

My Journey of Adversity for Defending Human Rights in Bahrain

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My Testimony

Introduction

In the decade following the 2011 Pearl Uprising, the Government of Bahrain (GoB) has orchestrated an ongoing human rights crackdown. The GoB has restricted rights and freedoms and imposed a culture of fear. Torture has been one of its lodestars. It undertook scores of arbitrary arrests, instances of enforced disappearance, and carried out executions, including following unfair trial. The GoB has tried officials alleged to have violated human rights. Yet, the outcome of such cases remains opaque and these officials are protected by a climate of impunity. The GoB has systematically failed to enact meaningful reforms regarding the use of torture. Thus, the result of its culture of impunity has been a decade of suppression, evasion of reparations and closure for torture survivors.

In Bahrain, the systematic use of torture continues. Bahraini authorities continue to obscure the reality of what detainees are being subjected to in prisons and detention centers. The Bahraini authorities justify or deny the human rights abuses committed by the security services, the Ministry of Interior, and the National Security Agency. The judiciary continues to cover up these violations and suppress any efforts to expose them.

These systematic and deliberate crimes against humanity, including torture, do not fade with time. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure justice and reparations for victims. Perpetrators of torture cannot be protected by decrees or laws, regardless of their rank or connections. Torture is a grave violation of the absolute right not to be subjected to such treatment. It is never justified under any circumstances, as clearly established in the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, by signing the Convention through Decree Law No. (4) of 1998, though without ratifying its Optional Protocol committed itself to adopting legislative, judicial, and administrative measures to prevent torture. Under Article 14 of the Convention, Bahrain is also obligated to ensure that victims have access to redress and receive fair and adequate compensation

In Bahrain, political prisoners, including well-known human rights defenders like Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Naji Fateel, Abdul-Jalil Al-Singace have faced severe repression simply for their activism. Many political detainees, especially those held in Jaw Central Prison, have been subjected to torture and inhuman treatment during interrogation at the Criminal Investigations Directorate, the Muharraq security complex, and other detention centers. These violations include beatings, sexual assault, medical neglect, and the denial of necessary treatment. In addition to imprisonment and torture, human rights defenders in Bahrain are regularly targeted with travel bans, arbitrary arrests, surveillance, online smear campaigns, and harassment of their families, all aimed at silencing dissent and isolating them from international engagement.

It's been years of torture and the Government of Bahrain remains unable or unwilling to compensate and provide redress for dozens of torture victims and their families by ignoring allegations of torture and their abstention, acquitting perpetrators, and issuing lenient sentences against the few who were convicted.

Summarized testimony

I was arrested at my home on 2 May 2011 by a group of masked civilians. They videotaped my arrest as they took me away. I was blindfolded and transported to an unknown location, where I was interrogated for two hours while still unable to see. The interrogator didn't introduce himself or tell me what institution he worked for. After the interrogation, more masked men

took photographs of me before putting me in a small, isolated cell, measuring only 2 meters by 1.5 meters.

The next day, I was interrogated again, and they threatened me with physical torture and electrocution. They also cursed and insulted me during a medical exam. On 4 May, the torture began. They deprived me of sleep, forcing me to stand with my hands raised. They threatened me with even more physical torture if I dared to sit down. This continued until midnight, pushing my body and mind to their limits.

The next day, on 5 May, I was transferred to the NSA, where I was kept in another isolated cell for 45 days and regularly interrogated. From the questions they asked me, I realized that my arrest was due to my political views, activities, and my membership in Al Wefaq.

On 18 May, I, along with others, was taken to the Military Prosecution. While waiting, the guards beat and mocked us. The investigation lasted for 10 hours, and I wasn't allowed to consult with a lawyer. Afterward, I was taken to a military facility, where they kicked, punched, and brutally beat me with metal sticks. They then took me to a man called "Al Sheikh," who cursed me, insulted my sect, and beat me using a metal rod on my face, ears, and back. On the way back to the NSA, one of the guards beat me again and threatened me with rape.

