

## **NGOs in Bahrain warned of action over fund-raising campaigns**

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NGOs in Bahrain would face disciplinary actions if they organise fun-raising activities before and after Eid Al Fitr without the permission of the Social Development Ministry.

Head of Registration at the Ministry Sultan Al Hamadi said the decision also bars charitable societies from accepting donation from regional and foreign organisations without informing the ministry.

"Caretakers and managers of worshipping places have been instructed not to allow societies to collect donations from people before submitting permission papers from the ministry," he said.

NGOs should seek permission from the NGOs Directorate by filling a form and submitting the required documents. Upon accepting donations, societies have to give people receipts of their donations bearing the names of the organisations and serial numbers.

Al Hamadi said the ministry expected financial statements from NGOs carrying details about revenues they generated.

"NGOs shouldn't violate the societies law and avoid sending donations to individuals or organisations outside the kingdom without informing the ministry as sending financial assistance to establishments not authorised by their government is an illegal act."

The ministry also warned societies and charity funds not to involve children and minors in their fund-raising campaigns. He said the ministry wouldn't reject any donation campaign if it fulfils the conditions but civic organisations should also follow the rules and don't put children's lives in danger who sometimes have to cross roads to attract car drivers to donate money.

Banning children from taking part in donation campaigns comes as part of the kingdom's obligations towards the International Children Law and International Labour Law that bans child labour, he said.

The ministry's move does not aim to control the freedom of societies to hold their own campaigns, but to ensure more effective and transparent donation activities.

The process of seeking permission doesn't take more than 24 hours, but could ensure a high level of cooperation between NGOs.