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Faculty of Law and Political and Administrative
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**Internship Report: Working as a Documentation &
Translation Intern at Americans for Democracy and
Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)**

By

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Sincerely,

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Introduction

This report is a short description reflecting on a 4 (four) months long internship carried out as a compulsory component of the Professional Master Program in Political Science – International Organizations. The internship was carried out in Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Beirut Branch (Headquarters in Washington DC).

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) is a non-governmental organisation that works on raising awareness and support for democracy and human rights in Bahrain and Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC)¹. ADHRB was initially founded in 2002 through the culmination of six conferences that succeeded in uniting the Bahraini American community in the United States. Throughout the years, it slowly expanded, and it now not only works on providing mappings for human rights abuses in Bahrain but also in neighbouring Gulf countries as well. The organisation has dedicated staff and interns from all over the world, from different ethnicities, religions, and opinions who all work diligently towards one common goal, for justice to prevail. The organization's main headquarter is in Washington, D.C. Since its initial founding ADHRB has successfully developed relationships with multiple pro-democracy and human rights NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, Freedom House and many others.

In its pursuit to raise awareness regarding the human rights situation in Bahrain, ADHRB offered support to delegations of Bahraini human rights activists which included individuals such as Nabeel Rajab², Jalila al-Salman³ along with others to give them a platform within which they can share their experiences, voices and demands with US

¹ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), <https://www.adhrb.org/about/> (accessed April 7, 2021).

² Nabeel Rajab is a prominent Bahraini human rights defender who was arrested in 2016 and sentenced to a total of 8 years of prison on multiple charges: spreading fake news, publishing and disseminating rumors and false news, inciting hatred against the regime, inciting non-compliance with the law over social media posts published on his Twitter and Instagram accounts while he was already in police custody in 2017. Additionally, he was charged with “spreading false news and statements and malicious rumors that undermine the prestige of the state” in relation to letters written by him and published in The New York Times and Le Monde. He was released in 2020.

³ Jaleela al-Salman is a Bahraini teacher and the former vice president of the (now dissolved) Bahraini teachers' association. In 2011, she was arrested, detained, and tortured for her alleged role in coordinating teacher strikes following mass protests demanding government reforms. She was charged with “calling for and inciting the overthrow and hatred towards the ruling system, possessing anti-political system pamphlets, spreading malicious and false news and, participating in illegal gatherings.” She was released late 2012.

lawmakers and NGO leaders. Furthermore, in accordance with its main cause which is to ensure the respect of all human rights and freedoms, ADHRB expanded its work and started advocating for the same causes in countries neighbouring Bahrain who are suffering from the same bad human rights reputation. These countries include Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait.

Generally speaking, the main motivation for applying to that internship was my search for diversity and my interest in Advocacy. The concept of diversity includes accepting and respecting others regardless of our differences. These can be related to ethnicity, race, gender, age, socio-economic status, physical abilities, political beliefs, religious beliefs, or other ideologies. My interest in advocacy, on the other hand, is restricted to the human rights field. But what are human rights and what is the definition of NGOs?

Human rights, by definition, are a list of international standards, represented by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948), governing how governments should treat their citizens. Such standards include that: Governments should not order or accept torture; they must allow freedom of expression and freedom of religion; they should not order capital sentences without fair trials; they must provide food, clothing, healthcare, Etc. These rights are guaranteed by the declaration mentioned above and many other international treaties and conventions on the global and regional levels. While it is true that the majority of the countries vowed not to violate these standards and to protect them, many violations are occurring. People came to know about these violations through articles published by media platforms, reports by specialized UN agencies, regional international bodies, and non-governmental human rights organizations.

Non-governmental organizations are a weird phenomenon. They are not governments, but they also are not private firms. So, what are they? According to the Canadian human rights expert Laurie Wiseberg (Wiseberg ,1991) an NGO can be defined as the following:

“A private organization which devotes significant resources to the promotion and protection of human rights, which is independent of both governmental and political groups that seek direct political power, and which itself do not seek such power.”⁴

She (Wiseberg, 1991) differentiates NGOs from political parties that are also private associations but do seek to achieve political power. NGOs, as Gordenker and Weiss (Gordenker and Weiss 1995) have put it, are “private in their form, but public in their purpose.”⁵

The World Bank ⁶ (World Bank, 1995) distinguishes between two types of non-governmental organizations: operational ones and advocacy ones. An operation NGO usually focuses on the planning and implementation of development related projects. In contrast, an Advocacy NGO defends or promotes a certain cause.

Authors like A. Le Roy Benett and James K. Oliver (Benett & Oliver, 2002) talked about how since the end of the cold war, NGO activity revolved around three main domains: the environment, human rights, and humanitarian affairs. Throughout the time, NGOs have undertaken a range of roles and functions such as feedback, opinion mobilization, service delivery, network creation, norm creation, Etc. Leon Gordenker and Thomas G. Weiss⁷ (Gordenker & Weiss, 1995) classified those roles and functions under three main categories. Unlike the World Bank, they defined three types of NGOs: operational ones, educational ones and advocacy ones. According to them, Operational NGOs are those: “associated with providing tangible resources for humanitarian relief necessitated by natural and other disasters, migration or refugee flows.” In contrast, Advocacy and educational ones are more general, and are directed at “policy making communities”, in other words States that have the responsibility and ability to act on a certain cause. In their book “International Organizations,” A. Le Roy Benett and James K. Oliver (Benett & Oliver, 2002) emphasize how Advocacy NGOs generally have “specific policy

⁴ Wiseberg, L. S. (1991). Protecting Human Rights Activists and NGOs: What More Can Be Done? *Human Rights Quarterly*, 13(4), 525. <https://doi.org/10.2307/762305>

⁵ “Pluralising global governance: analytical approaches and dimensions,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No 3, 1995, <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/14831012.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2021).

⁶ World Bank (1995, March). *Working with NGOs*, 10. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/814581468739240860/pdf/multi-page.pdf>

⁷ Gordenker, L. & G. Weiss, T. (1995). Pluralising global governance: analytical approaches and dimensions. *Third World Quarterly*, 16 (3). <https://library.fes.de/libalt/journals/swetsfulltext/14831012.pdf>

outcomes or policy agendas they seek to advance or conditions they want changed⁸.” This normally leads to a confrontation since those NGOs are seeking most probably governments to stop something or engage in solving a problem previously neglected or ignored. We are referring here mainly to those whose work is related to human rights or the environment. As we will see when further discussed in depth in the body of this report, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) is an NGO who’s mandate/cause fits exactly with this definition. It is a non-governmental organization who engages with key governments and the United Nations in pushing the Bahraini government to respect its international organizations by stopping the violation of basic human rights and freedoms not only in Bahrain but also in other Gulf States.

John E. Pardeck says that (Pardeck, 1996):

“Advocacy involves either an individual or group, or their representatives, pressing their case with influential others, about situations which either affect them directly or, and more usually, try to prevent proposed changes, which will leave them worse off.”

