issued in January 2007, on the grounds that he was from a tribe of a low status compared to the status of her tribe.

Fatima's brothers had filed a lawsuit demanding their sister's marriage be annulled 'on the grounds that (the married couple) were tribally incompatible.' The court ruled that Timani's tribal lineage was socially inadequate for him to marry 'Azzaz, essentially declaring that the marriage could harm the reputation of 'Azzaz's family since Timani is of a lower social class. In August, governorate officials detained 'Azzaz and her two children in Dammam Public Prison because of her unwillingness to return to her half-brothers, whom she fears because of violence directed against her and a history of family disputes. In April, she transferred to another detention center in Dammam under administration of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Under the Hanbali interpretation of Shari'a law followed in the Saudi Arabia, judges may discount the testimony of persons who are not practicing Muslims or who do not adhere to the correct doctrine. Legal sources reported that testimony by Shi'a is often ignored in courts of law or is deemed to have less weight than testimony by Sunnis.

In March 2008 Ala' Amin Al-Sadeh from Safwa town in the eastern province claimed a Sunni judge in al-Khobar court refused his testimony about a marriage case of Sunni citizen because he is Shiite which means Kafer (unbeliever). The judge Al-Sadeh filed a complaint with the Ministry of Justice.

On 13 April 2008 Minister of Justice (Abdullah bin Muhammad bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh) sacked the head of the religious inheritance and Islamic endowments of Qatif Shi'a religious court (Sheikh Mohammed al-Obaidan) in the Eastern Province and appointed (Sheikh Sa'eed al-Madlooh) instead of him .

It is worth to mention that in last September four Shi'a judges (Sheikh Mohammed al-Obaidan , Sheikh Ghalib Al Hammad , Sheikh Abdul Rasul al-Beiyati and Sheikh Ali al-Mohsen) in the religious inheritance and Islamic endowments of Qatif and Al-Hasa courts submitted their resignation to the Justice Ministry in protest against the deteriorating conditions in their own branches .

There are two Shi'a courts in Saudi Arabia in Al-Hasa and in Qatif, which base their decisions on Shi'a school of jurisprudence and exercise jurisdiction over cases involving civil suits regarding marriage, divorce, domestic issues , inheritance and Islamic endowments . The Saudi regime tried to have jurisdiction over these courts and make over the resources of Shi'a religious endowments to Grand Court .

The Grand Court also interferences with Shi'a judicial affairs in the Eastern Province and tries to solve Shi'a cases according to the officially sanctioned version of Islam , and make those courts only governmental offices followed the official authorities without independence .

On 9 September 2008 Minister of Justice appointed (Sheikh Mohammad Hassan al-Juzairy) instead of the removal judge (Sheikh Mohammad al-Luwaim) and let the (Sheikh Hassan Bokhamseen) as assistant judge .

In May 2008 the court of Hafer al-Baten barred an Shiite lawyer from representing his Sunni client .

On 5 May 2008 , the prosecution service in Jeddah charged Ra'if Badawi with "setting up an electronic site that insults Islam," and referred the case to court, asking for a five-year prison sentence and a 3 million riyal (US\$800,000) fine. Ra'if Badawi managed his website to criticize the religious police and deal with alleged transgressions of them .

In May 2008 , an appeals court reviewed affirmed the verdict issued by al-Baha court the case of a biochemist (Khalid al-Zahrani, 32) worked in al-Baha hospital

was sentenced to eight months in jail and 600 lashes and his female student sentenced to four months and 350 lashes jail and flogging by a lower court in November 2007 for establishing a phone relationship that led her to divorce her husband.

The where the man in the southwest of the kingdom put him in charge of the masters research the student was doing at the King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah in 2002.

The woman obtained a divorce seven months after she was married in 2004. Her husband then raised the court case, saying the supervisor's phone calls led to the break-up.

Mr Zahrani has fled Saudi Arabia after contact with three appeal judges who will decide his case. He said in an email that he believes two of the three judges will support the original verdict.

On 4 August, 2008 Hamad Salim bin Naif, who served as head of a Shariah court in Saudi Arabia, was arrested along with his Moroccan wife after police raided their room in a Dubai hotel on Friday and found four grams of hashish in his possession. Shariah Saudi courts impose tough penalties for drug-related charges, and drug trafficking is punishable by death in the kingdom.

On 4 August 2008 the judge of criminal court in Taaf refused a testimony of the citizen Mazook al-Mathahibi because of his long mustache and ordered him to leave the courtroom .

Elections

There are no national elections, except the municipal elections which were held in the year 2005 (participation was reserved for male citizens only) to elect the members of 178 municipal councils. The other half will be appointed by the government. , but as they were non-partisan elections, no political parties were allowed.

Although the electoral law for municipal elections was formulated in 1977 but has not been put to use until municipal elections were held.

Municipal elections results are difficult to interpret because candidates ran as individuals, not as members of parties.

The women were excluded from participation in the municipal elections and they were not allowed to vote or stand as candidates, the justification for their exclusion was the logistical problems related to the lack of photo identification cards for women and the difficulty of staffing separate voting centers for them.

Freedom of Speech

Although the Basic Law of Government provides for freedom of speech and of the press as in article 39 which states that,

" Information , publication, and all other media shall employ courteous language and the state's regulations, and they shall contribute to the education of the nation and the bolstering of its unity. All acts that foster sedition or division or harm the state's security and its public relations or detract from man's dignity and rights shall be prohibited. The statutes shall define all that."

; however, the government restricted these rights in practice.

Also the article 3 of law of printing and publication states that :

" The aim of printing and publication is call to Islam, noble manners, leading to all that is good and proper and spreading of culture and knowledge shall be among the purposes of printed matters and publication ".

But the law governs press issues and the authorities stipulate dismiss or imprisonment for criticism of the members of the Government, and foreign heads of state.

The Ministry of Information must approve the appointment of, and may remove, all senior editors.

There are “red lines” the press does not cross, including criticism of the royal family and religious issues .

The Government owned and operated the radio and television companies and most of the newspaper publishing houses. The print media are privately owned but publicly subsidized

The government also monitors Internet news programs to ensure adherence to the government policies. It blocked access to selected Internet sites that contained information deemed politically sensitive and it also monitors e-mail and Internet chat rooms.

The Security Affairs Commission in the Ministry of Interior also has blocked all the websites of Saudi human rights organizations in Saudi Arabia or abroad . As (

The Committee for Defense of Human Rights in the Arabian Peninsula (CDHRAP) , Saudi Affairs , Safhat Byanat , Human Rights First Committee .

The Blocked Websites

Human Rights First Committee , Rasid Net , Ya Hussain web site , Rafed Net , Shi'a Net , UK based Islamic Reform Movement (IRM) , The sites of al-Islamic Tajdeed , al-Qala'a , al-Haramain for Islamic Media , The Committee for Defense of Human Rights in the Arabian Peninsula (CDHRAP) , Hajar web net , Wadi Najran Net , the U.S.-based Saudi Institute , Saudi Information Agency , al-Shi'I al-Ghaiour Net , al-Hewar al-Motamaden Net .

Reformists

The 10 prisoners who are so-called the advocates of political and constitutional reform are still in solitary confinement after being arrested in February 2007 when they were meeting in the villa of `Isam al-Basrawi' in Jeddah . They were accused of collecting money to send Saudi youth to “disturbed areas,” in Iraq , they involved helping insurgents in Iraq to commit violent actions which were responsible for thousands of deaths from Shiites martyrs .

In September 2007, Saudi authorities released (`Isam al-Basrawi) according to the Jeddah hospital's report which referred he was effected with cancer .

