

## **NGOs lament Bahrain human rights report**

Bahrain Tribune

*19 February 2008*

Shura Council Member Faisal Fulad lashed out at the Bahrain authorities yesterday for preparing a weak report. "This is a compilation of official statements rather than presenting a clear picture of the state of human rights on the ground. They have not consulted NGOs or unions when they drafted this report. There is no transparency in this report which will be reviewed in Geneva," he said.

Non-government organisations expressed their dissatisfaction over the Bahrain National Human Rights Report and called for amendments as they feel that the report failed to incorporate vital issues.

" The Report does not mention about the freedom of expression in Bahrain. It neither mentions about websites being blocked by the authorities nor the torture allegations," claimed Bahrain Human Rights Society(BHRS) head Abdulla Al Derazi.

Al Derazi said the shadow report sent by the NGO's had more teeth and captured comprehensive picture of the situation as compared to the National Report prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Meanwhile, the United Nation Council would review the human rights records of forty-eight countries in three batches of 16 each in April and Bahrain was among the first group of 16 states scheduled to submit its report on February 25.

Al Derazi added "Our report is strong enough to question the authorities when the discussion takes place. We have addressed the issue of the Rally law and excessive use of force against protesters and human rights activists". He said that the report was prepared by BHRS in collaboration with the now defunct Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH). "We have mentioned human rights violations until November last year in our report, however, according to the National Human Rights report there is no torture in Bahrain. A copy of the BHRS report secured by Tribune stated that Bahrain had not implemented 11 commitments it pledged before being elected at the Human Rights Council. The six-page shadow report put under the scanner the NGO law, which granted the Ministry of Social Development the right to licence and prohibit NGOs from receiving any foreign aid.

A codified family law was also proposed in the report, which it claimed the government was not interested in its implementation.

Sexual discrimination continued in workplaces as per the findings of the shadow report. The report added that women were denied senior posts in both the private and public sectors. It further highlighted the plight of female domestic workers from not being protected by the Bahrain Labour Law. It also called for considering spousal rape as a crime in the Bahrain Law and Amendment of Decree No. 56 of 2002, which gave immunity to those officials who have tortured victims. It also cited the case of Ali Al Kabaz and Jaffar Ahmed who were allegedly beaten up by the anti-riot police. The shadow report sent for review to the Council in Geneva

highlighted that there was no law on right to information, which ensured access to key information on state affairs and top ranking officials. The Commission would review all the shadow reports received from Bahrain and would summarise it in 5 pages, which would later be added to the National Report.

The Bahraini delegation and NGOs will come face to face in Geneva on April 7 for a three-hour interactive dialogue that would be broadcasted live. The shadow report highlighted the failure of the authorities to establish a National Human Rights Council which was announced by the Cabinet but did not see the light of the day. The urgent need to form a National Committee for Truth and Reconciliation was mentioned which has not addressed the issue of the victims during the nineties. It's not all criticisms as the shadow report praised the Bahrain government for granting the right to housing for those with limited income, free basic education (up to secondary stage), free medical services, employment services, and unemployment insurance and retirement scheme.