Pardeck (Pardeck, 1996) further explains that:

“The advocacy role, from a social context, includes the redistribution of power and recourse to an individual or group, guarding their rights and preserving their values, conserving their best interests, and overcoming the sense of powerlessness⁹ .”

Advocating within an NGO for justice and pushing for change is not as easy as it sounds, experience and practice is needed. Of course, I was aware even before starting that objectivity and interest in the targeted countries are a must and indeed, I personally wanted to know more about Gulf countries and ADHRB was the perfect place to seek this knowledge since its internship program targeted fresh graduates. Another reason that drove me to apply was my love and passion for languages; an internship at an iNGO that focuses on human rights and involves translation seemed like the right choice in that moment.

⁸ Bennett, A. L. & Oliver, J.K (2002). *International Organizations: Principles and Issues* (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs (New Jersey): Prentice-Hall.

⁹ Pardeck, J. T. (1996). *Social work practice: An ecological approach*. Westport, CT: Auburn House.

The goal from this internship program was of course to see how iNGOs work on advocacy, to see if I, as an intern, can form my own understanding of the work which would help me frame my professional path. Working on accomplishing a change related to violated human rights personally meant that I would be able to see how certain governments are behaving, where international laws are broken and how NGOs work on finding a solution.

At the very beginning of the internship, I have formulated several concrete learning goals that I aimed to achieve, which included:

1. to understand the functioning and working conditions of an international non-governmental organization in general.
2. to see and improve my adaptation skills to a new environmental workplace which I have not previously been exposed to.
3. to oversee the prospect of working in an NGO for my future career in general.
4. to understand advocacy work and expand my critical thinking.
4. to use my achieved skills and knowledge.
5. to oversee what skills and knowledge I still need to work on in a professional environment.
6. to learn more about the Gulf region, in particular Bahrain.
7. to improve my Arabic.
8. to enhance my communication skills.
9. To build my own analysis of the Human Rights situation in the gulf generally and Bahrain specifically.
10. to expand my professional network.

In this internship report, I will start by giving a detailed description of the Organisation, its work and the tasks I was given. Then, in order to see if the internship program succeeded in training me to understand advocacy and the problematic situation based upon which the work is done, I will reflect on what I have experienced and learned during this period, I will include a thorough analysis of the human rights situation in the Gulf

generally and in Bahrain specifically, based on my experience and the knowledge I acquired. Lastly, I will describe how the internship helped me shape my overall vision for 2020.

Historical Background

On December 17, 2010, in Tunisia, Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old street vendor, set himself on fire in front of the Provincial governor's office. This tragedy occurred after several instances where officers were consistently harassing the young vendor for not having the needed legal license that allows him to sell fruits on the streets; this harassment was due to the fact that he did not have the means and could not afford to bribe the officers into allowing him to sell his fruits. Unfortunately, after having been hospitalized for two weeks, Bouazizi died due to his self-inflicted wounds. Witnessing Bouazizi being driven to such a mental state where he felt that there was no other way to express his agony and the way he died was enough to trigger factors that led to the popular uprising in the Tunisian capital.

On January 14, 2011, following several months of diligent protests, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Tunisia's second president who ruled for twenty-four years, was forced to flee the country with his wife and children to Saudi Arabia. These protests marked the beginning of what came to be known as the "Arab Spring." It was not only Tunisians who were frustrated by the political system in place, but Egyptians, Syrians, and many other Arab citizens similarly went on to protest against the reigning political systems in their respective countries. The Arab world has since continued to witness continuous movements amongst its populations, movements launched in hopes of a better future for the next generations. Within these, one in particular seems to have been forgotten; that is the Bahraini uprising in 2011.

In 2011, inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, thousands of protesters gathered in the capital of Bahrain, Manama's central Pearl Square, on what they called "the day of rage" to demand a change: a constitutional monarchy to replace the current reigning government. Unlike other uprisings, the Bahraini one was not solely rooted in demands for political and social reforms; it was also part of an ongoing sectarian conflict, known by many but discussed by few.

While most Bahraini people - more than 70% - belong to the Shia sect, the island is governed by a Royal Sunni family. Due to this sectarian division, Bahrain has, in a way, been facing earlier unrest than other Middle Eastern countries. In 1994, Sheikh Ali

Salman, a Shi'ite Muslim cleric, got arrested after distributing leaflets calling for the restoration of the parliament, dissolved previously in 1975. This incident led to two weeks of protests and the arrest of hundreds of opposition activists.

More flagrant movements of the Bahraini monarchy were noted in 1996 when the Interior Ministry summoned eight opposition leaders and warned them to stop using mosques to spread anti-government protests or face legal action. During that year, the Bahrain Defense force was quoted to have said that it was ready to intervene to end the protests that have started after the Interior Ministry move, "once and for all." It even went as far as to threaten to use martial law. Back then, the Bahraini monarchy had claimed that it had uncovered a coup plotted by those backed by Tehran, and it gave arguments that the repressive measures were only a way to push back foreign intervention. It was clear that the sectarian conflict generated by the disproportionate population ratio made it easy for the involvement of international elements, especially with the growing tensions between Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Iran.

The Arab Spring was different, or at least when it had started, people believed it was. The Arab world never seemed more unified than during the early stages of the Arab Spring. Egypt's removal of Hosni Mubarak was seen as a sign of success and gave rejuvenated hope to other Arabs that their uprisings will prevail. There was a synergy between the protests happening. Bahrainis, Syrians, Yemenis alike tried to replicate the occupation and long-term stationing in Egypt's Tahrir Square; protesters across the Middle East for the first time chanted the same slogans, waved the same signs while they demanded change.

Unfortunately, Arab Autocracies/Monarchies did not respond well to these demands. Syria and Yemen descended into horrific civil wars, the first triggering an international refugee crisis and the second leading to the worst humanitarian crisis, with 20 million Yemenis suffering from malnutrition and millions on the brink of death due to famine. These devastating results were clear warning signs for future challengers across the region.

Results observed by a paper published during a workshop organized by the Project on Middle East Political Science and the German Institute of Global and Area Studies, which examined the learning, diffusion, and demonstration across autocratic regimes during the

Arab counter-revolution, were astonishing. According to its results, authoritarian regimes have adopted many remarkably similar policy responses to mass protest, including denying access to public space, dehumanizing discourses, and mobilizing xenophobic nationalism. Protesters across countries found themselves labeled — in remarkably similar language — as provocateurs, alien agitators, or drug addict criminals. Bahraini Monarchy's movements in 2011 illustrated a perfect example to back these findings.

