

HUMAN RIGHTS IN BAHRAIN



***A Practical Guide for Global Institutions,
UN Agencies, and Policy Advisors***

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DESIGNED FOR INTERNATIONAL NGOS, UNITED NATIONS ENTITIES,
INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, RESEARCHERS, AND DIPLOMATIC PROFESSIONALS

Disclaimer

This publication is an independent analytical work by the author. It is intended to describe existing laws, institutions, and publicly available human rights mechanisms in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Nothing in this document should be understood as endorsing, criticizing, or questioning the authority, legitimacy, or international standing of the Kingdom of Bahrain or any of its public institutions.

The framework is provided for informational and analytical purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or represent the position of any government or international organization.



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Abstract

This publication presents a practical analytical framework for understanding human rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It maps selected international human rights treaty obligations to corresponding domestic constitutional provisions, legislation, and institutional oversight mechanisms.

Designed for international actors working in or on Bahrain, the framework provides a structured reference tool to support informed engagement, reporting, and programme design. Rather than providing an exhaustive legal commentary, it clarifies applicable international standards, identifies responsible national institutions, and highlights publicly available accountability mechanisms relevant to external analysis and cooperation.

Intended Audience

This framework is intended for:

- International non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- United Nations agencies and consultants
- International financial and development institutions
- Policy advisors, researchers, and diplomatic staff

It may also be of interest to academics, journalists, and practitioners seeking a concise overview of Bahrain's human rights architecture.

How to Use This Framework

Each thematic section of this framework follows a consistent structure to facilitate ease of use:

1. International Standard – the relevant treaty provision or obligation
2. Domestic Legal Basis – constitutional or legislative provisions in Bahrain
3. Responsible Institutions – entities mandated with implementation or oversight
4. Practical Reference Points – publicly available mechanisms, reports, or processes relevant to international engagement

Users are encouraged to consult primary legal texts and official institutional publications for the most up-to-date information.

Independence and Disclaimer

This framework is an independent analytical work developed by the author. It is provided for informational and analytical purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or official documentation

Edition History

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This edition reflects structural reorganization and reframing for independent publication and international use. The framework reflects the legal and institutional landscape as of 2025 and may be updated periodically to account for subsequent developments.

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Positioning This Framework

This framework is intended to be complementary to, but distinct from, national human rights strategies and action plans developed by state authorities, including the Kingdom of Bahrain's National Human Rights Plan. While national plans articulate government-led priorities and implementation pathways, this framework serves a different function as an independent reference tool for international actors seeking to understand Bahrain's human rights architecture as it exists in law and institutional practice.

Rather than outlining policy commitments or future reforms, the framework focuses on mapping international human rights standards to existing domestic legal provisions, clarifying the mandates of key national institutions, identifying oversight and accountability mechanisms, and highlighting practical reference points for engagement, reporting, and programme design.

It does not replicate national planning documents or assess policy implementation. Instead, it provides a procedural and analytical orientation to Bahrain's human rights system to support informed and context-sensitive engagement.

About the Author

Leena Al-Belooshi is a human rights expert, interfaith leader, and PhD scholar in Islamic legal jurisprudence, with over a decade of experience across academia, law, and public service in the Middle East and in international and cross-border contexts. Leena Al-Belooshi trains government officials, develops national-level educational curricula, and leads interfaith and dialogue initiatives. Most recently, she served as Head of Education and Dialogue at the Abrahamic Family House, where she designed and delivered programmes focused on coexistence, tolerance, and rights-based education grounded in shared humanity.

Her research examines how Islamic legal jurisprudence can inform contemporary human rights engagement and governance frameworks, with an emphasis on shared humanity and legal and ethical accountability. Leena Al-Belooshi works with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to support evidence-based human rights engagement and capacity-building.

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Part I: International Commitments and Treaty Framework

This section provides an overview of the international human rights treaties ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain. It serves as the normative foundation for the domestic legal and institutional frameworks outlined in subsequent sections.

