



Statement by NIHR on Prisoners' Exercise of their Religious Rituals during Ashura Season

Manama on September 12, 2019

Members of the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)'s Council of Commissioners have made important and interactive visits to reform, rehabilitation and detention centers during Ashura season 2019, in line with the NIHR's belief in the need to ensure that both male and female prisoners continue to exercise their religious rituals, as there are parties that insist upon spreading falsehoods for goals other than human rights, especially as all international conventions and treaties agree on the need of all persons deprived of their liberty to be treated humanely. At the same time, the charters emphasize that the regulations and rules of reform and rehabilitation centers must take into account the relevant human rights standards.

The members of the NIHR's Council of Commissioners met with a number of male and female prisoners at Women Inmates Rehabilitation Center, Women Inmates Detention Center in Isa town, Reform and Rehabilitation Center in Jaw area and Detention Center in Dry Dock, where they all expressed their satisfaction with the level of facilities provided by the centers' administrations to ensure the continued exercise of their religious rituals. The members also witnessed the inmates' exercise of those rituals on the ground, which emphasizes the freedom of religious practices for prisoners of all religions and sects.

The NIHR also coordinated with the centers to increase the duration of ritual practice on the 10th of Muharram, where the centers' administrations positively responded and thankfully doubled the time. The NIHR will also apply to the competent authorities for considering the possibility of increasing the number of books on the religious occasion in the future, at the request of a number of inmates.

Based upon its field visits during Ashura season this year, the NIHR states that the freedom of male and female prisoners to practice their religious rites is fully guaranteed in such a way that does not prejudice or exceed the freedom and privacy of other prisoners of all faiths and other sects in practicing their rituals, while ensuring the security of the center and the safety of its inmates.

On this occasion, Ms. Maria Khoury, Chairperson of the NIHR, stressed that the Kingdom of Bahrain has signed international agreements that guarantee the rights of people of all religions and beliefs, that the concepts of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence experienced by the Bahraini society of all its spectrums in the past decades have been and continue to be a source of strength and stability for the Kingdom of Bahrain, and that the free exercise of religious rites within the framework of ensuring public and personal freedoms and equality among everybody without distinction as to race, language, religion or sex is one of the basic pillars of building the homeland, which correspond to the values of tolerance and coexistence on which a Bahraini citizen was raised up.



For his part, Mr. Khaled Alshaer, NIHR's Vice-chairperson, explained that the field visits made by the NIHR members stem from the legal and oversight role of the NIHR over the ministries and institutions of the executive authority pursuant to its wide mandate stressed by its Incorporation Law, in confirmation of Bahrain's dedication to the safeguarding of the rights of all. The NIHR will issue its report in this regard pursuant to Article (12) of its Incorporation Law.

The NIHR's Council of Commissioners also appreciates the great cooperation of the Ministry of Interior and its response to the requests of the declared and undeclared visits to reform, rehabilitation and detention centers at the time it deems appropriate, in order to inspect the status of male and female inmates and ensure that they enjoy their established rights in accordance with the applicable regulations without restriction.