



Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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Summary record of the 2222nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 19 November 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Heller

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States Parties under article 19 of the Convention *(continued)*

Fourth periodic report of Bahrain (continued) (CAT/C/BHR/4; CAT/C/BHR/QPR/4)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Bahrain joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Bahrain**, responding to questions put at the previous meeting, said that the Ministry of the Interior was fully committed to the provisions of the Constitution, national laws and international instruments ratified by Bahrain that prohibited torture and all forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. All of the Ministry's departments and the correctional and rehabilitation centres under its administration operated in accordance with clear legal and procedural rules that ensured respect for human dignity and the protection of human rights. All places of detention were subject to regular supervision and inspection by the public prosecution and independent bodies such as the Office of the Ombudsman, the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission, the Special Investigation Unit and the National Institute for Human Rights, as established in the 2002 Code of Criminal Procedure and the 2014 Correctional and Rehabilitation Institution Act. The Ministry's Internal Audit and Investigations Department investigated complaints or allegations of torture or ill-treatment. Complaints from pretrial detainees and convicted prisoners could be submitted to the presidents of the courts of appeal and cassation, sentence enforcement judges or the public prosecution.
3. Not all allegations of torture or ill-treatment were based on reliable evidence, but any violations that were confirmed were immediately referred to the competent authorities in order to ensure accountability and transparency. Accused persons and detainees were treated in a manner consistent with international standards and the legal safeguards provided for in Bahraini legislation, and arrest and detention were subject to legal and procedural controls. Complaint boxes managed by the Office of the Ombudsman and the Internal Audit and Investigations Department were available in detention facilities and correctional and rehabilitation centres. In addition, to ensure their safety, security cameras with audio capabilities were in use at all times in all areas where detainees were likely to be present.
4. Pursuant to a ministerial decision of 2018, a human rights committee had been established within the Ministry of the Interior and tasked with conducting research on human rights and raising awareness of relevant human rights issues and disseminating a culture of human rights among staff of the Ministry. Employees of the Ministry were held accountable for individual transgressions in accordance with the Criminal Code and were disciplined by a police tribunal in accordance with the Public Security Forces Act. The Internal Audit and Investigations Department worked to ensure compliance with the laws of Bahrain and the professional standards for police work set forth in the Act on the Ministry of the Interior, the Police Code of Conduct and relevant orders. The Department received and examined complaints filed against members of the police and referred them to the Office of the Ombudsman, the police tribunal or the competent authority in the event that an act warranting disciplinary action against the perpetrator had been committed.
5. Bahrain was committed to developing its correctional and rehabilitation system in line with its international human rights obligations and internationally recognized standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules). A number of legislative, regulatory and practical measures had been taken in recent years to improve conditions of detention, strengthen independent oversight and ensure comprehensive healthcare for all persons deprived of their liberty. To address the problem of overcrowding, new multi-storey facilities had been constructed to provide privacy and a safe and healthy environment conducive to successful rehabilitation. The Ministry of the Interior was working to reduce overcrowding by implementing correctional and rehabilitation programmes, alternative non-custodial measures, the open prisons programme and royal pardons. Convicted persons who met the relevant legal requirements could serve their

sentences in open prisons or serve alternative measures set forth in the Criminal Code, such as community service or house arrest.

6. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the Ministry of the Interior ensured that all deprivation of liberty was in line with international human rights standards, in particular the Convention. The Ministry trained staff at correctional and rehabilitation centres in humane treatment methods and promoted a culture of respect for human dignity. All practices that violated the rights or physical or psychological safety of inmates were prohibited. The Ministry also ensured the implementation of comprehensive rehabilitation programmes with a focus on education, vocational training and psychosocial support, with the aim of reintegration into society upon release. Primary, secondary and technical education were available, and coordination was under way with the relevant authorities to also provide university courses. Respect for the rights of remand and convicted prisoners, without discrimination, was a cornerstone of the criminal justice system. Prisoners could receive visits and make video calls to their families or the embassies of their countries of origin. They were offered a range of recreational and educational activities, including sports, computers and handicrafts, and received well-balanced meals adapted to their dietary requirements. In accordance with the constitutional provisions on religious freedom, all prisoners were allowed to practise their religious rituals in line with the instructions issued by prison management and were provided with the necessary facilities to do so. Under a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry, the International Committee of the Red Cross was authorized to conduct visits to correctional and rehabilitation centres and detention facilities and to interview inmates. It also organized training courses on human rights and international humanitarian law for staff. Act No. 6 of 2020 had amended certain provisions of the Correctional and Rehabilitation Institution Act, broadening the scope of visits that inmates were entitled to receive and improving the healthcare provided to them through government hospitals. Pursuant to a ministerial decision, the time available to prisoners for exercise had been increased.

7. **A representative of Bahrain** said that legal safeguards relating to persons deprived of their liberty applied from the moment of arrest and were one of the fundamental pillars of the national justice system, in line with the country's obligations under the Convention and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Ministry of the Interior ensured that all procedures relating to arrest and detention were in line with the Constitution and the Code of Criminal Procedure and under the supervision of the competent judicial authorities. Arrested persons enjoyed all their legal and human rights, such as being informed of the reasons for their arrest, being able to communicate with their families and lawyers, and being brought before the public prosecutor within 48 hours. The Ministry ensured that no arbitrary practices occurred and that the principles of justice and transparency were upheld at all stages. It had also issued a manual on standardized procedures for arrest and pretrial detention in line with national legislation and international standards, which stipulated, for example, that all arrested persons must undergo a medical examination. All interrogations were video-recorded to ensure that there were no abuses by the police. Signs were posted in all police stations listing the rights and duties of arrested persons in both Arabic and English. There was also a centralized database shared by the Ministry of the Interior and all security agencies in the country that recorded the details of all arrested persons, including the time that reports were entered in the system, which could not be modified.

8. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the 2017 law on alternative penalties had introduced a restorative justice system that gave offenders the opportunity to rebuild their lives, without compromising public safety. The 2021 amendments to the law had expanded eligibility for alternative penalties by removing the requirement for prisoners to have served half of their custodial sentence. Bahrain had become the first Arab country to have a comprehensive alternative sentencing system that redefined the concept of community rehabilitation. Specific criteria were in place to ensure that convicted persons being considered for alternative sentences did not pose a threat to society. The comprehensive assessment included an analysis of their background and criminal record and expert social and psychological reports. The prisoner must have had good behaviour while in prison and shown that they were capable of positively reintegrating into society and were unlikely to reoffend. Convicted prisoners could apply to have their sentences substituted either directly from their correctional and rehabilitation centre or via an email from their family members.

All requests were reviewed through an inter-institutional system that ensured impartiality and objectivity, with the final decision taken by the sentence enforcement judge. In 2022, alternative sentencing had been expanded with the launch of the open prisons programme, designed specifically to rehabilitate medium- and high-risk offenders within the community. In 2024, the programme had received accreditation from the American Correctional Association, becoming the first mechanism outside the United States to be accredited in the category of community rehabilitation programmes. In addition, Bahrain had received an Arab Government Excellence Award for the best Arab government project for community development. In 2025, further alternative penalties had been introduced, including placement in a mental healthcare facility and community service. The system was regularly reviewed, and the legal framework was adapted to keep pace with developments in restorative justice. Thus far, more than 9,500 convicted offenders had benefited from alternative sentencing, and the recidivism rate had fallen to 2.5 per cent. The programme had been successful in its mission to rehabilitate and reintegrate individuals into society and was proof that punishment could be effective without being harsh.

9. **A representative of Bahrain** said that comprehensive medical care and examinations were available to all inmates in correctional and rehabilitation centres and detention centres, with a view to detecting diseases at an early stage. Medical staff operated with full professional independence in detention facilities. Training programmes for such staff applied the highest standards and included mandatory instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, infection control, medical and psychological emergencies, the management of suicidal cases, documentation of injuries and adherence to ethical principles. Ambulances were stationed inside or in the vicinity of centres to ensure immediate emergency response.