Agreement	Ratified Date
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	1990
The Convention on the Rights of the Child	1991
Ratification of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	1998
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	2002
The Convention on the Rights of the Child with regard to child involvement in armed conflicts	2004
The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding child sale, prostitution and pornography	2004
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	2006
The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	2007
The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	2011

Part II: Institutions, Oversight, and Engagement Pathways

This section outlines the key national institutions responsible for the promotion, protection, and oversight of human rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It clarifies institutional mandates, functions, and publicly available outputs, with the aim of supporting informed engagement by international actors. The section is intended as a practical reference for understanding oversight mechanisms and institutional entry points.

National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) was established in 2014 pursuant to national legislation to promote and protect human rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Its mandate aligns with international standards relating to national human rights institutions and covers the full spectrum of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

NIHR's mandate includes receiving complaints, monitoring human rights conditions, reviewing legislation, and providing recommendations to relevant authorities.

2. Powers and Functions

NIHR is empowered to:

- Receive and examine complaints related to alleged human rights violations
- Conduct monitoring activities, including visits and investigations
- Review existing legislation and propose amendments to align domestic law with international human rights standards
- Prepare thematic, annual, and special reports on human rights issues
- Contribute to treaty body reporting processes and international review mechanisms

NIHR also conducts training and capacity-building activities for governmental, public-sector, and security institutions.

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

NIHR operates as an independent national institution as provided for in its establishing legislation. It submits reports and recommendations to national authorities, including the legislative branch, and makes its findings publicly available through official publications.

Its institutional role includes engagement with regional and international human rights mechanisms and cooperation with United Nations treaty bodies and review processes.

4. Outputs and Public Record

NIHR produces:

- Annual human rights reports, submitted to national authorities and published publicly
- Special and thematic reports addressing specific incidents or thematic concerns
- Submissions to international mechanisms, including treaty bodies and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
- Educational publications and training materials on human rights law and practice

These materials are publicly accessible and constitute a primary reference source for assessing institutional positions and official responses.

Specialized Mandate – Commissioner for the Rights of the Child

In 2023, a Commissioner for the Rights of the Child was appointed under the National Institution for Human Rights. The Commissioner functions as a specialized mechanism within NIHR, with a mandate to monitor, promote, and follow up on issues related to children's rights across civil, political, economic, social, and cultural domains, in line with national law and international obligations.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International organizations and practitioners engaging with NIHR may:

- Consult annual and special reports to assess institutional priorities and identified challenges
- Reference NIHR submissions to treaty bodies and UPR processes for official data and analysis
- Engage with NIHR for capacity-building initiatives, training programmes, or technical dialogue
- Use NIHR publications as entry points for evidence-based engagement and follow-up discussions

For current mandates, reports, and procedural updates, users should consult NIHR's official publications and website. For more information, please visit: <https://www.nihr.org.bh/en/>

Ombudsman Office (General Secretariat of Complaints)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The Ombudsman Office commenced its work in July 2013 pursuant to Royal Decree No. 27 of 2012, as amended by Royal Decree No. 35 of 2013, to ensure compliance by personnel of the Ministry of Interior with the laws of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Police Code of Conduct, the Public Security Forces Law, and applicable civil service regulations. Its mandate includes receiving, investigating, and following up on complaints related to abuse of power, mistreatment, or violations of detainee rights.

2. Powers and Functions

The Ombudsman Office is empowered to:

- Receive complaints from individuals regarding police conduct
- Conduct investigations into alleged misconduct or abuse of authority
- Refer cases to the appropriate disciplinary or prosecutorial bodies
- Monitor detention facilities and police practices
- Issue findings and recommendations to the Ministry of Interior

Complaints may be submitted through multiple channels, including in person, by mail, electronically, and via online platforms.

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

The Ombudsman Office is administratively and financially independent and operates independently in the exercise of its powers and functions, including investigations and legal follow-up. While its mandate relates to the conduct of Ministry of Interior personnel, the Office is not subject to ministerial direction in the handling of complaints or investigations.

Its work is guided by principles of independence, impartiality, credibility, accountability, and transparency, and includes the receipt and resolution of complaints and requests for assistance from prisoners, detainees, and their families.

