

# BAHRAIN'S LARGEST AMNESTY IN DECADES: WHO WAS LEFT BEHIND?



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On April 8, 2024, the Bahraini government granted the largest amnesty in more than two decades, **releasing** 1,584 detainees, including **more than half** of the political prisoners in the country. Two months later, on June 15, 2024, they **pardoned** another 545 people, including eight political prisoners, to mark Eid al-Adha. Despite these significant releases, 546 political prisoners, including some of Bahrain's most prominent rights defenders, **remain** behind bars.

## THE CONTEXT

After Hussein Khalil, a political prisoner suffering from medical negligence, **died** in Jau Prison on March 25, 2024, most political prisoners began a strike, refusing to return to their cells. In response, authorities **suspended** family visits, phone calls, and access to the commissary for strikers and the other detainees in their buildings. Following the initial pardon, families of some remaining political prisoners **began peaceful protests** demanding the release of all political detainees, but some demonstrations have been **met with arrests** of the protesters.

## THE APRIL 8 PARDON

*The release of political prisoners was a significant departure from the kingdom's practice of largely pardoning criminal detainees.*

### PROMINENT RELEASES



**NAJI FATEEL** is a leading human rights activist and a blogger. He was most recently **arrested** in May 2013. While detained, he faced torture, ill treatment, and severe due process violations.



**SAYED NIZAR ALWADAEI**, a university student, was **arrested** in 2017 in an apparent act of transnational repression to try to silence his brother-in-law, BIRD Advocacy Director **Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei**.



**MAHMOUD AL-JAZIRI** was a journalist for the last standing independent newspaper in Bahrain, Al Wasat. He was **arrested** in 2015, the same day he published a report on a governmental proposal to deny housing to individuals who had their citizenship revoked for their political engagement.

## THE JUNE 15 PARDON

4

individuals under the age of 21 were released from prison.

3

individuals, including prominent former political opposition figure **HISHAM AL-SABBAGH**, were released while serving alternative sentences. (Alternative sentences **allow** eligible detainees to carry out portions of their sentence outside of a traditional prison environment.)

1

individual was pardoned due to an urgent medical condition.

**APR 8**

**1,584**  
TOTAL  
PRISONERS  
RELEASED

**652**  
POLITICAL  
PRISONERS  
RELEASED

**JUN 15**

**545**  
TOTAL  
PRISONERS  
RELEASED

**8**  
POLITICAL  
PRISONERS  
RELEASED

**NOW**

**546**  
POLITICAL  
PRISONERS  
REMAIN  
DETAINED

## THOSE LEFT BEHIND

546

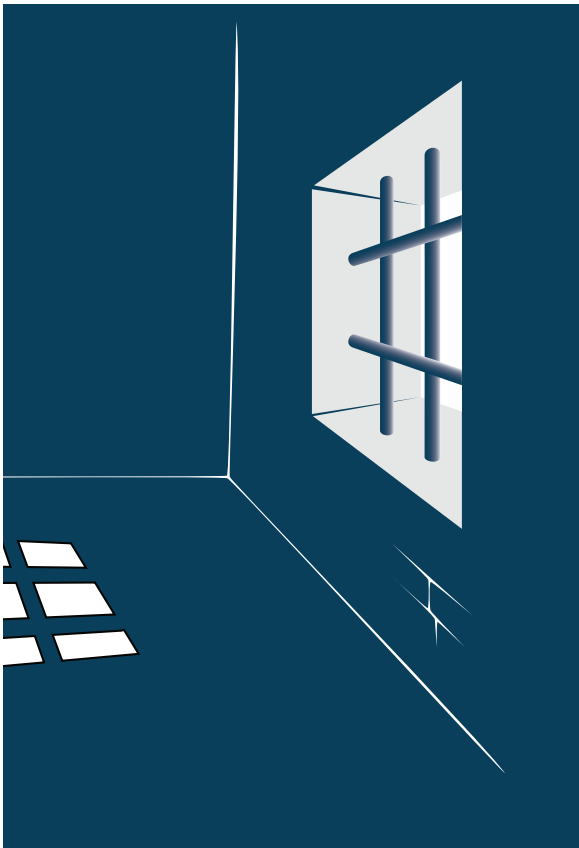
political prisoners remain in prison, with most detained in Jau prison.

46

political prisoners have been transferred to Bahrain's "open prisons project," since the royal pardon, and are able to leave Jau prison to go to their family homes on occasional Fridays.

26

individuals remain on death row and are at imminent risk of execution, having exhausted all rights to appeal. Twelve of the 26 death row inmates are imprisoned on political charges, and 11 of these 12 have said they were tortured.



## PROMINENT INDIVIDUALS STILL IMPRISONED



**ABDULHADI AL-KHAWAJA**, a Danish-Bahraini human rights defender, is the founder of Gulf Center for Human Rights and the only Danish prisoner of conscience in the world. Arrested in 2011, he is currently serving a life sentence for his pro-democracy activism after being convicted in a grossly unfair trial. Authorities have failed to provide him adequate medical treatment for his heart condition and glaucoma, and he is at imminent risk of a heart attack or stroke.



**ABDULJALIL AL-SINGACE**, an academic and human rights defender, is serving a life sentence for his peaceful role in Bahrain's 2011 pro-democracy uprising. He has faced brutal torture and continuous medical neglect at the hands of Bahraini authorities. He suffers from chronic medical conditions including post-polio syndrome, and he requires crutches or a wheelchair for mobility. Dr. Al-Singace has been on a **liquids-only hunger strike** since July 8, 2021, to protest the confiscation of his apolitical academic work.



**HASSAN MUSHAIMA**, an opposition leader and human rights defender, is serving a life sentence for exercising his rights to free expression and association. He was the former vice president of Al-Wefaq Islamic Society, the largest opposition group in Bahrain. Mushaima has been subjected to ill treatment and medical neglect throughout his time at Jau prison.



**SHEIKH ALI SALMAN**, the leader of dissolved opposition party Al-Wefaq, was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2018 on politically motivated charges. He has been imprisoned since 2014 on a separate conviction related to speeches he delivered against parliamentary elections that his party boycotted.

\* Methodology: Release numbers are estimates based on the Bahraini government's list of released individuals and BIRD's database of political prisoners. Information on individuals still detained is based on research conducted by BIRD that utilized direct information from political prisoners currently held at Jau Prison, further verified by their family members and recently released political prisoners, and cross-referenced with BIRD's database of political prisoners.



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