They claimed that they were advocates of political and constitutional reform and call themselves "advocates of a civil society" advocate an Islam-based constitutional monarchy and demanded the introduction of a parliament "elected by all adults, men and women . The Saudi authorities denied that claim and said they were listed under the terrorist accusation .

The suspects are :

- 1. Suliman Ibrahim Al-Reshoudi, former judge .**
- 2. Mousa Mohammed Al-Qarni, former university professor.**
- 3. Abdulrahman Mohammed Al-Shomari, former professor of education.**
- 4. Abdulaziz Suliman Al-Khereiji .**
- 5. Saifaldeen Faisal Al-Sherif.**
- 6. Fahd Alskaree Al-Qurashi .**
- 7. Abdulrahman Bin Sadiq .**
- 8. Saud Mohammed Al-Hashemi .**
- 9. Ali Khosifan Al-Qarni .**
- 10. Mansour Salim Al-Otha .**

In May 19, 2008 the citizen Matrook H. Al-Faleh, employee at King Saud University in Riyadh, detained by security forces for advocating constitutional reform.

On 19 May 2008 al-Hamid brothers launched a hunger strike protesting their bad treatment inside the prison.

On 7 July 2008 , Saudi authorities released the citizen Isa al-Hamid after four months of arbitrary detention in Buraida prison. The Saudi authorities, arrested him on 8 March 2008 and his brother Abdullah al-Hamid when they supported in July 2007 a group of women in front of intelligence offices whose husbands and relatives had remained in in Buraida Prison for over two years without charge, trial or access to legal counsel for encouraging the suspected Islamist militants .

Judge Ibrahim Husni of the Partial Court in Buraida sentenced Abdullah al-Hamid and his brother Isa al-Hamid to four and six months in prison, respectively. The Investigation and Public Prosecution Department had charged the brothers with violating a security cordon and instigating a public demonstration. Judge Husni's verdict cited the necessity to punish the two brothers because their actions may lead to acts forbidden in Islam.

On 28 August 2008 Saudi authorities released Abdullah al-Hamed a after he served a six-month prison sentence .

In November 2008 Saudi authorities prevented the human rights lawyer Abd al-Rahman al-Lahim from traveling to London to receive in person the 2008 Human Rights Defenders Award which he was honored with it by Human Rights Watch

It is worth to mention that in March 2004, Saudi authorities arrested al-Lahim and eleven activists for having signed and circulated petitions calling for reform . He was released later without charge and became the lead defense lawyer for the trial against al-Dumaini, al-Hamid, and al-Faleh, which started in August 2004.

In November 2004, al-Lahim was arrested after he stated on Al Jazeera satellite television that he believed his clients to be innocent. A court in May 2005 sentenced al-Dumaini, al-Hamid, and al-Faleh to nine, seven, and six years in prison, respectively.

In August 2005 Al-Lahim and his friends were released when King Abdullah pardoned them just days after acceding to the throne.

In 2005, he represented a woman, Umm Faisal, in a case against the religious police for wrongful deprivation of liberty.

In 2007, al-Lahim also represented the family of Salman al-Huraisi in appealing a court's acquittal of two religious policemen who faced charges of beating al-Huraisi to death in May 2007.

In December 2007 Al-Lahim represented the "Girl of Qatif" in her appeal of a sentence to 90 lashes for having in 2006 illegally "mingled" with an unrelated man in a car, before a gang of seven men set upon her and the man and raped them both.

On 11 December 2008 , Saudi authorities prevented the blogger Fouad al-Farhan from traveling to Beirut to attend a press forum, the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) .

It is worth to mention that Fouad al-Farhan who used his blog to criticize corruption and call for political reform, was detained on 11 December 2007 and was released from custody on 26 April, 2008 after a 137 days incarceration, held without any charges.

Freedom of Assembly

The Basic Law of Government does not contain any reference to freedom of assembly. Under Saudi regulations, all demonstrations are banned unless expressly sanctioned by the government ; such sanction is given only after authorities are satisfied that they would be in support of government actions or policies.

On 19 December 2008 hundreds of Shi'a citizens participated in a peaceful demonstration in Qatif in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in support of Palestinians who are under the Israeli siege of Gaza and condemned the Israeli occupation for Palestine . Human rights Activists joined the demonstration besides students , workers , women and youths.

The demonstrators rushed from the central courtyard in al-Qal'a District of Qatif headed to the main street of King Abdulaziz . Protestors chant slogans condemning the Israeli occupation and its siege on the Gaza Strip , holding the Israeli Entity and its allies in the US and UK responsible for the continuing suffering of the Palestinian people . Some of them holding pictures of Hizbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah .

The Saudi regime sent a lot of security forces which blocked access to side streets leading to the center of the city and made a human band round the demonstrators till they reach the main street and took photos for the

demonstrators . Upon arrival there , the Saudi forces attacked the demonstrators in an attempt to stop them from breaking into the other streets .

Members of Saudi General Intelligence (Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma) of Qatif arrested almost ten Shi'a citizens , among them the citizen (Fadhel Ibrahim al-Moghssal , 36 years , from Qatif) .

On 29 December 2008 , Saudi security forces forcibly dispersed a strong peaceful demonstration that took place in al-Qatif in support of Palestinian people of Gaza .

The protesters marched through the city of al-Qatif holding pictures of Palestinians wounded in Israel's military offensive against the Gaza Strip, which has killed more than 400 Palestinians since it began on Saturday.

The Saudi security forces charged the protesters with sticks and electric batons , fired shots in the air then fired rubber bullets to break up the protest , injuring up to twenty people. Some of the demonstrators clashed with security forces with shoes and rocks. Police dispersed the crowds and blocked the main street in al-Qatif and arrested dozens of people who were undressed and picked up in militant vehicles and transported to unknown location.

A similar, but smaller, a two-hundred peaceful demonstration organized in the eastern town of Safwa in the same day met with a like response from security forces . The demonstrators chanted slogans against Israel and the Arab languid rulers.

The demonstration marched from the district of Shariyah in Safwa town and after three hours the demonstrators dispersed.

Saudi security forces arrested some Shi'a citizens who did not participated with the demonstration , as:

1- The citizen (Mohammad Salih Gharib , 16 years) , from Safwa town , was arrested because police found the picture of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah in his car .

2- The Shi'a citizen (Sayyed Moneer Al Asa'd) , a former teacher from Safwa town was arrested due to putting a sign on the fence of his house refered to the events of Gaza .

3- The Shi'a citizen (Ali Hassan) , hawker , from Awwamiyah town charged of selling black shirts holding Hussainy slogans and pictures of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah.

Among citizens who detained during those demonstrations were :

- 1- Abdul Ali Mekki Al Bedouh , 75 years , sailor
- 2- Mohammad Abdul Ali Al Bedouh , 39 years , sailor
- 3- Abdul Naser Hassan Abo al-lerat , 39 years , cahier
- 4- Haider Jaafer al-Shabraka , 44 years, free employee
- 5- Reza Abdullah al-Shaker , 27 years, free job
- 6- Fadhel Ibrahim al-Moghassal , 35 years, teacher
- 7- Ramzi Haider al-beag , 40 years, employee
- 8- Zohair Abdul Jaleel al-Janbi , 26 years
- 9-Ali Abdul Jaleel al-Ghawi , 50 years, governmental employee
- 10- Amin Ali Al Samah , 32 years, professor
- 11- Kamel Abbas al-Ahmad , 43 years
- 12- Abdullah al-Meyad , 23 years
- 13- Abdul Hadi Hasaan Al Sh'aban , 46 years , mechanic
- 14- Hassan Ali al-Ghathban , 46 years , free employee

Women

Saudi women often must obtain permission from a guardian — a father, husband, brother or son — to work, travel, study, marry, or even access health care. They cannot open bank accounts for children, enroll them in school, obtain school files, or travel with their children without written permission from the child's father.