10. The Government Hospitals Administration, working jointly with the Ministry of the Interior and the public health department of the Ministry of Health, ensured full compliance with health and safety standards. Measures included regular testing of drinking water quality, inspections by infection control committees in accordance with national and regional guidance, monitoring of internal and external environments and oversight of laundry services to maintain proper hygiene. Detailed reports with recommendations were prepared, and their implementation was monitored in cooperation with security services.

11. Government hospitals followed a clear medical policy on the handling of hunger strikes developed in consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The policy provided for daily monitoring of vital signs, regular testing, adjustment of medication where necessary, the provision of intravenous nutrition when required and psychological support by qualified specialists. In cases of death, serious injury or illness in places of detention, comprehensive and immediate measures were taken to safeguard inmates' health in line with medical standards. Emergency care was available within detention centres, clinics were equipped to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and critical cases were transferred promptly to government hospitals. All medical procedures were duly recorded in official files.

12. The psychiatric hospital had been placed under the authority of the Government Hospital Administration, with oversight by the national body responsible for medical professions and services, an independent institution. The hospital had received full national accreditation at the highest level. Physicians were duly certified and received training in areas such as child psychiatry and forensic medicine. They were employed under the civil service system, with pay and grading aligned with other administrative entities. Home visits were provided for patients unable to travel, and mental health clinics had been established in health centres to allow family doctors to make referrals, thereby facilitating access to psychiatric care.

13. Government hospitals remained committed to providing independent, impartial, comprehensive and equitable services to all inmates and patients without discrimination and to ensuring an appropriate psychosocial environment.

14. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the Office of the Ombudsman was an independent body with financial autonomy responsible for receiving complaints from prisoners, detainees and others concerning violations of the law or allegations of ill-treatment by public officials employed by the Ministry of the Interior, inspecting places of detention

and taking appropriate action. It was empowered to request records from any authority, summon alleged perpetrators, visit detention facilities and conduct investigations based on complaints or ex officio on the basis of information from the media or civil society organizations, without recourse to any executive body.

15. The Office of the Ombudsman had independent offices within correctional and rehabilitation centres to receive complaints directly from inmates while ensuring privacy and confidentiality. Its methodology incorporated the standards of the International Ombudsman Institute, and United Nations reports had affirmed that it operated in accordance with internationally recognized norms. It also received complaints through complaint boxes in detention facilities or electronic channels. It carried out both announced and unannounced visits to detention facilities. During such visits, it reviewed detention conditions and met inmates in private. Its annual reports contained investigation findings, recommendations, examples of individual cases and measures taken. The Office also participated in international cooperation through its membership in the International Ombudsman Institute.

16. The Office of the Ombudsman played a significant role in ensuring that all persons deprived of their liberty enjoyed all rights and safeguards provided by law, including access to medical care, adequate living conditions, nutrition and clean drinking water and contact with the outside world through communications and visits. It also facilitated assistance requests that allowed inmates to communicate with relevant entities through the Office, which served as a mediator. So far, it had conducted approximately 23 visits to detention facilities. The Office of the Ombudsman had also established the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission, in accordance with the principles set out in the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

17. In September 2024, the Office had established a dedicated unit for receiving complaints from minors in conflict with the law. The specialists assigned to that work had received training from international experts. All allegations of reprisals against persons who submitted complaints to the Office of the Ombudsman were examined. The Office was empowered to refer cases to the public prosecution when criminal offences were alleged. Where the conduct concerned did not constitute a criminal offence but rather a disciplinary violation, cases were referred to the military courts, which were responsible for imposing disciplinary measures.