On 29 May, I was allowed a brief, five-minute phone call to my family, but I wasn't allowed to say anything about where I was or the torture I had endured. Throughout my time in the NSA, I remained blindfolded and isolated in my cell.

On 17 June, I was transferred to the Dry Dock Detention Centre, where I was kept in a small cell with another detainee. For the first three days, I was denied access to the Quran and a prayer rug. Finally, on 19 June, I had my first family visit, and then on 22 June, I was transferred to Al Qurain Prison.

Full testimony

Arrest

I was arrested at around 8:30pm on 2 May 2011 from my house in Hamad Town (south of Manama) by a group of hooded men, carrying guns but wearing civilian clothing, who had forced their way into his living room. One of the men was recording the event on a video camera. I asked for the men to confirm their identity, but they refused. The individuals did not produce an affidavit permitting the search, nor did they produce a warrant for my arrest, although I asked for them to provide one. I also asked the individuals to provide a reason for my arrest, but was not provided any reason. I was told that I was being taken for questioning for a short period and that I would return home shortly. I was taken from my home to an unmarked car parked outside, which I was forced to enter. I noticed that a clearly marked police car was parked immediately behind the unmarked car I was forced to enter.

Detention at Bahrain Defense Force Headquarters: 2 May – 5 May 2011

On the second day, I was questioned by two officers who threatened to torture me, including using electric shock. They told me they could refer me to a specialist interrogator who knew exactly how to extract the maximum amount of information using highly advanced torture equipment. From their accents, I believe one of the officers was from Jordan.

On 2 or 3 May, still blindfolded, I was taken to another room and insulted by security forces about my Shia sect, my political party, and what they claimed was my lack of loyalty to the State. One official said that Shia men engage in illegal sexual relations. As another official took my blood pressure, I was called a traitor, non-Bahraini, an agent of Iran, an illegitimate child, and a miserable human being. The person taking my blood pressure told me I didn't deserve treatment or medical care and that I would eventually no longer live in Bahrain. During this medical check-up, I could hear screams coming from other parts of the clinic. As I was being examined, the clinician described the torture I would face if I didn't cooperate with the authorities. I was also asked to inform them of any underlying health conditions, and I told them I had high blood pressure and high cholesterol. I did later receive medication for those conditions.

I was brought back to the same room mentioned earlier on another occasion during my stay at the BDF Headquarters. This time, I heard a woman's voice. She told me to stay calm and said she was a doctor. She asked me about the medication I took for high blood pressure and cholesterol. Then, I was struck on the head. I was called a "son of a bitch," a Shia traitor, an agent of Iran, a non-Bahraini who didn't deserve to be in Bahrain, and they hurled insults at the chair of Alwefaq. I was hit by anyone who passed me, and others laughed at me. I was told I should be grateful to the leader of Bahrain, that I didn't deserve to be a member of parliament, and that I was "rubbish" at doing my job anyway.

Around midnight on the third day, 4 May 2011, guards outside my cell forced me to stand with my hands in the air. I was made to remain in that position for about twelve hours, until noon the next day. They told me I'd face more abuse if I sat down. A photograph of the Bahraini Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa, was placed in my cell and I was told to kiss it. I believed the guards were trained to create maximum psychological stress before each interrogation in order to break me down and make me more compliant.

Detention at National Security Agency Headquarters: 5 May – 17 June 2011

On 5 May 2011, I was blindfolded and handcuffed, then driven to the headquarters of the National Security Agency (NSA) in Manama. From 5 May to 17 June—except for 18 May, when I was taken to the military prosecutor's office, and 12 June, when I was taken to the Court of National Safety—I was held in solitary confinement in a cell roughly two metres by two metres. Every time I left my cell, except during interrogations, I was blindfolded and handcuffed.

This was the only period during my detention when I was sure of where I was being held. The guards joked that I was now inside the very place I had stood outside of in protest in 2007. Recalling Alwefaq's 2007 protest against detention conditions, I deduced that I was being held at NSA headquarters.