4. Outputs and Public Record

The Ombudsman Office publishes:

- Annual reports detailing the number and nature of complaints received, investigations conducted, and outcomes
- Statistical data on complaint categories and institutional follow-up
- Public statements on systemic issues and corrective measures

Reports are publicly accessible and provide insight into internal accountability processes.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors may:

- Consult annual reports to identify trends in complaints and oversight outcomes
- Reference the Ombudsman's findings in relation to detention, policing, and use-of-force standards
- Engage with the Office on procedural questions related to complaint mechanisms and oversight practices

The Ombudsman Office serves as a primary entry point for understanding police accountability mechanisms. For more information, please visit: www.ombudsman.bh

Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC) was established in 2013 by Royal Decree No. 61 of 2013 as a national oversight body with a mandate to monitor places where individuals may be deprived of liberty. This includes prisons, detention centres, juvenile care facilities, and other locations where detention may occur.

The Commission's mandate centres on examining conditions of detention and the treatment of detainees in order to assess compliance with national law and Bahrain's international obligations, including safeguards against torture and other forms of ill-treatment.

2. Powers and Functions

PDRC is mandated to:

- Conduct announced and unannounced visits to detention facilities, prisons, juvenile centers, and other locations where individuals may be deprived of liberty
- Interview detainees, prisoners, and responsible officials
- Monitor compliance with international detention standards
- Report cases of torture or ill-treatment to relevant authorities
- Issue recommendations aimed at improving detention conditions and treatment

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

The Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC) was established by law as an independent oversight body mandated to monitor places of detention. It operates within Bahrain's broader detention oversight framework, alongside institutions such as the Ombudsman Office, the National Institution for Human Rights, and the Special Investigation Unit.

PDRC members are appointed for fixed terms and are required to carry out their mandate independently, in accordance with the Commission's establishing legal framework.

4. Outputs and Public Record

PDRC produces:

- Inspection reports following announced and unannounced visits to places of detention or shelters
- Thematic reports addressing detention conditions and safeguards
- Recommendations directed to relevant authorities, with follow-up mechanisms
- Annual reports documenting inspection activities and findings

PDRC reports are published publicly and constitute key reference materials on detention conditions and custodial standards.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors may:

- Review PDRC reports to assess detention standards and institutional responses
- Reference PDRC findings in discussions on CAT compliance
- Engage with PDRC on monitoring methodologies and follow-up processes

PDRC reports are particularly relevant for work related to detention, incarceration, and custodial safeguards. For more information, please visit: <https://www.pdrc.bh/en/>

Special Investigation Unit (SIU)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) was established in 2012 pursuant to Public Prosecution Decision No. (8) of 2012, following recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) calling for the investigation of allegations of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment involving public officials.

The SIU operates under the Public Prosecution and is mandated to conduct investigations in accordance with domestic law and internationally recognized investigative standards, including the Istanbul Protocol.

2. Powers and Functions

SIU is authorized to:

- Investigate allegations of torture or ill-treatment by public officials
- Conduct interrogations and collect evidence in accordance with applicable legal standards
- Refer cases for prosecution or disciplinary action where appropriate
- Utilize forensic, medical, and psychological expertise in the course of investigations
- Cooperate with national oversight bodies and international partners on investigative standards and capacity-building
- Issue public statements, statistical information, and periodic activity summaries
- Publish periodic and annual reports

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

SIU functions as a specialized prosecutorial unit within the Public Prosecution, with a mandate to handle torture-related allegations independently. Its work forms part of the criminal justice system and is subject to judicial oversight through established legal procedures.