18. **A representative of Bahrain** said that Bahraini legislation made it clear that superior orders could not be used as a justification for the offence of torture. The Criminal Code addressed crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity and expressly provided that those offences could not be excused on the basis that they had been committed pursuant to a superior's instructions. A reading of that law confirmed that superior orders could not be invoked to justify acts of torture, particularly where the illegality of the order was manifest. Torture was an unlawful act that could not be legitimized by reference to directives issued by a superior in an attempt to obtain impunity.

19. **A representative of Bahrain** said that article 5 of the Family Code defined marriage as a legal contract between a man and a woman for the establishment of a family under specified conditions. Marriage created reciprocal rights and obligations, including decent treatment and mutual respect. While Bahraini legislation did not expressly address rape in the context of marriage, that omission could not be interpreted as approval of such conduct.

20. Rape was not considered a crime where a valid marriage contract existed. However, Act No. 17 of 2015 on Protection from Domestic Violence defined sexual assault broadly as any act committed to gratify another person's sexual desires, and acts of physical, psychological, sexual or economic violence committed within the family were governed by that legislation. The Criminal Code criminalized rape, defined as a sexual relation with a woman without her consent, in articles 333–356. Physical assault against a spouse was considered among the most serious forms of domestic violence, and perpetrators were duly punished. If the assault resulted in death, the penalty was 7 years' imprisonment. Women victims of violence could seek legal redress and claim compensation.

21. The Family Code did not regulate polygamy. Islamic sharia, as one of the sources of legislation, permitted polygamy provided that equal treatment and respect for women's rights were ensured. A woman could stipulate in her marriage contract that the husband was

prohibited from taking another wife; a breach of that condition could lead to divorce. Polygamy was not common in Bahrain and was subject to legal safeguards. Men were legally required to disclose the number of their existing wives at the time of marriage, enabling prospective wives to make an informed decision. That requirement had significantly reduced the incidence of polygamy.

22. The Family Code set the minimum marriage age at 16. Under article 20 of the Act, girls under that age could not marry without a court order, which was granted only after the court confirmed the appropriateness of the marriage. Civil status officers were required to comply with the law. Marriage below 16 was therefore permissible only at the request of parents and with sharia court approval following assessment of the situation. In practice, most women in Bahrain married after the age of 24.

23. Article 322 of the Criminal Code imposed a penalty of 10 years' imprisonment on anyone who incited a woman to undergo an abortion without her consent. Article 323 provided for imprisonment where an abortion resulted in the woman's death, and article 321 criminalized abortion without medical consultation. Abortion was permitted only under medical supervision, in accordance with established procedures, and where necessary to save the woman's life.

24. The Supreme Council for Women was the national institution for women's rights. Both the Council and civil society bodies provided counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration services for women victims of violence. The Public Prosecution Service had a department dedicated to women and children. Family counselling and conciliation centres operated in several governorates, and the Ministry of Justice had established family mediation departments. The Ministry of the Interior also had counselling and support offices for women subjected to violence.

25. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the State was committed to respecting international standards, and its legislative framework had been developed accordingly, in particular with regard to the prohibition of torture. The Criminal Code contained explicit provisions criminalizing torture, whether committed by an agent of the State, persons entrusted with public functions or any other person. Torture was deemed a crime whenever it caused physical or psychological harm. Incitement to torture, acquiescence therein or threats to commit torture were also criminalized, and penalties were increased where the act resulted in the victim's death. Such crimes were not subject to a statute of limitations, thus ensuring that perpetrators could be prosecuted and punished whenever the crime came to light, consistent with the absolute prohibition of torture.

26. The Code of Criminal Procedure established safeguards to guarantee the integrity of investigations and the fairness of trials. Judges were required to base their decisions solely on evidence submitted during court proceedings and were prohibited from relying on material not formally presented. Statements obtained under coercion were inadmissible. The law had created a mechanism to examine allegations of torture and ill-treatment, assigning responsibility for that function to the Public Prosecution Service at both the interrogation and trial stages, thereby ensuring independence in the investigative process. In addition, the law allowed any person claiming reprisals for reporting torture to seek civil remedies before the investigative authorities.