Saudi women are prevented from accessing government agencies that have not established female sections unless they have a male representative. Despite national regulations to the contrary, some hospitals require a guardian's permission to allow women to be admitted, agree to medical procedures for themselves or their children or be discharged, according to the report.

A Saudi woman's access to justice is also severely constrained. Women continue to have trouble filing a court case or even being heard in court without a legal guardian, according to the report. Women are required to wear a full-face veil in court and be accompanied by a male relative able to verify their identity, it said.

Mothers are denied rights to act on behalf of their offspring, barred from open bank accounts for their children or enrolling them in school.

Government denied women to exercise their right to freedom of expression , they continue to be subjected to severe forms of discrimination which impacts upon and compounds the wide range of human rights violations against women, including domestic violence.

Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world where women are forbidden to drive. And a Saudi woman faces harassment from religious police if they are not accompanied in public by a male relative acting as her chaperone.

Freedom of Religion

The Saudi regime's respect for freedom of religion remained poor. It does not protect the freedom of religion, despite the Basic law of government stipulates in the article 23 that : " The state protects Islam; it implements its Shari'ah; it orders people to do right and shun evil; it fulfills the duty regarding God's call.", but the citizens could not exercise this right in practice. The public practice of worship is severely restricted in practice to all but those who adhere to the state-sanctioned version of Sunni Islam.

The Saudi government's arrest and detention of Shiite adherents solely on the basis of their religion is a violation of this law. In addition, some of these arrests violate Saudi Arabia's obligations under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights , which obligates Saudi regime give all citizens the right to freedom of religion," Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." (Article 18)

Sectarian Discrimination

Shiites have subjected to a long-standing discrimination. They are the largest minority in the country. They estimates range from fifteen to twenty percent of a total population . They are concentrated in the oil-producing Eastern Province .

The ill-treatment of the Shiite minority ranges from employment discrimination, restrictions on travel, and harassment of students returning from study abroad, to massive arbitrary arrests and detention and the destruction of Shiite religious buildings.

The Saudi regime had launched campaign of intimidation, economic and cultural repression, and terror against Shiites, and a traditional government disregard to their demands for social justice .

Whereas the Saudi regime either deny practicing human rights violations or portray them as rare aberrations, the repression that Shiite adherents face is often openly in the name of heterodoxy.

Shiite religious practices are not seen by Saudi regime as right ,but as a wrong or sin or ideological deviation, or a betrayal of the strictly conservative version of Sunni Islam enforced by the Government .

In the Arabian Peninsula, Shi'a citizens have been labeled none Moslem. The Shi`a historically have been regarded by the Wahhabi clerics as non-Muslims or infidels.

Saudi regime seeks not only to exclude Shi'a citizens from Islam ,but also to deny that they are Saudi citizens. Shi`a adherents subject to very sever consequences if there are found publicly practicing certain aspects of their religion.

The Saudi authorities are very intolerant of any Shi`a activism, and were extremely suspicious of any activity in the Shi`a community.

Discrimination in Education

The Saudi regime discriminated against Shiites in the system of education. Shi'a students experienced discrimination within the primary and secondary school systems.

The Saudi system of education, however, is still administered in a manner which restricts educational opportunities for Shi'a students and does not provide equal access to universities.

A lot of Shi'a children have no access to education, others who had chances to have access to education , study in schools where they endure bad conditions and daily assaults on their dignity by Wahabi teachers , in violation of the rights guaranteed to them under the International human rights standards.

The facilities for schools in Eastern Province are markedly inferior those provided for other provinces. The Saudi system of education demonstrates its inherent inequality. Shiites are deprived access to education of any type or at any level. , and limited to education of an inferior standard. The Saudi regime does not provide a teaching staff and facilities of the same standard, or afford the opportunity to take the same or equivalent courses of study.

The rate of Shi'a students is little compared to students from other Islamic sects. Among the reasons for this very low percentage is the education system which based on discrimination against Shiites.

Discrimination is exclusion or preference made on the basis of religion which has the effect of impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in education.

For example, it was estimated that Shiites comprise 2 percent of professors at a leading university in Al-Ahsa, an area that is at least 50 percent Shiites. Also in Al-Ahsa, it was estimated that there were five Shi'a principals at the several hundred boys' schools and no Shi'a principals at the several hundred girls' schools. Although Shi'a principals were also underrepresented in Qatif. The Saudi schools are promoting a brand of religious intolerance .

The Saudi textbooks containing prejudicial religious statements content disparaging of Islamic groups. Many books retained language that was intolerant of Shiite religious beliefs which contain teaching materials and statements of intolerance towards Shiite minority and other religious groups, and such statements were made by public officials and teachers, who hold extremist religious views.

The educational materials also have references disparaging to other religious traditions. Saudi textbooks are hostile to Shiites, characterizing the faith as a form of heresy and promote violence against Shiite citizens. The regime does not take measures to remove the references to other religious traditions from some educational curricula.

For example , the Ministry of Education published the book of (Tawhid , Dr. Sheikh Saleh Ibn Fawzan Al-Fawzan the member of the so-called (Committee of Senior Ulema) for the 12th-grade . It propagates an ideology of hate toward the "rafidah (rejectionists)," that is, Shiites and Sunni Muslims who do not follow Wahhabi doctrine and others.

Some religious education teachers told their students that Shiite practices were un-Islamic and that Shi'a students must follow Sunni traditions to be true Muslims, others told their students that Shiites were not Muslims, but rather Kufaar (unbelievers) or Rafidah (rejectionists). The prejudicial questions on exams and some teachers continued to use anti-Shiite rhetoric, such as calling Shi'a students infidels or polytheists.

Public school students at all levels receive mandatory religious instruction based on the Government's interpretation of Sunni Islam. Shiite teachers are not permitted to teach certain courses in schools, such as history or religion, even in predominantly Shiite areas.

The Saudi regime imposed a ban on establishing Shi`a religious schools. The Government does not recognize several Hawzat (centers of Shiite religious instruction) located in the Eastern Province, recognize certificates of educational attainment for their graduates, or provide their graduates employment, all of which it does for Sunni religious training institutions, it also prevents them to travel abroad to continue their religious studying.

On 14 January 2008 , a Shi'a student in the secondary school for girls in the town of Awwameyah in Qatif was accused of sorcery because of holding Shi'a religious materials. Some students who have the same religious materials subjected by the principal to extensive questioning .

In Darien school for girls in Qatif , one of the Salafi teachers distributed booklets and publications has prejudicial and anti-Shi'a language.

In the intermediate school of Khweildiyah in Qatif , some teachers who follow the Wahabbi sect used strong anti-Shi'a rhetoric . In some cases they took punitive measures against Shi'a students.

Employment Discrimination

Discrimination made on the basis of religion has an effect of impairing equality in employment or occupation.

The Shiites of Arabian Peninsula are discriminated against in employment. The Saudi regime in particular practices discrimination against Shiites by excluding them from most government employment, especially in jobs with national security implications. Consistent with this policy, employment opportunities for Shiites are extremely limited.

Shi'a citizens are not afforded equal pay and the same professional opportunities as their Sunni counter parts , even they are able to pursue advanced degrees and professional careers.

The Saudi government imposed a ban on hiring any Shiites at Aramco. So Aramco began rejecting them for employment. The result is massive unemployment among Shiites.