In March 2011, Saudi Arabia's military entered Bahrain to help the Bahraini government retake the streets from anti-government protesters¹⁰. Furthermore, it threatened to escalate the local Bahraini political situation into a regional conflict with Iran. In parallel to the entry of Saudi Arabia's military forces, Bahrain's King, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, decreed a three-month state of emergency. According to the official Bahrain News Agency (BNA), the King's decision to declare martial law was taken in light of the security escalations that affected national security and posed a severe threat to the lives of Bahraini citizens. Furthermore, the Bahrain News Agency stated that the King had delegated implementation powers to the commander-in-chief of the Bahrain Defence Force, who later explained that the declaration of a state of emergency fell under article 36, section B of the Bahraini Constitution. This article grants the government the power to ban the operation of NGOs, trade and political unions, gatherings under the pretext of national interest. The deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch, Joe Stork (Human Rights Watch, 2011), said: “King Hamad's decree does not give the authorities a blank check to commit abuses¹¹”. He emphasized on the fact that the world was watching on whether Bahrain was going to respect fundamental and basic human rights or not.

Unfortunately, what followed was a major crackdown on opposition activists. Following the declaration of a State of emergency, Bahraini forces used helicopters and military tanks to drive protesters out of the streets in the capital, clearing the camp in Pearl Roundabout that had become a symbol of the demonstrations. They even used live ammunition against peaceful demonstrators and occupied Manama's main hospital to

¹⁰ Bronner, E. (2011, March 15). Two Protesters Dead as Bahrain Declares State of Emergency. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/16/world/middleeast/16bahrain.html>

¹¹ Human Rights Watch. (2011, February 28). *Bahrain: Martial Law Does Not Trump Basic Rights*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/16/bahrain-martial-law-does-not-trump-basic-rights>

prevent those injured in the crackdown from getting any medical help¹². It appeared as if the government was carrying out violent repression against its citizens: widespread arbitrary arrests, politically motivated mass dismissals of workers from jobs and students from universities, shut down of the leading opposition newspaper, Etc. Amnesty International (“Arrests follow deadly Bahrain crackdown,” 2011) denounced the crackdown saying that the government was “very clearly trying to suppress any kind of freedom of speech¹³”. More shocking of the government's approaches was its “revoking citizens nationality” strategy. This strategy entailed that the citizen will be stripped of their nationality and thus become a stateless individual with no legal rights in one's country. According to the Bahrain Transparency Society president (Bowler, 2015):

“If you lose your citizenship in Bahrain, you may as well be dead... You cannot do anything if you are stateless. You cannot buy or sell anything; you cannot use state services like health and education. Your private finances are done for. You're told to leave the country, and if you disobey them, they'll arrest you for being an illegal immigrant¹⁴ .”

In other words, this strategy was one of the harder-hitting ones as it was a perfect silencing tool.

Today, after ten years, Bahrain, just like other countries in which uprisings have happened, continues to uphold a bad human rights record. According to the Human Rights Watch report for 2020¹⁵ (Human Rights Watch, 2020): “Authorities have banned all independent media from operating in the country, dissolved all opposition groups, and cracked down on critical online posts.” Autocracies learned to cope; they learned directly through tactics they have used in the past, and indirectly through ones that have worked

¹² “Curfew in Bahrain after security clears protesters from Pearl Square,” Washington Post, March 16, 2011, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/gulf-security-forces-enter-bahrain-saudi-official-says/2011/03/14/AB9z2BV_story.html (accessed April 7, 2021).

¹³ Arrests follow deadly Bahrain crackdown. (2011, March 17). *Al-Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2011/3/17/arrests-follow-deadly-bahrain-crackdown>

¹⁴ Bowler, N. (2015, August 18). When Bahrain Says You're Not Bahraini Anymore. *Foreign Policy*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/08/18/when-bahrain-says-youre-not-bahraini-anymore/>

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2020) Human Rights Watch world report. New York, NY: Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/bahrain#>

for neighbouring governments or even through international responses that followed the carried-out repressions, on what kind and what level of violence they can safely employ.

Allegations of forced disappearances, torture, violations of freedom of expression, and fundamental human rights are not just specific to Bahrain but apply to several Arab countries generally and Gulf ones specifically.

The above-mentioned brief background aims to clarify the content of this internship report to readers.

Part I: In-Depth Description

In this part, I will talk in-depth about the organization and the tasks I have performed as a “Translation & Documentation Intern” at Americans for Democracy & Human Rights for Bahrain (ADHRB).

1- About the Organization

In this section, I will start by explaining the background and work of Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), and then I will talk about the Beirut office and its importance.

Background

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) was informally established in 2002 by a group of Bahrainis and Bahraini Americans living in Alabama, USA. Following the outbreak of peaceful protests in 2011 and the Bahraini government's crackdown, ADHRB established an office in Washington, DC in 2012 to increase its advocacy efforts regarding the violations committed during and after the uprising.

As mentioned previously, since its founding, ADHRB has built relationships with pro-democracy and human rights NGOs, as well as congressional offices and executive departments and agencies. As a result of its outreach to Capitol Hill (United States Capitol), ADHRB has successfully secured several congressional briefings, hearings, resolutions, and legislation on human rights in Bahrain. ADHRB's international advocacy for human rights and democratic reforms includes engagement at the United Nations Human Rights Council, General Assembly, and the European Union. Through its advocacy work, ADHRB has also conducted several campaigns to highlight the Bahraini government's complicity in human rights violations. Additionally, ADHRB has increased the American public's engagement on Bahrain-related issues and has become the go-to source for reporters on current events in Bahrain.

United Nations Special Procedures Complaint Program

In October 2013, ADHRB launched the UN special procedures complaint program to raise awareness regarding cases of individuals who are victims of human rights abuses done in Bahrain or the broader Gulf region. ADHRB is able, through this program, to

complain to the Special Procedures offices of the United Nations on behalf of the individual, victim of human rights abuses.

❖ *Definition*

The Special Procedures are done through independent and impartial human rights experts (based in Geneva, Switzerland) who report to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The Special Procedures offices are composed of Working Groups, Independent Experts, and Special Rapporteurs. They are non-paid staff and are elected for 3-year mandates that can be renewed for another three years¹⁶. Special Procedures report annually to the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the majority of these mandates also report on an annual basis to the General Assembly. There are Special Procedures offices for thematic areas of human rights as well as specific countries. Some of the thematic areas include the situation of human rights defenders, arbitrary detention, torture, Etc. As of September 2020, there are 44 thematic in total and 11 country mandates¹⁷. Some of the thematic mandates related to ADHRB's work include the UN working group on enforced and involuntary disappearances (WGEID) and the UN working group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD).

The concerned Procedures office receives complaints from individuals who allege that their human rights have been abused. They can also receive complaints from civil society organizations, intergovernmental entities, or national human rights bodies. Once a complaint is received, the Procedures office submits the complaint to the offending government seeking an explanation regarding the allegations. Over the next couple of months, Rapporteurs communicate between the source of the complaint and the offending government, requiring the source to respond to the government's reply and vice versa. By the end of the process, the allegations are published in a Joint Communications Report ahead of the following Human Rights Council session. It is worth mentioning that since 2018, an "annual facts and figures" annex, which provides an overview of total communications sent and related information, has been added to the Special Procedures Annual Report. Additionally, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) may

¹⁶ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (n.d). *Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council*. Retrieved April 14, 2021 from <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/Pages/Welcompage.aspx>

¹⁷ Ibid.

issue official opinions on the status of detained individuals when possible, and the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID) may ask the government to clarify and reveal the whereabouts of a disappeared person.

