

Statement by NIHR on World Press Freedom Day

Manama on May 03, 2019

World Press Freedom Day is celebrated on May 3 each year, the day chosen to commemorate the adoption of the historic Windhoek Declaration of 1991, which states that freedom of the press can only be achieved by ensuring a free, independent and pluralistic media environment. This day is an opportunity to celebrate the basic principles of press freedom and to pay tribute to the journalists who lost their lives while performing their duty.

The theme of this year's celebration is: "Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation." It focuses on illuminating current challenges facing the media in elections, and highlights the importance of it in establishing the values of peace and reconciliation.

The NIHR takes this occasion to express its pride in the prominent position of the press in the Kingdom of Bahrain under the Reform Project of His Majesty the King, as Article (23) of the Bahraini Constitution provides for the freedom of opinion and the right to expression, stating that "Freedom of speech and freedom to carry out scientific research shall be guaranteed. Every person shall have the right to express and propagate his/her opinion in words, in writing or by any other means, in accordance with the conditions and procedures specified by the law, without prejudice to Islamic principles and without leading to division or sectarianism". The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which the Kingdom of Bahrain acceded by Law No. (56) of 2006, also affirms that "Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression and to seek various forms of information and ideas, whether written, printed, artistic or by any means of their choice, regardless of frontiers". The right of expression, however, may be subject to certain restrictions provided that they are defined by law, which are necessary to protect the rights and reputations of others or to maintain national security, public order, public health or morals.

Based upon the NIHR's terms of reference set forth in its Incorporation Law No. (26) of 2014, as amended by the Decree Law No. (20) of 2016, aiming at promoting and protecting the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the NIHR hereby calls for the rapid adoption of the Electronic Media and Press Law, which will guarantee greater rights for journalists and ensure their freedom, and will contribute to media work.