Shi`a Mosques and Husseinats

Shiites in the Eastern Province are not allowed to build new mosques nor allowed to expand or remodel existing mosques. The Saudi regime also prohibits Shiites from building new Husseinats (religious community halls), where they conduct funeral ceremonies and other religious services. It also refuses to grant permission to build new halls.

Shiite mosques in mixed neighborhoods were required to recite the Sunni call to prayer, which is distinct from their own, during prayer times.

The Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and Discouragement of Vice issued a stern warning to the Shi`a Imams to abide by the " legitimate" call to prayer. The warning promised the violators severe punishment. In addition, although Shiites combine two of the daily five Sunni prayers, Shiite businessmen were often forced to close their shops during all five prayer times, in accordance with Sunni practices.

The government also forbids Shi`a religious scholars from publishing their teachings and prohibits the importation of any Shi`a books into the country. Similarly, there is a ban on religious audio cassettes. Those caught with Shi`a books, audio cassettes, or even pictures of Shi`a leaders are imprisoned and their possessions confiscated and destroyed.

On 15 January 2008 some members of the General Directorate of Investigation (al-Mabahith al-'Ammah) and the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (al-Mutawwa'in) , restricted Shi'a people of Rumailah village to celebrate of the Shi'a holiday of Ashura. They removed the signs , banners and flags from the streets . They also closed down some religious halls (hussaineits) because they hold ceremonies without government permission. They also banned bookshops to buy Shi'a books

On 5 June 2008 the Saudi General Intelligence (Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma) in the town of al-Rabeayah in al-Ahsa called the supervisors of the feminine Hawzat (religious school) of Om al-Baneen , located in a private house and undertakes teaching Islamic Shiite sciences , and delivered them an order from the governor of al-Ahsa (Badr Ibn Jalawi , who is stern, brutal , and characterized by their hatred of the Shi`a) to close down the Hawzat. the Saudi General Intelligence forced them to sign an undertaking to cease supporting it or open it in future , warned them to abide by the order . The warning promised the violators severe punishment.

On 5 June 2008 the Saudi authorities also closed down three Shi'a mosques in al-Khobar city and arrested three religious scholars and five citizens among them :

- 1- Sayyid Hashim Ali al-Naser , prayer leader of al-Khobar mosque**
- 2- Sayyid Mohammad Baqir al-Naser prayer leader of al-Azeziyah mosque**
- 3- Shaikh Yousif al-Mazeny prayer leader of al-Athaqba mosque**
- 4- The citizen Abdullah al-Mohana**
- 5- The citizen Ahmad Ibraheem al-Nabbat**
- 6- The citizen Hussain al-Rashid**
- 7- The citizen Mohammad Abo Salih**
- 8- The citizen Mosa al-Ameer**

The mentioned citizens released after two days and signed undertakings not leading prayer in future.

On 29 April 2008 , according to an order from the governor of al-Ahsa (Badr bin Jelwi) , al-Mabahith al-'Ammah of al-Ahsa called for second time the religious scholar (Sheikh Ali Hussain al-Ammar) from Battaliyah of al-Ahsa and subjected him for a long investigation because of his religious activities.

Sheikh al-Ammar is a teacher of al-Ahsa Hawzat (center of Shi'a religious instruction) and the supervisor of the feminine Hawzat (religious school) and prayer leader of al-Fatimiyah mosque in Battaliyah . He was released after signing an undertaking to close down the religious school and the mosque.

It is worth mentioning that in October 2007, the Saudi General Investigation arrested him for one day and released him next day after pressure from people and prominent figures .

On 15 September 2008 , a lot of Saudi security forces raided the cities Al-Ahsa and Qatif where Husseiniyat, mosques, houses, shopping malls and streets were decorated with lights, flowers and shiny buntings to celebrate the birthday of the Imam Hassan the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed (AS) , and destroyed all signs and decorations celebrating . Police arrested the youths who were in charge of these celebrations , took them to the police station .There, police interrogated them on occasion about upcoming Shi`a religious celebrations. Later they released after they signed statements pledging not to engage in further religious activities.

Police also banned celebrations surrounding the "Gergean" festival which occurs on the eve of the 15th day of Ramadan, is a street festival noted for children passing from house to house singing and collecting nuts and sweets from villagers .

The Ministry of Interior issued a decision banning the celebration of the Gergean festival. The ministry decision banning the commemoration quoted a 1993 fatwa (issued by the Permanent Committee for Scholastic Research and Religious Opinion) that stated such a celebration "is a heresy with no origins in Islam and every heresy is an aberration and should be abandoned and warned against and should not be celebrated anywhere, neither in schools nor establishments nor anywhere else."

Expiatory Fatwas

Although the Saudi regime claims discourage sedition and disunity according to the article 12 which states that : " The consolidation of national unity is a duty,

and the state will prevent anything that may lead to disunity, sedition and separation. " , but it is adopting the sectarian discrimination through direction to religious preachers and clerics of the government especially the employees of what is called the (religious establishment) to issue inflammatory fatwas against the Shiite minority, which holds all types of hatred that has contributed to inflame the sectarianism, and plant the seeds of sedition and disunity among Muslim population of the Arabian Peninsula.

Some imams (Prayer Leaders) issued intolerant fatwas or make religious statements that promote intolerance, violence, or hatred, against Shiites. These fatwas pose a grave threat not only the population of the Arabian Peninsula but the neighbor countries and they led Muslim Youths to join with the so-called Jihad against Moslems in other countries.

On 14 March 2008 the Saudi cleric, Sheikh Abdurrahman Al-Barrak, published a fatwa published on his website denouncing the two Saudi writers (Abdullah bin Bjad Al-Otaibi, and Yusuf Aba Al-Kheil) over articles they had published in the Saudi newspaper "Riyadh." In his fatwa he declared the "takfir" of the two writers, that is, he declared that their opinions constituted apostasy from Islam, making them infidels ("kuffar"), and subject to the death penalty if they did not repent and retract their views .

Several days later a group of 20 other Saudi clerics published and signed a letter supporting Al-Barrak's fatwa.

In May 2008 Sheikh Nasser bin Suleiman Al-Omer warned during one of his lectures in the Khaled Bin Al Waleed in Al Rawdah district in Riyadh and published on his website (almoslim.net) , the Saudi authorities that are planning to carry out settlement project in the strategic areas in the country as the Zionist Project in Palestine

In June 2008 , 22 Sunni clerics issued a statement accusing Shiites of destabilizing Muslim countries and humiliating Sunnis.

They described Shiites as "The rejectionists" and are the worst of the Islamic nation's sects and "infidels". Among the prominent signers of the statement Sheikh Abdel-Rahman al-Barrak , Sheikh Abdullah Ibn Abdur-Rahmaan al-Jibreen and Sheikh Nasser bin Suleiman Al-Omer .

In October 2008 the extreme Sunni cleric (Abdullah Sa'ad al-Mutairy) from the Saudi (religious establishment) issued a statement prohibited selling lands or houses for claimed that they aim to make a Shi'a State and then destroy Sunni Islam and spread their Moslem Sect.

The regime-backed religious establishment which opposes change in Saudi Arabia has issued a strongly worded statement signed by 190 radical Wahhabi clerics , intellectuals , professors and academics from Saudi Arabia and other countries among them Saud Al-Fanisan, professor of the Qur'an and its commentary at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Owaz al-Qarni and Khalid al-Ajmi professors in the same University.

The statement which appeared on several extreme Islamic Web sites on 8 November 2008 was issued to stand by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi who has charged in a statement that Shiite Muslims are "invading" Sunni societies in Arab countries and also described Shiites as "heretics" .