4. Outputs and Public Record

SIU publishes:

- Public updates on investigations and case outcomes
- Statistical information regarding complaints received and cases pursued
- Public information on activities related to investigative standards and capacity-building
- Annual and periodic reports

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors may:

- Reference SIU activities when assessing mechanisms for investigating allegations of torture
- Consult SIU periodic and annual reports for statistical data and activity updates
- Consult public statements and case summaries to understand investigative and enforcement practices
- Engage on technical standards relating to independent investigations and forensic documentation

SIU constitutes a key component of the accountability framework related to CAT implementation. For more information, please visit: <https://siu.gov.bh/>

Supreme Council for Women (SCW)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The Supreme Council for Women (SCW) was established in 2001 pursuant to Emiri Order No. 44 of 2001 to advance the status of women in the Kingdom of Bahrain and to support the integration of gender considerations into national policy and legislation. Its mandate aligns with Bahrain's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

SCW's role includes policy review, legislative input, coordination with government entities, and advocacy for equal opportunities.

2. Powers and Functions

SCW is mandated to:

- Review legislation and provide advisory inputs and recommendations on matters affecting women's rights
- Support policy development related to gender equality and family protection
- Conduct studies and research on the status of women
- Coordinate with government bodies to mainstream gender considerations
- Develop national strategies related to women's empowerment and protection

SCW also plays a role in awareness-raising, capacity-building, and institutional coordination.

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

SCW functions as a national coordinating body with advisory and policy-shaping responsibilities. It engages directly with executive and legislative authorities and participates in national and international reporting processes related to women's rights.

4. Outputs and Public Record

SCW produces:

- Advisory policy and legislative inputs related to women's rights
- Strategic frameworks and action plans, including initiatives addressing domestic violence and family protection
- Reports and studies on gender equality and social policy
- Inputs to international reporting processes, including CEDAW
- Awareness programmes and research results on topics like domestic violence and women's social participation

Many of these materials are publicly accessible and referenced in national reporting.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors may:

- Consult SCW publications for insight into gender-related policy frameworks
- Reference SCW inputs in relation to CEDAW implementation
- Engage with SCW on programmes related to women's empowerment, protection, and social policy
- Use SCW studies as contextual sources for project design and assessment

SCW serves as a primary institutional reference point for issues related to women's rights and gender policy. For more information, please visit: <https://www.scw.bh/en/>

National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons (NCCTIP)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The National Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons (NCCTIP) was established to coordinate national efforts to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect victims, and support the prosecution of offenders. Its mandate reflects Bahrain's commitments under international anti-trafficking instruments and cooperation frameworks.

2. Powers and Functions

NCCTIP is responsible for:

- Coordinating inter-agency action on trafficking in persons
- Developing and overseeing the national referral mechanism for victims
- Coordinating victim identification and support mechanisms
- Coordinating with international organizations, including UNODC and IOM
- Supporting legislative and policy reforms related to trafficking
- Developing and coordinating programmes aimed at preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including measures to protect victims from re-victimisation or further abuse
- Encouraging and supporting research, data collection, public information initiatives, media campaigns, and social and economic programmes related to trafficking prevention and response
- Supporting victim protection measures, including a dedicated shelter for victims of trafficking and vulnerability

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

NCCTIP operates as a multi-agency coordinating body, bringing together relevant ministries and authorities involved in law enforcement, labour regulation, social services, and victim protection. Its work emphasizes cooperation, information-sharing, and capacity-building across institutions.

4. Outputs and Public Record

NCCTIP contributes to:

- National action plans and policy frameworks related to trafficking
- Public awareness initiatives and training programmes
- Data and information inputs related to victim identification and protection, reflected in national and international reporting
- Engagement outputs with international partners

Bahrain's anti-trafficking framework and institutional mechanisms are referenced in international assessments and reporting processes.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors may:

- Reference NCCTIP frameworks when assessing trafficking prevention and victim protection mechanisms
- Engage with NCCTIP on capacity-building, training, or technical cooperation
- Consult national referral procedures for guidance on victim identification and support
- Use NCCTIP materials in programme design related to labour protection and trafficking prevention

NCCTIP functions as the central coordination point for trafficking-related engagement. For more information, please visit: <https://endtrafficking.lmra.gov.bh/NCCTIP/>

Office of the Inspector General (National Intelligence Agency)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The Office of the Inspector General of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) was established by Royal Decree No. 28 of 2012, following the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). Its mandate focuses on receiving and investigating complaints related to the mistreatment of persons or other violations of applicable laws and international agreements committed by NIA personnel in the course of their duties.