❖ *Procedure*

ADHRB's complaint process is two-fold and spans several continents. First, ADHRB establishes contact with the victim and explains the process of communicating with the Special Procedures. This step is crucial, as ADHRB never files a complaint without first obtaining the explicit consent of the victim or an authorized representative. If the victim gives their consent, ADHRB can then begin to gather the information necessary for the complaint. Generally, this involves asking the victim to provide a concrete description of the abuse they have endured. ADHRB may receive information in English or Arabic.

Once the information and informed consent are secured, ADHRB processes the information and drafts a complaint to the Special Procedures offices. These offices then decide, depending on the circumstances of the case, whether to submit the information to the offending government in the form of an Allegation Letter or an Urgent Appeal. If the Special Procedures offices submit a piece of information, the process can go in two ways. If the offending government chooses to respond, the Procedures will pass the response to ADHRB and request a reply.

This process repeats itself until either the government stops responding or the Procedures are assured that they will not obtain new information. The communication will be published on the OHCHR site along with the government's response. If the government does not respond within 60 days, the communication will be published on the OHCHR website. ADHRB will send any relevant updates to the Special Procedures offices on the cases currently being covered throughout this period. Once the communication is published, ADHRB will inform the victim or their family and send them a copy of said communication. ADHRB also uses these communications to create the analysis of each Report ahead of the Human Rights Council session.

❖ *Noted Outcomes*

Since launching the UN Complaint Program, ADHRB has received information from hundreds of victims and successfully submitted their cases to the Special Procedures

offices. ADHRB has sent complaints to the Special Procedures on behalf of well-known human rights defenders such as Nabeel Rajab, political leader Sheikh Ali Salman¹⁸, prisoner of conscience Dr. Abdul-Jalil Al-Singac¹⁹, individuals in a military trial of civilians, and torture victim Ebtessam Al-Saegh²⁰. Furthermore, ADHRB has also successfully submitted information regarding cases of lesser-known Bahraini detainees, activists, and multiple prisoners in Bahrain's Jau Prison. Victims who have reported systematic negligence and human rights violations, including water cuts over the summer, allegations of torture, forced confessions, Etc. Other examples include the unfair conviction of 20 individuals in the "Zulfiqar Brigades" case²¹ and the hijack of the cultural rights of all Bahrainis following the destruction of the Pearl Roundabout back in May 2011. According to an article by the Guardian (Chulov, 2011):

“Demonstrators described the move as an attempt to symbolically cleanse the city of the main focal point of Bahrain's most sustained reformist movement in 20 years”²².

ADHRB also represents individuals whose rights have been violated by other GCC countries, including Saudi Arabia, like the case of Abbas al-Hassan²³. As a result, the individuals that ADHRB has represented have had their cases highlighted by: The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, the Special Rapporteur in

¹⁸ Sheikh Ali Salman is the Secretary General of Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society (Al-Wefaq) which was dissolved in 2016. In 2015 he was sentenced to four years in jail, on charges relating to speeches he made in 2012 and 2014, including at the Al-Wefaq General Assembly, in which he spoke about the opposition's continuing determination to reach power in Bahrain, to achieve the demands of the 2011 uprising through peaceful means and to hold those responsible accountable for the violation of human rights. Amnesty International (2018, November 4). *Bahrain: Opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman unlawfully convicted*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/11/bahrain-opposition-leader-sheikh-ali-salman-unlawfully-convicted/>

¹⁹ Dr. AbdulJalil AlSingace was a Bahraini academic, human rights activist, and blogger until 2011, when he was detained for his participation in protests. He is one of the “Bahrain Thirteen,” a group of 13 political leaders who were arrested for the role they played in the 2011 pro-democracy movement in Bahrain. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, May 9). *Profiles in Persecution: Dr. AbdulJalil AlSingace*. <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/05/profiles-in-persecution-dr-abduljalil-alsingace/>

²⁰ Ebtessam Abdulhusain al-Saegh is a Bahraini human rights activist who has been subjected to detention, sexual assault, and torture by Bahraini security forces due to her activism.

²¹ In 2018, in a mass trial, the Bahrain criminal court convicted 138 individuals for conspiring to create a terrorist cell named “Zulfiqar Brigades”. It sentenced 53 individuals to death, revoked the nationality of 115 and issued prison sentences ranging from life term to 3 years.

²² Chulov, M. (2011, May 18). Bahrain destroys Pearl roundabout. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/18/bahrain-destroys-pearl-roundabout>

²³ Al-Hassan was arrested in June 2013 and detained along with 31 other men for alleged ties to Iran and espionage. He was executed in 2019.

the field of cultural rights, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Etc.

While the organization's advocacy efforts may not result in the release of these individuals from prison, the international pressure caused by the UN's attention to their cases has sometimes resulted in better conditions for them throughout their detention.

It is worth noting that the organization uses the information received in its Complaint Program to further advocate for individual victims of rights abuses and highlight ongoing and thematic rights violations in Bahrain and the Gulf. It communicates information about cases to partner organizations, including Human Rights Watch, the Project on Middle East Democracy, and Amnesty International. Additionally, it uses the information to update relevant Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Embassies, European Parliament, US Congress, and other relevant US entities, including the Department of State, Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, and the US Commission International Religious Freedom. These communication efforts include joint letters, reports, Parliamentary questions, social media posts, and joint statements highlighting individual cases and widespread rights abuses. These efforts have resulted in questions raised in the European Parliament and open letters on cases like those of Habib Ali Mubarak²⁴ and Hassan Mushaima²⁵ and the extensive advocacy work on behalf of Hakeem Al-Araibi²⁶.

Interpol Program

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) first started its INTERPOL program in May 2016. It has since then worked on a handful of cases,

²⁴ Habib Ali Mubarak is a Bahraini citizen who was arrested without a warrant, forcibly disappeared, and subjected to torture in 2014. He was convicted and sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges of setting fire to a municipal building for terrorist purposes. He was sentenced despite having a strong alibi at the time of the alleged crime and submissions to the court by three of his co-defendants that they were tortured and coerced to confess.

²⁵ Hassan Mushaima is a Bahraini citizen who was previously the Secretary-General of the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy and Co-founder and former Vice President of al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, the largest political opposition group, which the government of Bahrain dissolved in 2016. He is currently serving a life sentence in Jau Prison for “attempting to overthrow the government” and for his role in the pro-democracy protests in 2011.