Upon arrival, I was immediately taken to a health clinic that, to me, felt more like a torture centre. While pretending to examine me, the officials described in detail the forms of torture I would be subjected to if I didn't cooperate. I could hear the screams of other detainees echoing through the clinic.

After that, I was taken for questioning. During these sessions, I remained blindfolded but was not handcuffed. The questions were similar to those I had been asked earlier at the BDF headquarters. They also interrogated me about my travels to Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and the United States, demanding explanations for each of my visits.

Between 5 May and 17 June 2011, I was interrogated at least three times by NSA officers. Each session lasted between two to three hours. The questions were repetitive, focusing on similar topics as before. In addition to verbal questioning, I was required during each interrogation to write responses to three to six written questions. I was given a blank sheet of paper and a pen to record my answers.

The questions focused heavily on how Alwefaq was founded and what role I played in its creation. They asked about my relationships with leaders of other opposition political societies, my whereabouts during the uprisings, my political background, my family's history, and my involvement in the gatherings of February and March 2011. They also wanted to know why Alwefaq had chosen me for coordination responsibilities and why I had openly criticized the ruling family.

It was suggested that I had special and confidential contacts in the US and Iranian embassies. I denied this.

During MY detention in the NSA, guards would occasionally, and deliberately, delay responding to my request to use the bathroom. On one occasion, i was left in the bathroom for more than 12 hours overnight. The morning shift guardsman said he would report the incident but I was not aware that any subsequent action to investigate took place.

Questioning at Military Prosecution Office: 18 May 2011

Early in the morning on 18 May, I was taken out of my cell and handed back some of my personal belongings that had been confiscated on 2 May—my watch, glasses, and ring. This gave me the impression that I was being released. I was placed on a bus, blindfolded and handcuffed. Although I couldn't see, I could sense that there were other passengers on board with me.

After a while, the bus stopped suddenly, and we were informed that we would be returned to NSA headquarters. But instead of going back there, my belongings—watch, glasses, and ring—were taken from me again while we were still on the bus. The bus then continued on to what felt like a "sunny outdoor location."

At that location, several individuals boarded the bus and began forcibly removing passengers. I was dragged off, struck on the head, and called a traitor. I was forced to sit in the sun and asked to state my name and

citizenship number. Each of us had to provide these details, and the whole process took at least thirty minutes. Afterward, we were returned to the bus. Though still blindfolded, I believe that more passengers were added to the bus during that time.

We then drove for what I estimate was two to three hours before arriving at a different location. When we got there, we were told we were no longer in Bahrain, but in Saudi Arabia, and were instructed to follow all orders. Security officers told us that Shia people in Saudi Arabia were treated “like dogs,” and warned us that we could expect even worse treatment as Bahraini Shia.

We were taken to what I can best describe as a waiting room. In that room, we were forced to repeatedly sing the Bahraini national anthem. The anthem was played loudly, and then it would be paused—sometimes we were ordered to sing the remaining line alone, sometimes as a group. Anyone who didn’t comply was beaten. I was struck on the head during this process.

While in that waiting room, I was also ordered at random to stand, sit, or move. Because I was blindfolded, I often collided with objects or walls. This humiliation and confusion went on for about an hour.

After approximately an hour, I heard my name being called. I was taken into a small room, and my blindfold was finally removed. Inside the room, I saw two men—one who introduced himself as the military prosecutor, and another who appeared to be taking notes.

When I entered the room, the military prosecutor informed me that I would be interrogated for some time. He asked if I was aware of why I was being detained and of the charges being brought against me. I told him that I was not aware of any charges. He then informed me that I was facing four charges. He said that his office had contacted my lawyer and invited him to attend the interrogation, but that my lawyer was in another urgent meeting. He told me my lawyer would likely arrive within a few hours and asked if I wanted to proceed with the interrogation. I agreed.