2. Powers and Functions

The Office is authorized to:

- Receive complaints concerning alleged abuse or misconduct by NIA personnel
- Conduct investigations into alleged violations of applicable laws and international agreements ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain
- Refer findings to the competent authorities for appropriate action

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

The Office operates as an internal oversight mechanism within the national intelligence framework and carries out its investigative functions independently in accordance with its establishing decree.

4. Outputs and Public Record

Publicly available information on the Office's activities is limited. Its existence and mandate are referenced in official government materials and international reporting processes.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors should be aware of the Office's role as a specialized complaints mechanism related to intelligence services. Engagement typically occurs through official reporting channels or broader institutional dialogue rather than direct operational cooperation.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.ombudsman.nia.bh/en/>

King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence (KHGC)

1. Mandate and Legal Basis

The King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence (KHGC) was established in 2018 pursuant to a Royal Order issued by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. The Centre advances Bahrain's policy commitment to peaceful coexistence, tolerance, and mutual respect among religions and cultures, reflecting longstanding societal traditions within the Kingdom.

KHGC's mandate is to promote coexistence and tolerance, strengthen intercultural and interreligious understanding, and support ethical and legal principles that contribute to social harmony and peaceful relations at the national and international levels.

KHGC's work is aligned with national normative instruments promoting coexistence and religious freedom, including the Kingdom of Bahrain Declaration, which articulates principles of interreligious respect, shared learning, and peaceful coexistence.

2. Powers and Functions

KHGC is responsible for:

- Designing and implementing educational, cultural, and social programs that promote coexistence, tolerance, respect for religious freedom, and mutual understanding among religious and cultural communities
- Raising public awareness of national policies relating to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion
- Facilitating dialogue and cooperation among civilizations and cultures based on shared ethical and legal values
- Supporting global peace initiatives grounded in common human values
- Developing initiatives to counter extremist ideologies that promote hatred, violence, and terrorism
- Documenting and disseminating Bahrain's historical experience of social and religious coexistence for educational and intercultural engagement purposes
- Conducting structured international outreach to communicate Bahrain's coexistence model
- Designing programs with measurable social impact at both domestic and international levels
- Administering institutional initiatives and programs, including the King Hamad Award for Coexistence and Tolerance, academic cooperation mechanisms in interfaith dialogue, sustainability programs involving religious institutions, and professional training programs in coexistence, peacebuilding, and leadership

3. Oversight and Institutional Position

KHGC operates pursuant to Royal authority and functions as a national institution contributing to Bahrain's official policy orientation toward dialogue, moderation, and intercultural cooperation. Its activities align with the Kingdom's broader commitments in the areas of peacebuilding, social cohesion, environmental responsibility, and international engagement.

KHGC's work is guided by principles of inclusivity, ethical engagement, cultural respect, and constructive dialogue.

4. Outputs and Public Record

KHGC produces and supports:

- Educational programs and public awareness initiatives on coexistence and tolerance
- International conferences, forums, and structured dialogue platforms
- Cultural and interfaith engagement activities
- Outreach publications and public communications
- Collaborative projects with domestic and international partners focused on peacebuilding, countering extremism, and sustainable development
- Institutional awards, academic cooperation initiatives, professional training programs, and sustainability programs relating to coexistence, peacebuilding, environmental responsibility, and leadership development
- National declarations and normative instruments relating to coexistence and interreligious understanding

These activities are documented through official publications, program records, and public communications.

5. Practical Engagement Notes for International Actors

International actors may:

- Engage with KHGC on initiatives related to interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, sustainability, and social cohesion
- Reference KHGC programs in assessments of Bahrain's institutional framework for coexistence and tolerance
- Collaborate with KHGC on educational, cultural, environmental, and counter-extremism projects
- Utilize KHGC platforms for multilateral dialogue and international cooperation

KHGC provides an institutional platform through which international actors may engage with Bahrain's policies and initiatives relating to coexistence, dialogue, social cohesion, and freedom of religion and belief.