27. The Correctional and Rehabilitation Institution Act guaranteed the dignity of inmates and their separation according to age, sex and type of offence. Judges, prosecutors and law enforcement personnel received ongoing training to foster a culture of human rights and ensure appropriate application of legislation. The legislative system reflected the Kingdom's commitment to developing its legal framework in accordance with international standards. No law permitted acts of torture, which were prohibited in peacetime, wartime and states of emergency.

28. Children were protected from corporal punishment under Act No. 4 of 2021, on restorative justice for children and their protection from ill-treatment, which addressed all forms of physical and psychological abuse, including sexual abuse and neglect. The Act on Protection against Domestic Violence required measures to be taken to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

29. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the Special Investigation Unit, which had been established to determine criminal responsibility in all cases of torture and ill-treatment and to prosecute offenders irrespective of their position or rank, worked independently from the judicial authorities and the executive. Its investigators worked full time for the Unit and enjoyed all the safeguards afforded to members of the judiciary. The Unit also employed forensic doctors, psychologists and experts in information and communications technologies, and its operational strategy had been developed with the assistance of legal advisors. Over the years, the Unit had contributed to strengthening public confidence in the justice system and had held to account more than 210 law enforcement officers, leading to disciplinary measures and criminal sentences. The number of complaints lodged with the Unit had dropped by 90 per cent. Since 2022, information on cases had been posted on the Unit's site, in Arabic and in English.

30. **Mr. Rouwane** (Country Rapporteur) said that, since the State Party already had some institutions aligned with the spirit of the Optional Protocol to the Convention, notably a national human rights institution in keeping with the Paris Principles, ratifying the Optional Protocol and formally establishing a national preventive mechanism would simply help it progress further on the prevention of torture. He wondered whether the State Party was considering recognizing the Committee's mandate under article 22 of the Convention to examine individual complaints and acceding to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

31. He would welcome information on the content of the National Human Rights Plan for 2022–2026 and on any measures included based on recommendations by the United Nations human rights system, in particular those contained in the Committee's previous concluding observations. He would also welcome more detailed information on procedural safeguards, specifically whether suspects and defendants underwent medical examinations and what role the judiciary and prosecutorial authorities played in cases of visible signs of torture. In that connection, it would be helpful to better understand the process for initiating criminal proceedings in torture cases, as the Convention was clear about the duty to open an investigation into all allegations of torture, irrespective of their source, not solely at the behest of the prosecutorial authorities. He was curious to know whether persons convicted following the events of 2011 were eligible for the alternative sentencing programme and, if so, how many of them had benefited from it and how many of those individuals had received a royal pardon.

32. **Mr. Liu** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would welcome a clarification of the rules adopted in 2024 on sports activities for persons deprived of their liberty and their implementation in practice, as well as further details on the open prison programme. Statistics showing the results of the alternative sentencing programme would also be welcome, as would further information on the employment status of the healthcare practitioners working in detention facilities and the sufficiency of mental health professionals in such facilities.

33. He was interested in hearing whether the new age of criminal responsibility had been applied retroactively to minors under the age of 15 years who had been convicted prior to the change and whether video surveillance had been installed in places other than interrogation rooms, such as social welfare institutions and mental health hospitals.

34. He wished to note that referring to the offence of marital rape by that name would help raise public awareness and set boundaries for spouses. In addition, the State Party's distinctive legal system – a blend of sharia, English common law, Egyptian civil and commercial codes, and customary law – meant that it was important to conduct human rights education so as to ensure that the various traditions did not clash. He would encourage the State Party to involve civil society organizations in the development of laws and policies, in the drafting of its reports to treaty bodies and in monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

35. **Mr. Buchwald**, noting that the State Party's legislation appeared to provide for the liability of superiors for acts of torture and the inapplicability of statutes of limitations to such acts in relation to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, asked whether those provisions also applied outside the context of armed conflict.