After my release, I asked my lawyer about this. My lawyer told me that the military prosecutor's office had only contacted him at the exact moment the interrogation was about to begin. Since he had no prior knowledge that I would be questioned on 18 May, he had already scheduled other meetings. He also explained that even if he had been available immediately, it would have taken several hours for him to reach the interrogation site because interrogations took place in undisclosed locations. Lawyers had to go to known police or security offices and then be transferred to these secret interrogation sites by officials. He was concerned that the interrogation would have ended before he could arrive.

I agreed to continue with the interrogation without my lawyer because I hoped he would arrive soon and because I feared being forced to endure the same ordeal of travel again—being dragged through the “sunny outdoor location,” struck, insulted, and humiliated in the waiting room. I couldn't bear the thought of repeating that journey.

The interrogation lasted between eight and ten hours. I was permitted occasional breaks for food and prayers. During the session, I reported the abuse I had suffered earlier that morning.

The military prosecutor accused me of conspiring with others to overthrow the Bahraini regime, particularly in connection with the events at the GCC [Pearl] Roundabout. He asked whether I had deliberately spread hatred against the regime among the Bahraini people and if I had spread false information—offenses under Bahraini law. He warned me not to deny the allegations, claiming they had recordings of me that would prove my guilt.

He said he would play clips from interviews I had given to international media which, according to him, confirmed the charges. He described these clips as just samples from a larger collection of recordings they had which he claimed would fully implicate me. Incomplete and selectively edited segments of my interviews were played during the interrogation. I was also questioned about statements I had made to the United Nations and the European Parliament.

After the interrogation ended, I was blindfolded again and taken back to the waiting room. The guards there punished me and others for having complained earlier that morning. They insulted us again and repeated the same humiliating commands—ordering me to stand and move while blindfolded. While trying to comply, I bumped into a wall and hit a staircase banister. The guards laughed at this and further subjected me to humiliating insults. I was told to provide information of my income. Upon hearing the amount, guards mocked me and laughed at me, calling me foolish for letting himself get into trouble with the authorities when he was given such a high salary. This went on for almost an hour. While in the waiting room, I heard the names of other detainees being called. These included the names of resigned MP Matar Matar, Shaikh Mitham Alsalman, Sheikh Abdeladeem Almohtadi and Sheikh Mohammed Habib Almoqdad.

Late that same night, I and the others were taken back to the bus. While on the bus, and as it was moving, I and others were instructed to stand on a single leg; those not willing to obey the order or those who could not for physical reasons endured additional beating and cursing.

After a few hours, the bus stopped. I was grabbed violently, beaten with sticks, shoes, taken out of the bus and pulled to the ground. A voice shouted that a “Sheik” was waiting for Me. A guard beat me while dragging me on ground towards the man referred to as a Sheik. The man identified as a Sheik beat me with a stick, kicked me with his shoes, and threatened the use of electric shocks. I, still blindfolded, could feel that the Sheik was pulling something over his head. As he did this, the Sheik said he could kill me right now but that he did not want to spoil his hand with my dirty blood. I felt the Sheik remove the object over his head and felt two others begin to beat me. As this went on, the Sheik said he had been waiting a long time to punish me, he asked rhetorically “who are you to stand against the ruling families, traitor, agent of Iran” and hurled insults against Alwefaq, and My parents.

When the beating stopped, the Sheik informed me that they would be waiting for me to return: “you will come here again and it will be longer session next time”.

I was then dragged back on to the bus and was forced to sit at the back of the bus. A man asked me for my name and identity number again. I kept silent; the guard repeated his questions and then beat and kicked me. He also subjected me to sexual assault and harassment, and threatened me with rape. My hand was hit. The man who hit me said that it was known I practiced sexual acts with boys. I kept quiet. The man then said that he could attack me sexually and began touching me on my back, backside and genitals. The man told me to bend over so that he could rape me and alleged that i had done this before, or had had this done to him before, and so was accustomed to it. This threat could be easily heard by others in the bus.