²⁶ Hakeem Al-Araibi is a professional football player who was detained in 2012 and sentenced in 2014 to 10 years of prison for torching a police station. During the same year he fled to Australia but was later arrested by Thai authorities during his honeymoon due to a red Interpol notice. Under international pressure, the case was dropped.

including multiple successful requests for deletion and certificates for multiple individuals who believed they might have been subjected to a Red Notice.

INTERPOL (the International Criminal Police Organization) is an independent international organization that includes 192 member countries. While INTERPOL is a policing organization, it possesses no powers of arrest or enforcement. Instead, each state's law enforcement officers must determine whether to arrest individuals in their territory for the alleged crimes. INTERPOL will, however, issue "Red Notices and diffusions." A Red Notice is a request issued by INTERPOL to all member states to take the identified individual into custody and to, ultimately, deport them to the requesting country. It is an international wanted person notice, but not an arrest one²⁷. A Diffusion is a mechanism that INTERPOL member countries can use to request cooperation from each other. This mechanism is less formal than a notice; it is circulated directly by an NCB to all or some of the member countries²⁸.

Bahrain, and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, have abused INTERPOL mechanisms to target and suppress human rights defenders, activists, and other individuals living abroad and to obtain the extradition of individuals to punish them with prison sentences and other forms of abuse²⁹.

Bahrain, for example, does not publish needed information on INTERPOL's website. As a result, many individuals only discover a Red Notice or diffusion when they are detained while attempting to travel.

Since the launch of this program, ADHRB advocacy efforts have been successful. Several Red Notice deletions for Bahrainis were obtained and one successful removal for an individual from Saudi Arabia³⁰. Additionally, the organization worked on the issue of certificates for several individuals who believed that they might have been subjected to a Red Notice. These certificates stated that these individuals were/are not within

²⁷ Interpol. (n.d). *About Notices*. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Notices/About-Notices>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Hakeem Al-Araibi's case is an example of how these countries have been misusing INTERPOL mechanisms.

³⁰ The names of individuals are not made public in order to preserve the confidentiality of the INTERPOL process and to protect their identity.

INTERPOL's data system. They enable these individuals to travel internationally; they could not do something when fearing that there is a Red Notice issued against them. ADHRB hopes that through this program and the successful cases, that others who believe that they may have Red Notices against them will be encouraged to seek assistance.

Saudi Advocacy Program

In 2015, ADHRB launched its Saudi Advocacy Program to shed light on connections between democratic reform efforts and human rights activism across the Gulf region. ADHRB's Saudi advocacy work mainly focuses on violations of freedom of expression and association, torture and arbitrary detention, religious and gender-based discrimination, and the rights of migrant workers - among other vital issues. Additionally, ADHRB raises awareness regarding human rights violations in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, including the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait.

Advocacy efforts

ADHRB's advocacy work encompasses a diverse and wide range of approaches such as research and report-writing, government and public outreach, strategic campaigning, and domestic and international advocacy.

An essential function of ADHRB's advocacy work is its sponsorship of visiting delegations of activists, human rights defenders, and other relevant segments of society from Bahrain. These advocates share their experiences with US lawmakers, top government officials, and NGO leaders through meetings, panel discussions, and other interactive events. Past delegations have included prominent human rights advocates such as Nabeel Rajab and Fatima Haji³¹. Some involve Congressional testimonies, like the one in August 2012, when ADHRB Executive Director Husain Abdulla submitted testimony for the record in a hearing sponsored by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission³².

³¹ Dr. Fatima Haji was among 3,000 people working at the Salmaniya Medical Complex, the country's main public hospital, in Manama, Bahrain when the uprising began. She and other health professionals were arrested for alleged involvement in the protests. Human Rights First. (2014, April 17). *Stories from Bahrain's Crackdown: Dr. Fatima Haji, Internal Medicine and Rheumatology Specialist*. <https://www.humanrightsfirst.org/blog/stories-bahrain%E2%80%99s-crackdown-dr-fatima-haji-internal-medicine-and-rheumatology-specialist>

³² Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain. (2012, August 1). *Hearing before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission: Implementation of the BICI Report*. <https://www.adhrb.org/2012/08/past-event-hearing-before-the-tom-lantos-human-rights-commission/>

At United Nations events in 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017, ADHRB succeeded in encouraging delegations to raise their concerns about the human rights situation in Bahrain. ADHRB engaged with multiple branches of the United Nations system, including the Special Procedures mechanisms at various sessions of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, as well as meetings of the Third Committee of the General Assembly in New York. ADHRB engaged with UN mechanisms and the Member States in support of series of joint statements on Bahrain that highlighted the international community's concern over ongoing human rights violations in the country and called for concrete steps towards human rights reforms. These statements, presented to the UN Human Rights Council in February and September 2013, June 2014, and September 2015, were joined by a growing cross-regional coalition of nations, including the United States. ADHRB has also engaged actively in the Universal Periodic Review³³ ((UPR) processes of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The UN Human Rights Council (United Nations Human Rights Council, n.d) defines the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as a process that entails a periodic review of the human rights situation of all 193 UN Member States. The UPR is an innovation created by this council to emphasize equal treatment for all countries. The process provides an opportunity for all Member States to declare the actions they have taken, within a specific timeframe, to improve human rights conditions in their countries and overcome obstacles toward the ultimate respect of such rights. While the UPR is a state-driven process, NGO involvement in the UPR process can generate critical discourse regarding public policy issues and highlight problems governments did not previously address or were aware of their existence. Furthermore, the UPR can also motivate member States to address issues they did not want to confront; research from NGOs can potentially expose the scope and dimensions of human rights violations in Member States. The role played by ADHRB is crucial regarding this process.

It is worth mentioning that the organization has also expanded its international advocacy work to include a campaign calling on Formula One drivers to sponsor a prisoner of conscience during the 2013 Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix. A letter³⁴ was sent to the

³³ United Nations Human Rights Council. (n.d). *HRC Bodies*. Retrieved on April 10, 2021, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/basicfacts.aspx>

³⁴ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2013, April 10). *Rights Groups Launch Campaign on Eve of Formula One Race to Highlight Human Rights Abuses in Bahrain*.

Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) urging the organization to reconsider the name and funding source of the UNESCO-King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize.

Furthermore, ADHRB has also previously carried out monthly prisoner of conscience campaigns aimed at raising awareness towards the unjust detention of individuals based on their nonviolent expression of conscientiously held beliefs.

As part of its legislative advocacy, ADHRB successfully secured the 2013 National Defense Authorization Act requiring the US State Department to issue a report assessing the implementation status of the BICI³⁵ recommendations. In August 2015, ADHRB successfully advocated for the introduction of Senate Resolution September 2009 to overturn the Obama Administration's June 2015 decision to reinstate arms sales to the Bahrain Defense Force and the National Guard³⁶.