For more information, please visit: <https://khgc.org.bh/>

Part III: Human Rights Standards and Domestic Frameworks in Practice

This section maps selected civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights to their corresponding international standards and domestic legal foundations in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It identifies responsible institutions and publicly available reference points relevant to international engagement, supporting comparative analysis, reporting, and programme design.

Right to Equality and Non-Discrimination

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 2(1)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Articles. 2(2), 3: Equality before the law and non-discrimination in the enjoyment of rights.

Domestic Legal Basis

Constitution of Bahrain, Article 18: Ensures equality in dignity and public rights.

Responsible Institutions

- Courts and Public Prosecution
- National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)
- Relevant line ministries (subject-matter dependent)

Key Public References

- Constitutional provisions
- NIHR annual and thematic reports
- Treaty body submissions and UPR materials

Practical Note for International Actors

- Review NIHR reporting and court decisions addressing equality claims across sectors.

Right to Life

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 6: Protection of the inherent right to life and regulation of capital punishment where retained.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 20(a): States that penalties must be prescribed by law.
- Penal Code No. 15 of 1976 (selected provisions):
 - Article 49: Lists capital punishment as a penalty for certain serious offenses.
 - Article 51: Application of capital punishment in cases of multiple offences
 - Articles 112–116: Crimes against State security and constitutional order
 - Article 118: Terrorism-related offences resulting in death
 - Articles 121–122: Aggravated intentional homicide and participation therein
 - Article 126: Assassination of protected persons
 - Articles 148–149: Sabotage or destruction resulting in loss of life

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf
- Ministry of Interior
- Public Prosecution

Key Public References

- Penal Code provisions
- Judicial decisions (where publicly available)
- NIHR reporting and international submissions

Practical Note for International Actors

- Consult official legal texts and NIHR reports for current application and procedural safeguards.

Right to Liberty and Security of Person

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 9–11: Protection against arbitrary arrest and detention; humane treatment of persons deprived of liberty.
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Articles 19–20: These articles safeguard personal liberty and ensure that no one is subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention.
- Law No. 18 of 2017 on Alternative Sanctions and Measures, Article 2: Provides for alternative penalties and measures as substitutes for imprisonment, promoting non-custodial sanctions.

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf
- Ombudsman Office
- Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC)

Key Public References

- Ombudsman annual reports
- PDRC inspection reports
- Law No. 18 of 2017 and implementing regulations

Practical Note for International Actors

- PDRC and Ombudsman publications provide entry points for detention standards and complaint mechanisms.
- Track official news announcements for Royal Pardons as primary indicators of restorative justice and social de-escalation.

Freedom of Opinion and Expression

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Articles 19–20: Protection of expression, subject to lawful and necessary restrictions.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Articles 23–24: Article 23 guarantees freedom of opinion and expression, while Article 24 addresses the regulation of the press and publications

- Decree-Law No. 47 of 2002 on the Organisation of the Press, Printing and Publishing, and related regulations governing media, publication, and broadcasting.
- Law No. (41) of 2025, amending the Press, Printing and Publishing Law to modernise media regulation and formally extend its scope to electronic and digital media.
- Penal Code No. 15 of 1976 (selected provisions relevant to expression and publication):
 - Article 92 (definition of publicity and methods of expression)
 - Articles 93–95 (liability for publication and distribution of expressive content)
 - Article 96 (seizure and confiscation of publications)
 - Article 97 (publication of judgments in cases involving publicity)
 - Article 69(5) bis (interpretive safeguard for restrictions on expression)
 - Article 169 (publication affecting public order or public interest)
 - Article 245 (publication influencing judicial proceedings)
 - Article 265 (unauthorised publication of currency images)
 - Articles 364–368 (defamation and insult through publicity)
 - Article 370 (violation of private or family life through recording, publication, or dissemination by means of publicity)
 - Articles 371–372 (breach of secrecy and private communications)