Upon returning to the NSA, My body ached. I had dark spots across his body. The next morning (19 May), a guard noticed that I was not feeling well and insisted that I inform him of what happened. The guard seemed disturbed and promised to raise concerns with his supervisors. I was not aware that any investigation was carried out, however.

NSA Headquarters

While I was held at NSA Headquarters, there was one occasion when I asked to use the toilet and was escorted to the bathroom. Next to the toilet—only about a meter away—there was a washbasin. I used the toilet and then naturally went to use the washbasin. After finishing, I called for the guard to take me back to my cell.

When the guard opened the door and saw that I had moved from the toilet to the washbasin, he began shouting at me, accusing me of disobeying orders because I hadn't asked for permission to use the washbasin. I explained to him that it was normal practice to use both the toilet and the washbasin, and that I had never before been told to ask separately for

permission to use them. I also told him that other guards had never had an issue with this.

In response, he beat me. He punched me on the face and head and then left me locked inside the bathroom for about an hour. When he finally returned, he grabbed me by the neck and dragged me back to my cell. I found the whole experience deeply humiliating and disturbing.

Detention at Dry Dock Prison, Muharraq: 17 June – 22 June 2011

On 17 June, I was transferred to Dry Dock Prison in Muharraq. I was placed in a prison cell shared with a 16-year-old detainee. While I was there, I was denied access to both a copy of the Quran and a prayer mat. I asked for them, but the guards told me they had been specifically instructed not to provide me with either—even though they clearly had both available.

I believe this denial was intended as a form of punishment, another way to humiliate and demoralize me.

Continuing Prosecution and Revocation of Citizenship

The charges originally brought against me before the military court (Court of National Safety) on 12 June 2011 were as follows, as outlined in the unofficial translation of the final court judgment:

1. That I openly instigated hatred for the regime and showed contempt for it by speaking to Al-Alam TV Channel, where I asked the broadcaster to listen to the slogans being chanted against the regime.
2. That I deliberately spread false news, rumors, and propaganda intended to disrupt public security, cause chaos, and harm public interest—specifically by claiming that the Saudi Army had entered Bahrain to confront unarmed Bahraini civilians, and that militias in

plain clothes were operating in different areas of the country, organized and trained in the ways described in the case papers.

3. That I took part in a gathering at the GCC Roundabout with the aim of disrupting public security.
4. That I called for and organized marches without informing the appropriate authorities—namely, the Martyrs March, the “Government Must Resign” march, the “Down with the 2002 Constitution” march, and a march in front of government buildings.

The Military Prosecution sought to have me punished under Articles 165, 168, and 178 of the Penal Law, and Articles 1, 2(a), 9, and 13(2) of Decree Law No. 18 of 1973 concerning Gatherings, Processions & Meetings, as amended by Law No. 32 of 2006.

At the end of the National Safety period, my case was referred to the civil courts on 29 June 2011, in accordance with Article 1 of Royal Decree No. 62 of 2011, which directed that cases not yet adjudicated by the National Security Courts should be transferred to ordinary courts.

After my release, my case remained open. My trial resumed in October 2011. The prosecutor later dropped the charges relating to “spreading false news about the regime” and “encouraging hatred among the people toward the regime.” However, the charges related to participating in illegal gatherings and organizing marches without notifying the authorities were still pursued.

After several hearings, the court set the date of 4 July 2012 for delivering the verdict. But on that day, without any advance notice or explanation, my assigned judge was replaced, and the case was transferred to a new judge.

This meant the trial had to start all over again. My lawyer had to restart the defense from the beginning. A new date for the verdict was announced—2 January 2013. But on 3 November 2012, I received notice that the verdict would instead be delivered earlier, on 7 November 2012.

I left Bahrain on 5 November 2012 and traveled to the United Kingdom on a valid visa.