ADHRB has also successfully engaged the grassroots community in the United States through some events at universities and community centers across the country in various locations, including Connecticut, Michigan, New Jersey, and New York. Constituents participated in letter-writing campaigns calling on their members of Congress to support human rights and political prisoners in Bahrain. ADHRB has additionally organized annual demonstrations at the Embassy of Bahrain in Washington DC and several rallies at the Qatari Embassy calling for more significant protection measurements for migrant workers and the release of an imprisoned poet Mohammed al-Ajami³⁷.

<https://www.adhrb.org/2013/04/rights-groups-launch-campaign-on-eve-of-formula-one-race-to-highlight-human-rights-abuses-in-bahrain/>

³⁵ The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry was established on 29 June 2011 in Bahrain by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. The Commission was tasked with investigating and reporting on the events that took place in Bahrain from February 2011, and the consequences of those events.

³⁶ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2015, August 7). *ADHRB Welcomes Senate Bill to Reinstate US Arms Exports Ban on Bahrain*. <https://www.adhrb.org/2015/08/adhrb-welcomes-senate-bill-to-reinstate-us-arms-exports-ban-on-bahrain/>

³⁷ Mohamed Al-Ajami is a Qatari poet who had been arrested in 2011 and sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment for writing and reciting, at his residence, a poem in which he criticized Arab governments and praised the Tunisian revolution that took place in 2010. He got sentenced for “inciting to overthrow the regime” and “insulting the Emir.”

Research/Publications

ADHRB updates the Profiles in Persecution section weekly on its website, highlighting individual cases and demonstrating the abuses that even prisoners who are not high-profile political figures are subjected to in Bahrain. These cases are also raised in oral interventions made by ADHRB and its partners before the Human Rights Council in Geneva three times a year.

ADHRB has an extensive collection of independent reports which include: *Subservient and Unaccountable: A Shadow Report on the Bahraini Ministry of Interior's Ombudsman and Bahrain National Institute for Human Rights*³⁸ (2014), *The Pretense of Progress: A report on the implementation of Saudi Arabia's recommendations from the special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers*³⁹ (2015), *The Evasion of Equality: A Report on the Implementation of Saudi Arabia's Recommendations from the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and its Causes*⁴⁰ (2015), *Inside Jau: Government Brutality in Bahrain's Central Prison*⁴¹ (2015), *Shattering the Façade: A Report on Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI Recommendations Four Years On*⁴² (2015), *A Midterm Report on Saudi Arabia's UPR Second Cycle: Analyzing Saudi Arabia's Refusal to Reform*⁴³ (2016), *Charting the Seas of Abuse: Analysis of United Nations Special*

³⁸ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain. (2014, October). *Subservient and Unaccountable: A Shadow Report on the Bahraini Ministry of Interior's Ombudsman and Bahrain National Institute for Human Rights*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/ADHRB_Mechanism_Final-web_REV2.pdf

³⁹ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2015, March). *The Pretense of Progress: A report on the implementation of Saudi Arabia's recommendations from the special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ADHRB_Pretense-of-Progress_v1_web.pdf

⁴⁰ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2015, April). *The Evasion of Equality: A Report on the Implementation of Saudi Arabia's Recommendations from the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and its Causes*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ADHRB_Equality_0415_Final-web.pdf

⁴¹ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2015, May). *Inside Jau: Government Brutality in Bahrain's Central Prison*. [://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Inside-Jau-Report_Final.pdf](https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Inside-Jau-Report_Final.pdf)

⁴² Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2015, November). *Shattering the Façade: A Report on Bahrain's Implementation of the BICI Recommendations Four Years On*. http://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Shattering_the_Facade_Web.pdf

⁴³ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2016, June). *A Midterm Report on Saudi Arabia's UPR Second Cycle: Analyzing Saudi Arabia's Refusal to Reform*. <https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Saudi-UPR-Midterm-Report-Electronic-Version.pdf>

Procedure Communications to the Kingdom of Bahrain 2011 – 2016⁴⁴ (2016), Collective Efforts: International Calls for Accountability and Reform in Bahrain⁴⁵ (2016), Living as Commodities: Human and sex trafficking in the GCC⁴⁶ (2016), Roads to Reform: The Enduring Work of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights⁴⁷ (2017), Anatomy of a Police State: Systematic Repression, Brutality, and Bahrain’s Ministry of Interior⁴⁸ (2019).

Additionally, through its engagement on social media platforms such as Twitter⁴⁹, its Weekly Newsletter, press statements, and opinion pieces, ADHRB raises awareness of Bahrain's ongoing human rights violations. ADHRB's work has been featured in many esteemed publications such as Reuters, Huffington Post, Foreign Policy, Muftah, Middle East Eye, Al Jazeera, International Business Times UK, Bahrain Observer, Defense One, openDemocracy, Global Post, Foreign Policy in Focus, Eurasia Review, and Arabian Business.

Offices

ADHRB has one main office in Washington DC and several small virtual offices in more than 10 countries that include London, Paris, Geneva, Madrid, Berlin, Brussels, Canada, Mexico and one in Beirut, where I did my internship.

The office is located in Beirut, Ein Mreisse Area, Phoenicia Street, Yassine Building which is an office complex building on the second Floor. When you enter the building, the sign indicates European Center for Democracy and Human Rights which confused many, including myself when I first started there. The European Center for Democracy

⁴⁴ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2016, June). *Charting the Seas of Abuse: Analysis of United Nations Special Procedure Communications to the Kingdom of Bahrain 2011 – 2016*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/ADHRB_Charting_Web.pdf

⁴⁵ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2016, September). *Collective Efforts: International Calls for Accountability and Reform in Bahrain*. https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ADHRB_Collective_Web-1.pdf

⁴⁶ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2016, November). *Living as Commodities: Human and sex trafficking in the GCC*. https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ADHRB_Commodities_Web.pdf

⁴⁷ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2017, March). *Roads to Reform: The Enduring Work of the Saudi Association for Civil and Political Rights*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/2017.3.1_ADHRB_Roads_Web.pdf

⁴⁸ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights (ADHRB). (2019, April). *Anatomy of a Police State: Systematic Repression, Brutality, and Bahrain’s Ministry of Interior*. https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ADHRB_MOI_0319_Web.pdf

⁴⁹ ADHRB [@ADHRB]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/ADHRB>

and Human Rights is the European representation of a coalition of other like-minded NGOs – which includes the Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain – ADHRB (Washington DC, USA), the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights – BCHR (Copenhagen, DK), and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy – BIRD (London, UK)⁵⁰.

The office has one main room, a Kitchenette, and a toilet. The main room is composed of two individual desks for the Documentation and Media coordinators and common desks for the six interns. The kitchenette is equipped with basics: plates, eating utensils, a microwave, coffee, tea, etc. While the organization did provide us with laptops to work on, they were very slow, and all the interns preferred to use their own personal ones to get tasks done in a more efficient way.

