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Bahrain: Human rights defender Nedal Al-Salman banned from travel

On 26 November 2017, human rights defender **Nedal Al-Salman** was stopped at Bahrain International Airport and prevented from leaving the country. She continues to be banned from travel.

[Nedal Al-Salman](#) is the Head of Women & Children's Rights Advocacy at **Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)**. BCHR works carrying out advocacy, training, workshops, seminars, media campaigns on human rights and reporting to UN mechanisms and international NGOs. The BCHR has also participated in many regional and international conferences and workshops, in addition to testifying in national parliaments across Europe, the EU parliament, and the United States Congress.

On 26 November 2017, Nedal Al-Salman was stopped at Bahrain International Airport by Bahraini authorities and prevented from leaving the country. She had intended to travel to Toronto, Canada, to attend an information and skills exchange with fellow members of the IFEX network, a network of 119 organisations working to promote and defend freedom of expression and information worldwide. The human rights defender was not given reasons for her travel ban and was instead told to speak with the Public Prosecutor.

Such a travel ban is not unprecedented. On 29 August 2016, while [en route](#) to Geneva to participate in the United Nations Human Rights Council, the human rights defender was informed by officials at Bahrain International Airport that the Public Prosecution had ordered a travel ban against her. She was subsequently banned from travelling in March and June 2017 again, when the Human Rights Council sessions were held in Geneva.

Estimates gathered by local human rights defenders indicate that since June 2017, over 25 human rights defenders and members of civil society have been banned from travel. Mass travel bans are regularly issued by the Bahraini authorities in the lead up to, and during, Human Rights Council sessions, as well as during Bahrain's Universal Periodic Review in May 2017.

In August 2016, human rights lawyer [Mohammed Al-Tajer](#) and human rights defender [Enas Oun](#) were banned from travelling from Bahrain International Airport. On 7 July 2016, journalist and human rights defender [Ahmed Radhi](#) was prevented from travelling to Oman. On 12 June 2016, Bahraini security forces prevented three human rights defenders, [Hussain Radhi](#), [Ebtisam Al-Saegh](#) and [Ibrahim Al-Demistani](#) from travelling to Geneva to attend the United Nations Human Rights Council session and to participate in a side event on the situation of human rights in Bahrain. Human rights defenders [Abdulnabi Al-Ekry](#) and journalist [Nazeeha Saeed](#) were also prevented from travelling in June 2016.

Several employees of the Bahrain Human Rights Organization (BHRO) have also been targeted through the imposition of travel bans since August 2016, including Jalila Al-Salman, Ahmed Al-Saffar, Ali Al-Ghader, Esa Al-Ghaeb, Fatima Al-Halwachi, Husain Sahwan, Mohamed Khaleel, Redha Al-Qatari, Dr. Rola Al-Saffar, Dr. Taha Al-Durazi, and retired members Fareda Gholam and Hadi Al-Mosawi. [Zainab Al-Khamees](#) of the Bahrain Human Rights Society has also faced

continued travel bans.

From 24 to 25 April 2017, twenty-two human rights defenders in Bahrain were interrogated by the authorities. They received police summonses on 21 April 2017 to appear before the office of the General Prosecutor. The majority of the human rights defenders who were summoned for interrogation received confirmation that the Public Prosecutor had issued travel bans against them. Ebtisam Al-Saegh and Hussain Radhi were among the twenty-two human rights defenders who were summoned and interrogated, later receiving confirmation that they were subject to travel bans. The interrogations preceded the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session which took place in Geneva on 1 May 2017. In a separate case on 20 April 2017, [Sharaf Al-Mousawi](#) was prevented from travelling to attend a meeting on development in Lebanon.

Front Line Defenders expresses condemnation of the travel bans imposed against Nedal Al-Salman and other Bahraini human rights defenders. Front Line Defenders furthermore believes that these travel bans are solely motivated by their peaceful and legitimate activities in the defence of human rights in Bahrain, and their engagement or intended engagement with the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the Universal Periodic Review.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Bahrain to:

1. Immediately lift the travel ban on Nedal Al-Salman and all others who currently face travel bans and guarantee full respect for their rights to freedom of movement;
2. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bahrain are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.