However, even before the verdict was handed down, on 6 November 2012, the Ministry of Interior appeared on national television to announce that it had revoked the citizenship of 31 citizens. My name—and that of my brother, Jalal Fairouz—was among them. We were listed as the final two names. According to a statement released by the official news agency, our citizenship was revoked because we had allegedly caused “damage to state security.”

I received no prior warning of this decision. It came without any formal notice, legal process, or chance to appeal. It effectively rendered me stateless.

The very next day, 7 November 2012, the court announced its verdict in my case. I was found guilty of the two remaining charges under Article 178 of the Penal Code and the Decree Law on Gatherings.

Impact of exiled and statelessness

Losing your nationality means you are no longer recognized as a citizen by any country. You become stateless with no passport, no rights, and no protection under any government. In exile, you may not have legal status in the country you're forced to live in either. This puts you in a legal limbo, often with no access to basic services.

In exile, you lose:

- The right to work legally
- Access to healthcare and education
- The right to vote or participate in public life
- Property and financial rights (bank accounts and properties are frozen)
- You are cut off from all civil and political rights, which are normally protected by citizenship.

Exile often means long-term or permanent separation from family. You may not be able to return for births, deaths, or emergencies. Your children may grow up without you, and your parents may grow old without your support.

Being forced out of your country and losing your identity leads to depression, anxiety, and trauma in addition to social isolation, meaning a deep feeling of loss and disconnection from your culture and community

Many exiles are cut off from their income, property, and savings. In a new country, they may not be allowed to work or may have to start from zero, often in poverty and uncertainty.

Revoking nationality and exile are often used to silence dissent. It tells others: "If you speak out, this could happen to you." It has a chilling effect on freedom of speech and activism.

Human Rights Defender stories

Ebtisam al- Saegh: In May 2017, the National Security Agency detained human rights defender (HRD) and member of Salam for Democracy and Human Rights, Ebtisam AlSaegh.). She told SALAM DHR that officials telephoned her and instructed her to go to the NSA building. When she arrived at the building in Muharraq, they blindfolded and interrogated her because of her human rights activities. During the interrogation, they used the worst forms of physical torture. They insulted her, threatened her, and sexually abused her. They also threatened to rape her and ultimately target her and her loved ones with criminal charges and instructed her to close all her social media accounts. Following her release in October 2017, after international pressure, Ebtisam Al-Saegh was hospitalized in a state of complete nervous breakdown. A medical examination confirmed that she had been severely beaten on the head and physically assaulted. However, the attending doctor refused to issue a medical report due to fear of government reprisals.

The long-term effects of her abuse extended beyond herself. Al-Saegh later described how her youngest son developed severe psychological trauma

as a result of repeated police raids on their home. He became terrified of the color blue, associating it with the police uniforms of the officers who frequently came to arrest family members. On one occasion, the child collapsed in fear when police entered his room, highlighting the deep intergenerational impact of such state-led intimidation.

A few months later, Al-Saegh was arrested again, this time in direct retaliation for speaking publicly about the torture she endured. She was held in solitary confinement, subjected to humiliation, and charged with terrorism. During this detention, a security officer reportedly told her: “You will remain in prison for 10 to 15 years—if you don’t die in prison. We just want you to stay silent because you speak out and dare to challenge us, men.”

Naji Fateel: Throughout my human rights activism, I have experienced several arrests, but the harshest of them occurred on 2 May 2013. The arrest took place under brutal conditions, and during the investigation, I was subjected to various forms of psychological and physical torture, aimed at extracting confessions under duress and forcing my submission. I was sentenced to 15 years in prison with immediate effect, and later, an additional 15 years was added, bringing my total unjust sentence to 30 years in prison, in trials that lacked the most basic standards of justice.

During the 11 years I spent in prison, I was moved between different cells and prisons. I witnessed firsthand the daily suffering of political prisoners—denial of medical treatment, poor nutrition, prolonged solitary confinement, systematic repression of religious practices, as well as restrictions on family visits and communication with the outside world. The suffering was widespread and continuous, indiscriminate of age, health, or status, in blatant violation of international conventions Bahrain has ratified, especially the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Despite all of this, I hoped that my release would mark the beginning of a new chapter in my life, after being granted a royal pardon on 8 April 2024.