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Information
- Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf
- Ministry of Interior
- National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)

Key Public References

- Constitutional provisions
- Regulatory decisions and court rulings (where available)
- NIHR thematic reporting

Practical Note for International Actors

- Review constitutional limits alongside regulatory practice and NIHR assessments

Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Articles 18 and 27; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 13 (religious education): Protects freedom of belief and religious practice, subject to lawful limitations, and ensures protection of religious minorities.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain Article 18: Ensures non-discrimination and equality before the law.
- Article 22: Guarantees freedom of conscience, the inviolability of places of worship, and the freedom to perform religious rites in accordance with customs.
- Penal Code No. 15 of 1976 (selected provisions relevant to religion and belief):
 - Article 309: Prohibits insults to recognized religious groups or their rituals.
 - Article 310: Penalizes deliberate distortion of religious texts and public insults to religious symbols.
 - Articles 311–313: Other provisions addressing offenses related to religious practice and respect.

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf
- King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance (KHGC)
- National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)

Key Public References

- Constitutional provisions
- Penal Code articles concerning religious protection
- NIHR annual and thematic reports

Practical Note for International Actors

- NIHR reporting and judicial practice provide key reference points for assessing freedom of religion and interfaith coexistence.

Freedom of Movement

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 12: Guarantees freedom of movement and residence within a state, the right to leave any country, and the right to enter one's own country.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 19: Affirms the right to freedom of movement within the country and the right to travel.

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf

Key Public References

- Constitutional provisions
- NIHR reporting where relevant

Practical Note for International Actors

- Review legal provisions alongside administrative practice and reported cases.

Freedom from Torture and Ill-Treatment

International Standard

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 7; Convention against Torture (CAT): Absolute prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, and the obligation to investigate and remedy violations.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Articles 19(d), 20(d) (prohibition of torture and degrading treatment; inadmissibility of coerced confessions)
- Penal Code No. 15 of 1976 (selected provisions relevant to torture, ill-treatment, and abuse of authority):
 - Article 208 (use of torture or force by a public official to obtain confessions; aggravated penalty if death results)
 - Article 232 (use of torture, force, or threats causing bodily harm or death)
 - Article 357 (unlawful arrest, detention, or deprivation of liberty, including where accompanied by force or torture)

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Interior
- Ombudsman Office
- Special Investigation Unit (SIU)
- Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC)
- National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)

Key Public References

- Ombudsman annual reports
- SIU annual and periodic reports
- PDRC annual reports
- NIHR thematic and annual reports

Practical Note for International Actors

- Oversight and investigative bodies' public reports are primary sources for assessing compliance with CAT obligations.

Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

International Standard

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 11: Right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and housing, and the continuous improvement of living conditions.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 9 (State responsibility for social justice, housing, and environmental protection)
- Sectoral legislation and administrative frameworks governing housing, public utilities (water and electricity), and social welfare, implemented through relevant ministries and public authorities.

Responsible Institutions

- Electricity and Water Authority (EWA)
- Ministry of Housing
- Ministry of Industry and Commerce
- Ministry of Health
- Supreme Council for the Environment
- Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture

Key Public References

- Constitutional provisions (Article 9)
- Sectoral legislation and regulations governing food safety and availability
- Food safety and consumer protection standards published by the Bahrain Standards and Metrology Directorate (BSMD)
- Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture policies and programmes
- NIHR thematic reporting on economic and social rights

Practical Note for International Actors

- Sectoral ministry data and NIHR assessments provide insight into implementation and access.

Right to Health

International Standard

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 12: Right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 8 (State responsibility for public health services and health care)
- Full implementation of Law No. (6) of 2024, transferring the management and staffing of inmate healthcare from the Ministry of Interior to government hospitals to ensure professional medical autonomy.

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Health
- National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA)

Key Public References

- Health legislation and regulations
- Public health policies and statistics
- NIHR reporting

Practical Note for International Actors

- Ministry of Health publications and regulatory frameworks are primary reference points.