On 8 November 2008 , the regime-backed religious establishment issued a strongly worded statement signed by 190 radical Wahhabi clerics , intellectuals , professors and academics from Saudi Arabia and other countries among them Saud Al-Fanisan, professor of the Qur'an and its commentary at Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, Owaz al-Qarni and Khalid al-Ajmi professors in the same University.

The statement which appeared on several extreme Islamic Web sites was issued to stand by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi who has charged in a statement that Shiite Muslims are "invading" Sunni societies in Arab countries and also described Shiites as "heretics" .

On 20 August 2008 Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al-Alsheikh said Muslims only have two official celebrations — Eid Al-Fitr, which is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, and Eid Al-Adha .

He said that the celebration of other occasions such as birthdays, wedding anniversaries and mother's day were un-Islamic.

Several prominent Muslim scholars have supported the mufti, adding that celebrating such occasions is in imitation of people of the Jewish and Christian faiths.

The Saudi government funds the mosques and the research centers; and trains imams who became radicalized chaplains in Saudi mosques, and as it introduced Wahhabism to the schools and the universities.

Religious institutions and Islamic schools, are a particular concern, for these foster and train a hostile generation.

These publications pose a grave threat to Muslims and the materials instill a doctrine of religious hatred.

Some of the clergy in Saudi religious establishment allegedly refused compromising Islamic principles, and they claim that the State's policy based on the Koran and the Sunnah.

The Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice

The Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice was created in 1926, before even the official unification of the whole country six years later. It refers to the Saudi Arabian government bureaucracy employing "religious police" or Mutawwa'in to enforce Sharia Law.

It has approximately 10,000 fierce-looking, bearded members and thousands of volunteers, who patrol all public places and the streets to enforce a strict lifestyle , to ensure that women are covered, that sexes do not mingle, that shops close five times a day for prayers and that men go to the mosque and worship . The commission's brigades patrol the cities of the Kingdom with their conspicuous GMC cars. They hang around in groups of two or three members, backed up by the regular police.

Mutawwa'in are employed in direct order of command of King . They have broad and arbitrary discretionary powers of surveillance and entry to property, detention and interrogation of suspects, and, in some places, summary judgment and execution of punishment for perceived violations of Sharia.

They are tasked with enforcing Wahabbi rules as defined in Saudi Arabia. They actively prevent the religious practices of Muslims who do not adhere to the officially sanctioned Salafi (commonly called "Wahhabi") and other religions within Saudi Arabia.

Mutawwa'in should be accompanied by the regular police, but they often patrol without police escort.

They suppress the celebrations of Shi'a holidays , such as the celebration of Maulid al-Nabi (birthday of the Prophet) and Imams' birthdays the birthdays of many other holy persons, Shi'a rituals, especially the 'Ashura rituals .

The most serious and widely criticized incident attributed to them occurred on March 11, 2002, when they prevented schoolgirls from escaping a burning school in Mecca, because the girls were not wearing headscarves and head coverings required in public and abayas (black robes), and not accompanied by a male guardian. Fifteen girls died and 50 were injured as a result. Widespread public criticism followed, both internationally and within Saudi Arabia.

They locked the doors of the school from the outside, and barred firemen from entering the school to save the girls, beating some of the girls and civil defense personnel in the process.

The Mutawwa'in announced on June 10, 2007, the creation of a 'department of rules and regulations' to ensure the activities of commission members comply with the law.

The governmental National Society for Human Rights criticized the behavior of the religious police in May 2007 in its first report since its establishment in March 2004. In May 2006, the Interior Ministry issued a decree stating that "the role of the commission will end after it arrests the culprit or culprits and hands them over to police, who will then decide whether to refer them to the public prosecutor."

Abuse of authority by the religious police

On 6 February, 2008 , Yara a 37-year-old American businesswoman and married mother of three was thrown in jail by religious police for sitting with a male colleague at a Starbucks coffee shop in Riyadh .

She was bruised and crying when she was freed from a day in prison after she was strip-searched, threatened and forced to sign false confessions by the "Mutawwa'in" .

The Commission publicly denounced her with a statement posted on the Internet, saying her actions violated the country's Shariah law.

On 16 March 2008 — some members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice publicly humiliated a young woman while she was waiting in her car outside a school in the Al-Zahir district in order to pick up her brother's children several days ago .

Her family driver was in the car. The commission members arrested the driver, accusing him of having committed disgraceful acts with the woman. They ordered her to get out of the car and attempted to forcibly take her purse and mobile phone in front of bystanders .

On 18 March 2008 , a patrol from the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice in a quadric car chased a young couple in Tabuk who allegedly were fleeing from the religious police burned to death when their speeding car crashed into a truck.

The Commission denied its members were chasing the couple and said authorities are investigating the accident , but the authorities arrested the charged Mutween for investigation . On 26 May , they were released from custody due to lack of evidence related to their alleged participation in the accident . The head of the commission (Sulaiman bin Salim al-Anzi) said that they had nothing to do

with the accident and their patrol “happened” to be in the area when the crash happened .

On 27 March, 2008 some agents of the powerful religious police raided an apartment building in the eastern city of Dammam according of false information that there was a large number of men from different nationalities were frequenting a residential apartment late at night in a way that raised suspicions and the apartment was being used as a prostitution den .

The owner of the apartment was a 39-year-old Saudi national . The man died when he jumped to his death from 2nd floor apartment while fleeing raid .

The statement of the Commission alleged that the man has died after he jumped from in an attempt to flee a by , but his family said that the members of the Commission blockaded him and let him drop down . After they filed a compliment in the police , the head of the Commission said that the victim jumped out of the second floor, fell on the ground and was taken to hospital, where he died.

On 30 April 2008 , a patrol of two members from the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice accompanied police officer chased a car had two men and two women on an agricultural road in Medina for alleged “illicit privacy”. The chase caused turning over the victims' car and death all the riders.

Local police arrested the two commission members and the policeman following eyewitness reports that a commission car was seen in hot pursuit of a car shortly before the accident took place on the Khaleel Road .

The two detained officials are members of the commission’s office at the Al-Jarf district where the accident happened. Those who were killed in the accident included a woman and her daughter, according to the relatives who identified them .

In August 2008 , a member of the religious police killed his young sister, Fatima al-Matiri, in the city of Burida. He beat her to death after having her tongue cut out when he found a photo of the cross and colloquial Christian poems on her laptop.

In September 2008 members of the religious police (The Commission for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) raided a house of a woman without family provider and had four daughters. She was detained with a charitable came to offer help . The Mutawwa'in suspected that the man and the woman were on "illicit privacy," Illegal khalwa .

On 6 October 2008 a car was chased in the capital Riyadh by officers who suspected a couple of “illicit privacy” ended in a crash that damaged several vehicles. The chase ended when the man’s car hit a fence and four cars, according to eye-witness reports.

Officers arrested the woman after brutally beating the man and taking his identity card, the paper reported. The owners of the cars involved said they would ask the Commission for compensation for the damage .

On 6 October 2008 in Medina, Commission officers chased a man and his wife for alleged “illicit privacy,” resulting in a dual car pileup .

The man’s brothers got in a brawl with police and the wife's brother, who tried to assault the Commission officers, was interrogated and released on bail . The wife said she was the one who asked her husband not to stop because there was nothing to prove that the vehicle belonged to the Commission, and that is why she and her husband were scared and ran away .

On 5 November 2008 , a patrol of three members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice of Tabuk who chased a car had a man with his wife for alleged “illicit privacy,” on the road of King Khalid in Tabuk .

The couple's car turned over which caused fractures and bruises for the couple . They were transferred to the hospital of King Khalid .