However, the shock was greater than I had expected. The targeting continued even after my release, and it became clear that in Bahrain, imprisonment doesn't end when you step out of a cell.

Today, I live under constant security surveillance, with repeated summons to security centers without any legal justification. As a result of these summons, I was fired from my job, and I have been banned from entering Kuwait, and potentially other Gulf and Arab countries in the future, as my name has been included in the blacklists of my own government. I also face systematic deprivation of basic civil rights:

- I cannot work freely because of my political background.
- I am still deprived of obtaining government housing, despite my application from 1996, which is now over 29 years old. The Housing Ministry even changed the dates of my application from old to new in an attempt to erase my right and exclude me from eligibility.
- My children and family are paying the price of my absence, and the ongoing targeting affects them psychologically and socially.

What I am going through is not an isolated case; it is a strategy employed by the Bahraini authorities to punish anyone who expresses an opposing view or participates in peaceful movements that demand political reforms. This retaliatory approach, based on exclusion rather than reconciliation, and the denial of justice, represents one of the clearest forms of political persecution that needs to be documented, exposed, and held accountable.

Freedom does not simply mean opening the prison doors; it means respecting human dignity, ensuring civil rights, and living in security without threats. Until this is achieved, the walls of the prison will continue to haunt us even in the streets and homes.

Important Note Before Conclusion: I am still at risk of being arrested at any moment because of my demands for my legitimate rights.

Need for reparation

Potential roadmap for Bahrain, summarized as:

First: Restoration of rights and an effort to return the victim to their situation prior to the violation, taking into account the specific circumstances of each case. This requires addressing the structural causes, i.e. addressing the consequences of torture such as discrimination and sectarian persecution and taking steps to reverse its effects.

Second: Appropriate financial and non-financial compensation to cover damages, including medical expenses, loss of income, and opportunities. Compensation should also include legal aid and other costs related to seeking redress.

Third: Comprehensive rehabilitation and provision of medical, psychological, legal and social services, to enable the victim's integration and participation in society, and efforts to address the negative effects of torture and provide long-term support.

Fourth: Satisfaction and the right to know the truth by investigating incidents of torture, revealing the truth, restoring dignity and rights, imposing penalties on the perpetrators and holding them accountable, offering a public apology, and commemorating the victims.

Fifth: Taking preventive measures to combat impunity and ensure that torture is not repeated. Adhering to international standards of due process, training law enforcement officials, protecting human rights defenders, implementing independent monitoring of detention facilities, and undertaking legal reforms.

Sixth: Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which was approved in 1984.

The Transformation From Physical Violence to Soft Torture

The tools of repressing opposition have undergone a noticeable transformation in an attempt to circumvent growing international pressure. While direct physical torture was prevalent in the past, today, what can be called "soft torture" has become the most commonly used tool. Despite its lack of visible blood and marks, its destructive consequences on individuals and society are no less dangerous than physical violence.

Some of the most prominent features of this type of torture include:

Deprivation of Civil Rights After Release:

- Banning employment in both the public and private sectors.
- Hindering the acquisition of official documents or certificates of good conduct.
- Restrictions on travel, or obtaining housing and basic services.

Ongoing Social and Political Surveillance:

- Monitoring individuals' movements and activities, even after their sentence has ended or they have been acquitted.

Frequent Security Summons Without Legal Justification:

- A tool for creating a constant state of fear and intimidation.

Indirect Threats:

- Whether through intermediaries or veiled messages, aimed at breaking the will and imposing silence.

The Result: Repression did not stop; rather, it changed its form. It has become more hidden, harder to document, but no less harmful than physical violence. Its effects last much longer and undermine individuals' ability to restore their normal lives.