Right to Social Security and Family Protection

International Standard

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Articles 9 and 10: Right to social security and social insurance; protection of the family, mothers, children, and vulnerable groups.
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 5 (family protection; care for mothers, children, and youth; reconciliation of family and work responsibilities; social security and social insurance in cases of old age, sickness, disability, unemployment, orphanhood, and widowhood)
- Law No. (74) of 2006 (Care, rehabilitation, and employment of persons with disabilities) significantly updated by Decree-Law No. (34) of 2025.
- 2025 Amendments (doubled the private-sector hiring quota to 4%)
- Law No. (21) of 2025 (Restorative Justice for Children), establishing specialised restorative justice mechanisms for children and reinforcing protection from abuse within the family and social protection framework.

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Social Development
- National Committee for the Care of Persons of Determination
- National Committee for Childhood
- Social Insurance Organization (SIO)
- Ministry of Labour

Key Public References

- Constitutional provisions
- Social security and social insurance legislation and regulations
- Public policies and programme documentation issued by social protection authorities
- NIHR reporting on social protection and family-related rights
- National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2023-2027)

Practical Note for International Actors

- Review statutory frameworks together with publicly available social protection programmes, administrative guidelines, and NIHR assessments to understand implementation and access in practice.
- Review the latest news updates regarding protection and inclusivity of persons with disabilities.

Right to Education

International Standard

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 13: Right to education directed toward the full development of the human personality and respect for human rights.

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 7 (State responsibility for education, scientific research, and cultural development)

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Education
- Higher Education Council (HEC)
- National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (NAQQ)

Key Public References

- Education legislation and regulations
- Public education policies and statistics
- Quality Assurance reports and standards issued by NAQQ
- NIHR reporting on education and cultural rights

Practical Note for International Actors

- Ministry of Education publications and policy frameworks provide primary reference points for access and quality.

Right to Work and Just Conditions of Employment

International Standard

- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Articles 6 and 7: Right to work; just and favourable conditions of employment, including fair wages, safe and healthy working conditions, and equal opportunity.
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

Domestic Legal Basis

- Constitution of Bahrain, Article 13 (State responsibility for work, employment conditions, and social justice)
- Law No. 36 of 2012 Promulgating the Labour Law for the Private Sector
- 2025 Winter Amendments focusing on Wage Protection

- Civil Service Bureau (CSB) Regulations and Decisions
- Social Insurance Laws and Regulations

Responsible Institutions

- Ministry of Labour
- Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA)
- Tamkeen
- Civil Service Bureau (CSB)
- Ministry of Finance

Key Public References

- Law No. 36 of 2012 Promulgating the Labour Law for the Private Sector
- Civil service laws and regulations
- Employment and labour market programmes
- Public-sector employment and compensation regulations issued by the Ministry of Finance
- NIHR reporting on labour and employment rights

Practical Note for International Actors

- Labour law texts, inspection frameworks, and NIHR assessments are key sources for understanding employment protections.

Conclusion

This framework has presented a structured overview of the human rights architecture in the Kingdom of Bahrain by mapping international human rights standards to domestic constitutional provisions, legislation, and institutional oversight mechanisms. Its purpose is to provide international actors with a clear analytical reference for understanding how human rights are situated within Bahrain's legal and institutional landscape.

The framework focuses on clarifying legal foundations, institutional mandates, and publicly available accountability mechanisms rather than advancing policy positions or evaluating implementation outcomes. By organizing this information in a consistent and rights based format, it supports informed engagement, comparative analysis, and responsible reporting by external stakeholders working on human rights issues in Bahrain.

Human rights systems evolve in response to legal reform, institutional development, and international engagement. Accordingly, this framework should be understood as a reference point reflecting the structure of Bahrain's human rights framework at the time of publication, grounded in publicly available law and institutional practice and intended for use alongside primary legal sources and official institutional publications.

By consolidating applicable standards, institutions, and engagement pathways in a single reference, the framework enables international actors to engage with Bahrain's human rights system in a more structured, informed, and operationally relevant manner.

For more information, visit: www.leenaalbelooshi.com

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