

## **Bahraini people positive about reforms**

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**Bahrain Tribune** - 25 February, 2007

A majority of Bahrainis are optimistic about the direction of reforms in the country over the past six years, according to a survey by a human rights group.

In a poll covering 8,420 Bahrainis aged 20 and over, 84 per cent of them agreed that women's rights and their participation in the political scene had greatly improved since 2001.

Fourteen per cent said they disagreed while two per cent were undecided.

The survey was conducted by the Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society (BHRWS) from October 2006 to January 2007.

The survey report was released this month to mark the sixth anniversary of the Charter.

Sixty-two per cent of the respondents expressed agreement that the legal reforms promoted transparency and the fight against corruption while 22 per cent said no. Sixteen per cent were undecided.

"The survey was conducted to feel the pulse of the people. Generally the mood is still positive about reforms and the democratisation process," said BHRWS international relations director Faisal Fuladh.

He said the survey, done over a three-month period, included respondents visited in their homes, malls and offices.

The survey was conducted by a BHRWS team of volunteers under the supervision of chairperson Huda Nonoo.

"The society prepared the report for the sixth anniversary and it only reveals that the people are very hopeful about our the Charter," said Fuladh.

The Arabic version of the report was released last week.

The anniversary of the charter is traced to February 14, 2001 when 98.4 per cent of Bahrain's voting population went out to say yes to a referendum calling for a new Action Charter.

On a question on whether the rights of civil societies had improved, 73 per cent of the respondents said yes while 12 per cent said no. Fifteen per cent were undecided.