The three members were released after two days in custody according to the order of Prince Fahad Bin Sultan Bin Abdul-Aziz, Governor of Tabuk Province.

On 18 December 2008 members of Mutawwa'in prevented a lot of pilgrims from Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Indonesia, and Turke to visit the Graveyard Eve (Ammuna Hawwain) in Jeddah under the wrong allegation that this practice is kind of heresy or heterodoxy.

Protest gatherings were held by shocked pilgrims , some of them tried to enter the Graveyard through climbing the fence , but the severe Mutawwa'in prevented them .

The case of Salman Al-Huraisi

On May 21, 2007, over 18 commission agents stormed Al-Huraisi family home in Riyadh’s Al-Urajja district without a warrant on suspicion of alcohol production, and then arrested 10 family members.

They detained Salman Al-Huraisi , 28-year-old, and transferred to their office in Riyadh . Al-Huraisi died there as a result of a beating by mutawwa'in. Two mutawwa'in were charged and acquitted at trial.

On 28 June 2007 the lawyer of Al-Huraisi's family had been denied access to a medical report on the fatality, but that Al-Huraisi had died after blows to the eye and head .

On November 28, 2007, the General Court of Riyadh found two CPVPV members not guilty of killing al-Huraisi.

29 December 2007 the case of Al-Huraisi, was transferred to the Cassation Court.

Investigators from the General Investigation and Prosecution Board held the two defendants responsible for the man's death after months of investigations, which included collating testimonies from other commission members and an autopsy report stating that Salman was beaten and died as a result of a blow to the head, which fractured his skull .

At the hearing, the attorney representing the two defendants offered the Al-Huraisi family an out of court financial settlement if they dropped all charges. However, the family, which is seeking the death penalty, refused the offer . Raif Badwi, a human rights advocate, has teamed up with the family's attorney, Yahya Al-Huraisi, to appeal the lower court's decision on Nov. 28 dropping all charges against two defendants in the murder case.

In 2007, Abdul Rahman Al-Lahem also represented the family of Salman al-Huraisi in appealing a court's acquittal of two religious policemen who faced charges of beating al-Huraisi to death in May 2007. The appeal is pending . Al-Lahem said that the newspapers (Al-Riyadh and Okaz) have "slandered the deceased and his family," and aimed to influence court proceedings on the case. Al-Lahem has filed the case after the two newspapers published a report that commission members had arrested a group of men, identifying one man in particular as Al-Huraisi's brother, for selling alcohol.

On March 18, 2008, the Court of Cassation in Riyadh overturned the acquittals and returned the case to the Riyadh General Court for a retrial. The Cassation Court, which is tasked with reviewing lower court rulings, ordered a retrial after judges at the General Court reached a not-guilty verdict in November last year. The court rejected the ruling after identifying several errors, including judges' failure to hear eyewitness testimonies .

9 April 2008 — Several members of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, who took part in the raid on the Al-Huraisi's house changed their testimonies at the start of a retrial into the case at the Riyadh

General Court and denied that two of their colleagues had participated in the raid and had beaten Al-Huraisi .

They told judges that their previous statements were made, while under pressure from investigators .

On May 14, 2008, the Riyadh General Court upheld its November 27, 2007 verdict.

On June 12, 2008, the family appealed the case yet again.

Judges at the Cassation Court rejected a previous not-guilty verdict by the General Court and ordered a retrial due to 12 errors in the case. One of the errors included the fact that judges had ruled without hearing the testimonies of eyewitnesses .

Investigators from the General Investigation and Prosecution Board held the two defendants responsible for the man's death after months of investigations, which included collating testimonies from other commission members and an autopsy report stating that Salman was beaten and died as a result of a blow to the head, which fractured his skull .

Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

The Saudi regime exercises a negative policy towards individuals who suspicious of adopting political attitudes contrary to the regime's policy even they fall among the climate of political reforms.

Although the Law of Criminal Procedure prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention as the article 2 states that , " No person shall be arrested, searched, detained, or imprisoned except in cases provided by law." , and the Basic Law of Government which its article 38 states that " Penalties shall be personal and there shall be no crime or penalty except in accordance with the Shari'ah or organizational law. There shall be no punishment except for acts committed subsequent to the coming into force of the organizational law. " , however, the security forces conducted large-scale arrests and detained many individuals without giving information about the reasons for arrest or charges. The prisoners are held incommunicado for months and not allowed access to family or lawyers.

On 4 February 2008 , two citizens from the Ismaili branch of the Shi'a Muslim community in Najran south west of the country (Hamad 'Ali Daseeny al-Hutailah and Hamad Qulayan al-Zbeydi) were arrested the Saudi General Intelligence (Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma) of Najran .

The arrest of the two men is believed to be connected with an interview that Shaikh Ahmad Turki al-Sa'ab gave to a foreign journalist in which he reportedly expressed some criticism of the Saudi Arabian authorities' policy towards the

Ismaili community in the country. Hamad 'Ali Daseeny al-Hutailah acted as an interpreter during the interview. The reasons for Hamad Qulayan al-Zbeydi's arrest are unknown, but he is believed to have also been present during the interview .

On 15 January 2008 the Saudi General Intelligence (Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma) of Najran called the citizen (Shaikh Ahmad Turki al-Sa'ab) a leading member of the Ismaili branch of the Shi'a Muslim community in Najran. He was subjected to a summary investigation there . He was accompanied by his relatives who were allowed to return to Najran while he was taken to Riyadh , where he left behind bars in Oleisha prison .

The director of General Intelligence of Najran told him that the director of Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma of Riyadh want to investigate with him because Saab was one of six people who met the head of Saudi regime Abdullah on April 26 2007 and presented the petition signed by 77 Najran notables demanding the sacking of Najran's governor (prince Musha'l Bin King sa'ud Bin Abd al-Aziz) who is suspected of encouraging the settlement of Sunni Yemenis in Najran , a move aimed at altering the demographic and sectarian composition of Najran .

On Sunday 22 June 2008 , al-Mahbahith al-'Aamma (General Investigations) in the eastern town of Hufuf in al-Ahsa , detained the prominent Shiite religious scholar (Shaikh Tawfiq al-'Amer) according of an order from the governor of al-Ahsa (Badr Ibn Jalawi) .

Al-'Amer's family has not been able to obtain any news about him because the authorities refused to justify that detention or give any information about the whereabouts of al-'Amer's.

Shaikh al-'Amer criticized in his Friday prayers sermon the statement issued in May by the Wahabbi religious establishment and signed by 22 Saudi Wahhabi clerics which attacked Shiites and consider them as Sunnis' enemies." He criticized it for inciting hatred and justifying violence against Shiites and called the government to take strict stand towards the extreme Wahabbi clerics . Al-'Amer was previously held in April 2005 over his supporting religious and societal activities in his town .

On 7 September 2008 , (al-Mahbahith al-'Aamma) of al-Hufuf , arrested (Shaikh Tawfiq al-'Amer) for the second time .

According to a usually reliable source the arrest was in conformity with a direct order from the Interior Minister (Nayef bin Abdulaziz) .

On 17 September 2008 , Shaikh Tawfiq al-'Amer was released by the authorities after ten days of arbitrary detention .

It is worth to mention that Al-'Amer was previously held in on 22 June 2008 for criticizing in his Friday prayers sermon the statement issued in May by the Wahabbi religious establishment and signed by 22 Saudi Wahhabi clerics which attacked Shiites and consider them as Sunnis' enemies" , showing in his sermon how dangerous it could be to the community, and asked the government to prevent such statements and to remedy the results of it.