36. **Mr. Kessing** said that he would welcome a reply to his question concerning the detention of human rights defenders, including Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, specifically information on their conditions of detention and their access to medical treatment and whether the State Party intended to respond to the concerns raised by a number of special procedures regarding Mr. Al-Khawaja.

The meeting was suspended at 4.55 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

37. **A representative of Bahrain** said that jurisdiction over medical services in detention centres had been shifted from the Ministry of Health to the Government Hospitals Administration. Correctional and rehabilitation centres had their own doctors with at least five years' experience, as well as dentists, psychiatrists, pharmacists, physical therapists and social workers, all with the requisite qualifications. Medical staff must complete in-service training to maintain their authorization to practise in the centres. Where necessary, specialist doctors could also make visits to facilities. Healthcare professionals notified the competent authorities in the event that inmates presented with injuries.

38. **A representative of Bahrain** said that, under the Criminal Code, acts of rape were not classified as such when committed by a man against a woman with whom he had signed a contract of marriage. They were instead classified as acts of physical, psychological and sexual violence. In such cases, a complaint and evidence in the form of a medical report were needed for the public prosecution to open a case, which was tried by the competent criminal court.

39. **A representative of Bahrain** said that all persons could file complaints for acts of torture or ill-treatment, and that the Special Investigation Unit investigated all such allegations. Article 208 of the Criminal Code explicitly provided that acts of torture were not subject to a statute of limitations. The Unit placed a strong emphasis on training as a means of building institutional capacity. In 2014, it had signed an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme in Bahrain that was aimed at building its capacities with a view to ensuring that it complied with international standards. Under the agreement, 34 events had been held on subjects such as the mandate of the Unit, international human rights standards, the Convention, the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Istanbul Protocol), investigative strategies and evidence-gathering methods, and restrictions on the use of force. The Unit had held 14 meetings devoted to studying the Istanbul Protocol – which it followed in its operations as the gold standard – as a result of which it had developed 86 recommendations for improving investigative procedures, accountability and access to justice in line with international best practice. To mark Human Rights Day, it planned to organize a workshop for the relevant national authorities with a view to discussing the practical implementation of the Istanbul Protocol, as revised.

40. Under Bahraini law, acts of torture were defined by three constitutive elements: the attack must cause severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental; the victim must be in the custody or under the control of the perpetrator; and there must be a specific intent, such as obtaining a confession from or intimidating the victims. Acts that did not constitute torture, such as physical assault, were also criminalized. Every year, the Unit analysed the cases that had been submitted to it with the aim of developing appropriate recommendations.

41. **A representative of Bahrain** said that migrant workers enjoyed the same legal protections against torture and ill-treatment as Bahraini citizens. In the light of the diversity of the migrant workforce, they could file complaints with oversight bodies in a variety of languages. The staff of foreign embassies could visit detention facilities to find out about the situation of detainees from their country. To better combat trafficking in persons and other crimes of which migrant workers could be victims, Bahrain had taken steps to align its laws and policies with relevant international instruments and had become a Party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol thereto to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; the Slavery Convention and the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery; relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) against forced labour and the exploitation of workers; and the Arab Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. At the national

level, it had put in place a comprehensive legal framework to combat such crimes that, in addition to the Constitution and the Criminal Code, included Act No. 1 of 2018 on Combating Trafficking in Persons and a law on the labour market. The Government had also implemented policies and strategies with a focus on prevention and protection.