Beirut office is responsible for translating and documenting everything happening in the Gulf region generally, and in Bahrain specifically and then to send it to Washington for further advocacy or other projects. While the work being done by the Beirut office does not seem to be much compared to all of the achievements and work done by the main office, it is worth noting that the work around Gulf countries generally, and Bahrain specifically, requires knowing Arabic and being able to transfer the reality of what is truly occurring on land to the main office. In other terms, the Beirut office is the core of everything.

At the time of the internship, the team included:

Beirut Office:

- Head of Legal and Documentation Department (Direct Supervisor): Salma Moussawi
- Media Coordinator: Rayan Swaidan
- Legal Research Intern: Mirna Ghanem
- Legal Research Intern: Salam Daibes
- Documentation & Translation Intern: Dina Ghanem
- Documentation & Translation Intern: Ghenwa Younes

⁵⁰ European Center for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDH), <https://www.ecdhr.org/>

- Documentation & Translation Intern: Rita Nayfeh
- Documentation & Translation Intern: Tia Allouche

It is worth noting that interns were hired on a rolling basis and the normal internship period is three months.

Among the requirements to become an intern at ADHRB:

- BA in International Relations, Political Science, journalism, translation, or a related field,
- Prior experience working in government affairs and/or advocacy capacity is desired,
- Extensive research and writing experience,
- Demonstrated research experience (especially related to the Middle East, human rights, democratization, governance, and political rights),
- Ability to prioritize, implement and deliver high-quality advocacy programs, sometimes within tight timelines and with minimal supervision,
- Excellent written and verbal communications skills,
- Strong interpersonal skills and ability to thrive in a collaborative working environment,
- Experience using social media in a professional capacity (Twitter, Facebook, etc.)
- Previous translation experience is desired,
- Proficiency in Arabic and English (reading, writing, and speaking)

Washington DC Office:

- Executive Director: Husain Abdullah
- Legal Officer: Bridget Quitter

2- Internship Tasks

In this part of the report, I will focus on describing the tasks that I had to perform during my internship. The internship consisted of 16-weeks, it started on September 5th, 2019 and ended on January 7th, 2020.

The process involved an individual interview wherein I was assessed and was asked several questions ranging from job related questions to more personal questions concerning career goals. Following the interview, I had to undergo a written test which involved translating a text from English to Arabic and another text from Arabic to English within a specific time limit in order to test if my efficiency and language knowledge were up to par with the organization's standards for this internship program. Following the initial approval after the interview and test, I had to undergo a two-week trial period working under the organization.

Before my arrival for my initial orientation days, I was sent some useful information on ADHRB and its work, which included some background readings on the human rights situations in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf.

ADHRB's office hours are 10 am - 5 pm, 40 hours a week Monday through Friday.

The organization was flexible enough with schedules as long as they were given one week's notice.

In terms of translating the articles and reports from English to Arabic, I was told to check-in with Rayan Swaidan -the Media Coordinator, and for translating cases and documentations from Arabic to English check with Mirna Ghanem -the Legal Research Intern. As for things related to documentation, administrative tasks, or schedules, I was instructed to directly contact Mrs. Salma in the office or through WhatsApp when she was working from home. For all questions about specific assignments or projects, I was instructed to report to whoever assigned me the task.

The dress code in the office was business professional (examples: suit, shirt & tie, pants & blouse, etc.). A good rule of thumb is to dress as if I were to attend a business meeting.

I was given an ADHRB email address rhassan@adhrb.org (cc'ed here) along with its password: BeirutIntern. Once I came on board this email became the primary means of

communication between me and the staff. I was instructed to report immediately if I had any technical issues with my email account.

I was given the intern Guidelines for Documentation and other files which I had to read on the first day and some other materials published on the ADHRB website (Both Arabic and English websites), and was encouraged to review the articles of ملفات الاضطهاد or Profile in Persecution and to come prepared with any questions. By the start of my first day, I was asked to sign a form acknowledging that I've read the intern confidentiality agreement and to fill out an emergency contact form.

I have also been asked to check some recent briefing documents on Bahrain, concerning recent events. Additionally, I was encouraged to take a look through Human Rights Watch's excellent "140 Characters" website and report (https://features.hrw.org/features/HRW_2016_reports/140_Characters/index.html#), which tracked individuals targeted for exercising their right to free expression in the Arab Gulf - many of the people listed are cases that ADHRB or their partners worked with. I was also encouraged to review some of the organization's recent reports and website content.

On a general basis

As a Translation & Documentation intern at ADHRB, I was generally required to do the following tasks:

- Monitoring violations of the right to health and violations of medical neutrality and human rights abuses and other developments in the MENA region,
- Researching, analyzing, and synthesizing information and data about the human rights situation to accurately document violations and develop advocacy initiatives,
- Drafting short articles on latest updates and assisting with background research;
- Developing and strengthening relationships with the NGO and think tank community;
- Attending meetings, conferences, and events to keep up with the latest policy developments and represent ADHRB's interests if needed,

- Developing coordinated NGO advocacy campaigns addressing human rights and policy issues,
- Carrying on extensive research and report writing capabilities,
- Translating articles, statements, legal documents, and social media content (Arabic <-> English);
- Performing administrative and other duties as required.

On a more detailed basis

The following represent the tasks I individually or with other interns was asked to perform.

❖ *Media report on the humanitarian situation:*

Rita, my colleague, and I were to alternate turns in doing this task. We were asked to provide a media report which would include news on the human rights situation in the following countries: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, UAE, and Qatar. We monitored a total of 32 newspapers and submitted this media report on a quotidian basis. Being alert to all the happenings occurring in the gulf region was an important aspect of the internship and this task's goal was to ensure this acquisition. These reports were the basis for what later became the official newsletter that is shared externally. Of course, simply checking a certain number of media platforms is easy, the difficulty lied in finding human rights news worth flagging while remaining objective.

❖ *Translation of court sentences:*

All interns were asked to translate, from Arabic to English, Bahraini court sentences related to certain political prisoners. Sometimes we were asked to provide specific details of the sentence and other times were asked to provide a full translation, which was hard. Unlike the Judicial system in Lebanon, where courts abide by certain rules in writing sentences, Bahrain court sentences often lacked a unified form, coherence and justified reasoning. Translating the sentences without prior knowledge of the Bahraini judicial system confused us at certain times. The organization relied on us to provide accurate translations that were to be used later as key documents in advocacy efforts towards releasing prisoners and stopping death sentences.