On 10 October 2008, the Saudi Shi'a poet (Fareed Abdullah al-Nemer) , from the town of Awamiya in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia , was arrested with his wife and daughter upon their arrival at King Fahad Causeway Bridge check-point on the Saudi Bahrain frontier. They were returning from Bahrain after performing visit to their relatives there .

The police searched them, released his wife and daughter after confiscating their mobiles . The poet al-Nemer was held at the King Fahad check-point detention center for hours then transferred to custody of the General Investigation Directorate (*al-Mabaheth al-'Ammah*) of Al-Khobar and later to al-Dammam's. On 15 October 2008 , he was released after five days behind bars.

On 14 October 2008 the General Investigation Directorate (al-Mabaheth al-'Ammah) of al-Ahsa arrested the Shi'a citizens (Ahmad Abbas al-tariki , Ja'far Ahmad al-Makki , Hassan Ahmad al-Makki , Sami Zeki Bokhmseen , Kamal Makki al-Mutaw'a , Salih Ibrahim al-tariki) from the village of Dalwa in Al-Ahsa in the Eastern Province due to sponsoring religious activities in occasion of the annual celebration of Imam Hassan's birthday., which is not permitted by Saudi authorities .

On 13 October 2008 the General Investigation Directorate (al-Mabaheth al-'Ammah) of al-Ahsa called the citizen Hussain Abdulmohasen al-Hassan , 25 year, student of Shari'a college of Ahsa , from al-Rumaila town of al-Ahsa in the Eastern Province , under the charge of participation of the annual celebration of Imam Hassan's birthday and organizing the celebration of Gargean on the fifteenth day of Ramadan (children dress in traditional clothes going door-to-door asking for nuts and candies) , a celebration spread in most Arabian Gulf countries. He was released on 20 October after serving a week of imprisonment .

On 11 January 2008 , some members of al-Mahbahith al-'Ammah (General Investigations) of al-Ahsa raided the bookshop of the citizen (Reza Abdul Aziz al-Ghasham) 23 years , and arrested him under the charge of trading Shi'a religious books.

Saudi authorities called his wife and subjected her to a long investigation. His father Sheikh Abdul Aziz al-Ghasham (a prominent Shiite religious scholar ,

Imam al-Montazar mosque in al-mobarraz town of al-Ahsa) visited him for one time , and saw the signs of torture on his son's body.

On 8 June 2008 , Al-Mahbahith al-'Amma of al-Hufuf arrested the citizen Nayef Hassan Ali al-Baqshi , 32 years , (the brother of the Shiite religious scholar , Sheikh Rabee'a Hassan Ali al-Baqshi , the prayer leader of al-Kharas mosque in al-Ahsa) from the town of al-Mobarraz, al-Nazha district of al-Ahsa , married with two daughters , a teacher of primary school, , delivered to al-Dammam Public Prison without any clarification for his family .

The arrest of this citizen is believed to be connected with his friendship with the detainee (Reza al-Ghasham) under the charge of organizing a pilgrimage to the holy shrines .

Reza al-Ghasham was arrested previously in November 2004 with Shiite Sheikh Abdul Aziz alJumei'a , 30 years , and the citizen Ali al-Dahneen , 17 years , when some members of al-Mahbahith al-'Amma raided their bookshop in al-Kharas town , then transformed to al-Ahsa prison.

According of orders from the Governor of Al Ahsa Province (the Prince Badr Ibn Mohammed Ibn Jalawe) , the General Investigation Directorate (al-Mabaheth al-`Amma) on 21 October 2008 arrested the citizen Abdullah Hajji al-Hammad , 23 year, an employee , from al-Rumaila town of al-Ahsa , under the charge of sponsoring religious activities in occasion of the annual celebration of Imam Mahd's birthday before two months .

According to his family , the citizen al-Hassan did not participate of this year celebration because he was forced last year by police to sign pledge agreeing not to participate of any religious activity in future.

Al-Hassan was detained in al-Ahsa prison without giving his family any information of his fate .

On 24 August 2008 , the Saudi General Intelligence (al-Mabaheth al-'Amma) of Rabe'yyah town in Qatif arrested the Shi'a citizen Sayyed Ali Alawi al-Derweesh , the supervisor of (al-Abbas Mosque) under the charge of Hanging Hassan Nasrallah's picture and other pictures of high rank Shi'a clerics on the outer wall of his mosque .

On 25 August 2008 , the General Intelligence (al-Mabaheth al-'Amma) arrested al-Nemer after having summoned him to the office of the Qatif governorate .After one day behind bars he was released .

Al-Nemer is the imam (prayer leader) of Imam Hussein Mosque in Awamiyah town of Qatif. He had used the mosque to criticize corruption of Saudi government and call for political reform and religious freedom in Saudi Arabia.

On 15 June 2008 al-Mahbahith al-'Aamma (General Investigations) of al-Ahsa arrested , Sayyed Shobbar Kadhun al-Ali from al-Rumaila village in the Eastern Province, aged 28, married, an employee in local medical com. He was told that his arrest was according of an order from the governor of al-Ahsa , Badr Bin Muhammad Bin Abdullah Bin Jalawi which subjects to arrest individuals engaged in public religious activities not in conformance with the officially accepted interpretation of Islam such as the celebration of the Shi'a holiday of Ashura .

It is worth to mention that the citizen Sayyed al-Ali participated in Ashura celebrations last year and was lifting a banner of Imam Hussain (P.B.U.H) during a public march, which caused a criminal accusation against him as a violator of the government orders.

On 24 December 2008 the Saudi General Intelligence (Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma) of Qatif arrested the human rights activist Mekhlef Deham al-Shammari the Sunni tribal leader who is a member of the Saudi Human Rights Commission (HRC) according of an order from the Prince Mohammed Bin Fahad Bin AbdulAziz Al Saud the governor of the Emirate of Eastern Province .

The arrest was due to a former complaint at the Board of Grievances filed by al-Shammari against the Emirate of Eastern Province because it caused his arrest for 120 days without charge, therefore he asked for redress and compensation.

Al-Shammari subjected to beat and assault on the hands of members of the General Intelligence (Al-Mabahith Al-'Aamma) and was driven to an unknown location without his family getting to hear anything about him.

Prison Conditions

Saudi prisons and jails generally do not meet internationally accepted standards and overcrowded (up to 200 prisoners might share a single room), unsanitary, and not air-conditioned.

Inmates slept on a bare floor; in some cases, they were provided with a pad, but no mattress. They had to supply their own blankets. There was little ventilation and a hole in the floor served as a lavatory. Prisoners were liable to suffer heat stroke and sometimes complained of difficulty in obtaining adequate medical treatment.

Political prisoners are held in prolonged detention without trial, and routinely tortured during interrogations.

Relatives and lawyers often were unable to obtain access to prisons for visits. Restrictions were placed on visits to prisoners incarcerated for political crimes,

limiting the number of visits allowed for each prisoner and the total number of visitors allowed in the prison at one time .

The Saudi regime does not allow members of international human rights groups of any type access to prisons, where persons accused of political subversion are detained. There was systematic abuse of political prisoners by guards and the power of arrest and detention , but the authorities neither conduct investigation of abuse nor remove offending guards or punish individual officers who violate regulations.

On 4 May 2008 seven inmates died in a fire at at the al-Ahsa prison in the Eastern Province after setting fire to mattresses inside cells to protest over conditions .The prisons chief Ali al-Harithy said the seven died "because of a dispute between some of them , "three security officers and 9 other prisoners had also been taken to hospital.