42. The Government had set up a centre to provide support for migrant workers in gaining access to justice under free and simplified procedures. It also operated an income protection system and a victim support fund and ran public awareness-raising campaigns. It conducted regular workplace inspections to detect violations and adopted protocols for identifying cases of trafficking and potential victims. Since 2018, more than 110,000 migrant workers had received support and protection services through the centre. A helpline for supporting migrants had received more than 180,400 calls, and more than 7,300 complaints related to improper dismissal had been handled. More than 11,500 passports had been returned to migrant workers, and more than 1,400 victims and potential victims of exploitation had been provided with shelter. Since 2020, proceedings had been brought by migrant workers in more than 5,700 cases. A special department for combating trafficking in persons and protecting public morals had been set up in the Ministry of the Interior, and Bahrain was also the first Arab State to have set up a special prosecutor's office and designated a court to deal with trafficking in persons. Furthermore, the Government had strengthened cooperation between all stakeholders in that area, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), diplomatic missions and international organizations, particularly the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Joint initiatives had been undertaken to raise awareness of rights and obligations and facilitate access to protection and support services in that area. Ongoing efforts were being made to strengthen protocols for identifying victims, the national referral system, specialized units and related training programmes. Given that trafficking in persons was a crime that cut across borders, the Government was committed to exchanging experiences with other countries. Such efforts had enabled the Government to make concrete progress in combating trafficking. Administrative procedures had been introduced to deal with employers who confiscated migrant workers' passports, under which they could be referred to the competent security authorities for criminal breach of trust. A draft amendment to make confiscation of a worker's passport a specific criminal offence under the Labour Code was currently under consideration. Furthermore, an office for the protection of victims and witnesses of trafficking had been established to protect persons who reported crimes against reprisals by their employers.

43. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the National Human Rights Plan for 2022–2026 had been adopted following nine consultation sessions involving 1,700 participants from government agencies, the United Nations, NGOs and local and national experts. The action plan had four pillars – civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the rights of vulnerable groups and solidarity rights – 17 main goals, and 102 associated projects. Sixty-four projects had been completed by the end of 2024. Reports were submitted to the Council of Ministers twice a year on progress made in the implementation of the plan. Projects carried out under the plan included human rights training courses, capacity-building, a review of legislation, including on the rights of persons with disabilities and on civil society organizations, and public awareness-raising on human rights. Projects implemented thus far had been carried out in collaboration with civil society organizations and stakeholders, and the results achieved had been monitored. A project to build capacity in the areas of law enforcement, the rule of law and restorative justice had been implemented by the Royal Academy of Police with more than 670 participants. To commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a comprehensive framework had been developed setting out Bahraini policy for promoting and protecting human rights at the local and international levels and ensuring its compliance with the country's international obligations, including with respect to recommendations made under the universal periodic review, those issued by the human rights treaty bodies and obligations assumed under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

44. The commitment of Bahrain to combating corporal punishment in all settings in line with international human rights agreements with a view to protecting human dignity and the rights of the child was reflected in the Constitution and other laws, such as Act No. 4 of 2021 on restorative justice, which prohibited the ill-treatment of children.

45. Bahrain supported a broadly participatory approach to the drafting of national reports, and civil society organizations participated in many national committees that contributed to such reports, including the committees with responsibility for combating trafficking in persons and protecting children, older persons and persons with disabilities. Under the National Human Rights Plan, human rights experts had been invited to build the capacities of civil society organizations to submit reports to United Nations entities.

46. Bahrain had submitted information about Mr. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in replies to the special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council on a number of occasions – most recently, on 10 November 2023 – and had replied to all communications, allegations, urgent appeals and calls that it had received. Under Bahraini law, the rights of accused persons were protected at all stages, from investigation until the final verdict.

47. **The Chair** said that he wished to thank the delegation for the responses that it had provided during the constructive dialogue, from which the Committee had learned a great deal about a range of topics relevant to the State Party.

48. **A representative of Bahrain** said that the dialogue with the Committee had been a valuable opportunity to review the positive developments that had taken place in Bahrain in the field of human rights, including with respect to the promotion of legal and institutional safeguards against torture, the strengthening of a culture of accountability and restorative justice and the improvement of conditions at correctional and rehabilitation facilities. Bahrain was steadfastly committed to building on what it had achieved on the basis of the Committee's concluding observations and was ready to pursue cooperation with all relevant international mechanisms.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.