Forgotten Prisoners (languishing in jail)

The protesters are hoping to draw attention to "flagrant human-rights violations" of prisoners held without trial, especially the 9 forgotten Shi'a prisoners , the distinct group of prisoners whom Saudi authorities never charged or brought to trial who arrested on suspicion of involvement in attacks on June 25, 1996, in Khobar that killed 19 US military personnel and injured 350 people. They are :

The forgotten Shi'a prisoners are still be held in al-Ha'ir prison over twelve years . They have been arrested as suspects in connection with the bombing of a US military complex at al-Khobar in June 1996 which left 19 US servicemen dead .

They have not been granted access to lawyers , no opportunity to challenge the legality of their detention and have not been allowed to family visit .

The Saudi regime has given no indication that their trial will start . It has also ignored requests for visas submitted by delegates of International human rights organizations who were hoping to meet them , but the Saudi regime rejected such calls and insisted on accusing them unjustly.

- 1- Hani Abdul Rahim al-Saygh , 36 , from al-Qatif / Sihat**
- 2- Abdullah Ahmad al-Jarrash , from al-Qatif / al-Qala'a**
- 3-Hussain Moghayis , 33 , from al-Qatif / al-Bahari**
- 4-Abdul Karim Hussein al-Nemer , 45 , al-Dammam**
- 5- Sayyid Mostafa alQassab , 36 , from al-Qatif / Mayyas**
- 6- Sayyid Fadhel al-Alawi , 32 , from al-Qatif / al-Jaroudiyah**

- 7-Mustafa Ja`far al-Mo`llim , 28 ,from al-Qatif / al-Jaroudiyah
- 8-Ali al-Marhoon , 32 , from al-Qatif / al-Jaroudiyah
- 9-Salih Mahdi Ramadhan , 32 , from al-Qatif /al-Jaroudiyah

They are all in the mabahith prison in Dammam, after spending up to nine years in al-Ha'ir mabahith prison without charge or trial.

Torture

The Saudi detention enforcement authorities violate the articles of the criminal procedure code which the article 2 of it states that an arrested person "shall not be subjected to any bodily or moral harm" or to "any torture or degrading treatment". The article 38 of the Basic Law which states that " Penalties shall be personal and there shall be no crime or penalty except in accordance with the Shari'ah or organizational law. There shall be no punishment except for acts committed subsequent to the coming into force of the organizational law."

Torture is used frequently to extract confessions which can be used to obtain convictions and sometimes for discipline , which violates the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) .

The imposition of flogging sentences by Saudi courts which range from dozens to thousands of lashes are legal punishments inconsistent with Shri'a (Islamic Laws) and considered to be torture under international law.

In June 2006 , the prisoner (Mo'naz al-Dosary) died in prison of al-Hair under torture while being held in custody. He was subjected to dangerous hits on his head by prison guards , then rushed to hospital where died there. The hospital released a report alleged that his death was normal.

In the same month , some prisoners (Saudi citizen "Abdullah al-Harithy" and three foreign prisoners) reportedly died under torture in the Breeman General Prison in Jeddah.

In June 2007 , the prisoner (Ahmed ibn Mussalam Al-Bulawi , 50 years) died under torture while being held for questioning in one of the Muttawa's offices in the city of Tabuk. The officers from the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice or the Muttawa are accused of responsibility for the death of Al Bulawi.

Suleiman al-Hareesi, 28 years , from Riyadh died on 23 May 2007, while being held in custody of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice under the hands of four Muttawa who alternately beat him until death. There has been no official report on his case.

The common methods of torture in Saudi Prisons

- * **Insult the detainee, his faiths, his sacred ideologies and his family members.**
- * **Telling him bad news in order to exhaust him psychologically.**
- * **Spitting on the detainee's face.**
- * **Conducting the interrogation with the detainee while he is naked.**
- * **Beating by sticks, batons, plastic cords , makeshift whips and electric flex on the soles of feet, hands and other parts of body. The victims suffer bruises, internal bleeding, broken bones, lost teeth, ruptured organs .**
- * **Pulling out the finger nails by pincers.**
- * **Clipping the parts of the detainee's body particularly breasts by clippers or put them between tow keys and pressing on them fiercely.**
- * **Threatening the detainee with sexual assault , his wife or his sister before him .**
- * **Sleep deprivation and exposure to extremes of heat or cold .**
- * **Prolonged standing which causes swelling of the legs .**
- * **Submersion in water .**
- * **Stubbing out of cigarettes on the body .**
- * **Deprivation access to a toilets which causes a perforated colon , hemorrhoids and a ruptured bladder .**
- * **Thrust the shoe into the mouth.**
- * **Using electric batons and electric chairs.**
- * **Suspending the detainee upside down with his feet tied to a fan ceiling while it is turning and during winter they turn on air conditioner.**
- * **Pulling out the facial and chest hair.**
- * **Dipping the head of the detainee in dirty water or in the toilet .**
- * **Offering dirty food for him includes insects which causes severe colic.**
- * **Depriving the detainee from taking a shower during the period of interrogation when he is in the solitary confinement.**
- * **Burning with a hot iron.**
- * **Using scissors to tear the skin of body from back .**

Ratification of International Conventions

The Saudi regime has not become a party to most of the important international human rights instruments now accepted throughout the world. It has claimed that fundamental principles of Islam prohibit its acceptance of many international human rights instruments , but in fact , there is no fundamental contradiction between the teachings of Islam and respect for human rights .

Saudi regime has a lamentable record of formal adoption of the major international human rights agreements and has adopted no other major international agreements relating to human rights.

It has not subscribed to any of the principal covenants or conventions which require formal reporting or accountability for human rights practices. Saudi regime, for example, has not acceded to the two fundamental human rights treaties, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These Covenants are two of the most fundamental human rights instruments in the world.

Saudi regime, has never supported the conventions for freedom of association and collective bargaining and the conventions against racial discrimination, torture, and discrimination against women.

Recommendations

The Saudi Regime should :

- * Issue a permanent constitution , clarifying the basic principles of government and of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled and stating the basic rights of citizens .**
- * The investigation of all aspects of the judicial system and areas of competence ; modernizing its laws and taken every necessary step to guarantee independence of the judiciary.**
- * Commitment to total equality among all citizens in all aspects of their life, without distinction based on ethnic, tribal, sectarian or social origins.**
- * Grant Muslim women their rights to share in numerous fields of public life within the Islamic laws (Shari`a) and to allow them to participate in building society.**
- * Reform educational system .**
- * Apply justice and equality, rights granted and duties assigned in full equality among all citizens .**
- * Ensure the rights of individuals and society , elimination all forms of restriction on people's rights , to ensure the enjoyment of human dignity.**

- * Government officials, especially those occupying the highest positions, whose corruption or dereliction are proven must be diligently scrutinized and must be made accountable with no exceptions regardless of any other consideration .**
- * Ratify international and regional treaties which seek to strengthen protection against the torture or ill-treatment .**
- * Establish effective independent mechanisms to monitor the actions of law enforcement officials so that complaints of torture, ill-treatment and discrimination within the criminal justice system can be properly investigated and appropriate remedies implemented.**
- * Act with due diligence to protect children, women, and racial minorities and other groups facing discrimination against violence at the hands of non-state actors .**
- * Review cases and releasing those who have been detained or imprisoned on account of their religious belief or practices.**
- * Exclude offensive and discriminatory language from textbooks and the school curriculum.**
- * Improve the situation of Shiite community and rein in domestic expressions of anti-Shiite hostility .**
- * Expand Shiite presence in government institutions, in particular in national and local councils including the Majlis al-Shura and Regional Councils.**
- * Lift remaining restrictions on Shiite religious rituals and practices, specifically by allowing construction of mosques and community centers (Husseinat) and the production, printing, and circulation of religious materials within their communities.**