❖ *Translation of laws:*

The Translation of laws task was given to me on my final day. I was asked to conduct research about the new Media Law the Bahraini government was set on promulgating in 2020⁵¹ and translating from Arabic to English any relevant information regarding the text. After a long search, I was able to find a leaked draft published by “Akhbar Al-Khaleej” media platform⁵². After sharing my findings with Mrs. Salma and Mr. Quitter, the Legal Officer in the Washington Office, I was asked to find the old version of the media law, Decree Law No. (47) of 2002 regarding the regulation of the press, printing and publishing and Decree Law No. (1) of 1993 establishing the Radio and Television Commission, in order for us to compare the new and old provisions. While I was able to find an English version of Decree Law. (47) of 2002⁵³, I was not able to find the Decree Law No. (1) of 1993⁵⁴ in English. Only an Arabic version was available online. Additionally, I was asked to translate from Arabic to English some articles of the leaked draft. The task was simple and yet, surprisingly, complicated. Providing straightforward translation of laws might have sounded simple at first glance, but given the fact that laws are written in a particular way, the tiniest mistake in translating could potentially lead to a huge misinterpretation which would lead to wasted effort. Being a fresh law graduate and aware of the sensitivities regarding the formulation of laws, I was keen on pointing out that the translation I provided by no means represent the complete meaning of the original text. While conducting the required research and translating some of the controversial articles of the leaked version, I noticed the flagrant difference between Lebanon and Bahrain. In its new law for 2020, Bahrain tried to limit freedom of the press and speech in a very tight but discreet manner. For example, article 3⁵⁵ of the leaked media law stated that: “Right to criticism is guaranteed within the limits of the law.

⁵¹ Gibbon, G. (2019, December 26). Bahrain to issue new media law in 2020. *Arabian Business*. <https://www.arabianbusiness.com/media/436126-bahrain-to-issue-new-media-law-in-2020-reports>

⁵² Diab, W. (2019, October). Akhbar Al-Khaleej leaks the first draft of the new Bahraini Media Law. *Akhbar Al Khaleej*. <http://www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1178445>

⁵³ Bahrain Journalists Association. (n.d). *Decree-by-Law No.: (47) for the year 2002L: Regarding organizing the press, printing and publishing*. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from http://www.bahrainijournalists.org/References_and_documents/Law

⁵⁴ East Laws. (n.d). *Decree Law No. (1) of 1993 establishing the Radio and Television Commission*. Retrieved April 15, 2021, from <http://site.eastlaws.com/GeneralSearch/Home/ArticlesTDetails?MasterID=220021&related>

⁵⁵ Diab, W. (2019, October). Akhbar Al-Khaleej leaks the first draft of the new Bahraini Media Law. *Akhbar Al Khaleej*. <http://www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1178445>

Newspapers and electronic press websites should ensure the accuracy of their contents”. Article 13⁵⁶ stated that “The written and electronic press are forbidden from releasing any content that violates the constitution, that invites for the violation of law or the academic honor code, that contradicts the national interest or calls for discrimination between citizens, hate or violence. The administration that deals with expressions has to prohibit newspapers or media content that got released or is being released outside of the kingdom from being spread within it”. More flagrant and shocking, article 64 and 66⁵⁷ which stated that any person who releases or publishes content “criticizing the ruling system” or “criticizing any person from the legislative authority, courts or any person from other governmental institutions” and many other conditions is to be fined. Furthermore, article 71⁵⁸ stated that “one shall not be exempted from criminal liability regarding previous articles for invoking or referencing writings, illustrations, symbols, radio or TV programs or other ways of expression even if it was merely translated or copied from articles, radio or TV programs that have aired or been published within the kingdom or abroad and even if it was mere rumors”. This meant that a person would be fined or worse, imprisoned, for a Facebook post or a mere tweet.

❖ *Translating website content to Arabic:*

All interns were asked to translate website content together as well as individually. The content encompassed the Profiles of Prosecution section, ADHRB reports and sometimes also included the interventions that are shared publicly:

- i. Profiles of Prosecution is a section within which the organization posts articles that are about prisoners, their enforced disappearances, their sentences, possible illegal methods used to extort confessions and their current status. The most important part within these articles is the conclusion as ADHRB would at the end of each article urge/demand the Bahraini government to abide by its international obligations, punish those responsible for human rights violation and compensate political prisoners for the suffering they went through.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Some of the articles I have worked on tackled the cases of Hassan Ali Fateel, Husain Ali Barbar and many more:

- 1- Hassan Ali Fateel⁵⁹ is a 20-year-old Bahraini student who was arbitrarily detained after his warrantless arrest in 2018. Since Hasan's arrest, Bahraini officials have tortured him, hid him for over a month, and subjected him to an unfair trial. He is currently imprisoned in New Dry Dock. This was the first task I was asked to do and I personally got a very negative review about my Proficiency in Arabic following its submission but Mrs. Salma was kind enough to point out where exactly the grammatical errors were and emphasized on the terminology that needed to be used.
- 2- Husain Ali Barbar⁶⁰ is a 23-year-old Bahraini student who was arrested at just 18 years old, arbitrarily detained, tortured, and refused proper medical treatment by prison officials. Husain is currently imprisoned at Jau Prison. This task was given exactly after a month from the start of the internship program. By then, I was already faster and more knowledgeable of the language used to provide the translated articles.

ii. ADHRB Reports:

ADHRB published while I was interning a couple of reports translated by interns in the Beirut Branch. These included:

- 1- A report submitted by ADHRB, Ahead of Bahrain's review under the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁶¹, attesting to the treatment of persons with disabilities in Bahrain, in particular the government's failure to follow through with its treaty body obligations.

⁵⁹ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, September 5). *Profiles in Persecution: Hasan Ali Fateel*. <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/09/profiles-in-persecution-hasan-ali-fateel/>

⁶⁰ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, October 10). *Profiles in Persecution: Husain Ali Barbar*. <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/10/profiles-in-persecution-husain-ali-barbar/>

⁶¹ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, October 15). *ADHRB submits report ahead of Bahrain's review under the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. https://usercontent.one/wp/www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019.08.29_ADHRB_Bahrain-CRPD-submission_FINAL.pdf

- 2- A report submitted by ADHRB to the UN Committee on the Rights of Children (CRC) 85th Session of the CRC Committee on Kuwait⁶².
- 3- Breaking the Silence: Bahraini Women Political Prisoners Expose Systemic Abuses⁶³.

It is worth mentioning that the translation of the website content was sort of satisfying as we were able to see our own work published on the website the following day. This gave us, as interns, confidence in our abilities as we knew that the organization trusted our work.

❖ ***Providing transcripts of audios sent by prisoners and their translation to English:***

This task was something done by all of the interns at the Beirut Branch. We were asked to provide transcripts of audios sent by political prisoners themselves. These audios often included prisoners' demands, a description of their current situation, the human rights violations they have been submitted to which included: torture, forced confessions, no medical care, etc. After having written the transcript of the audio, we were to translate it to English. Due to the difference in dialects, this task was particularly challenging as it took all of us a certain amount of time to familiarize ourselves with the Bahraini accent.

❖ ***Documentation regarding prisoners and their release:***

ADHRB documents prisoners' cases following a certain format to ensure efficiency of advocacy work, UN special procedure, etc. Every prisoner has his own file and the organization was keen on not making the files identifiable. We were always warned to send the file once ordered without mentioning the identity of the prisoner but only the number of his file.

We were often provided with personal information about the prisoner (often sent by a family member), details on how he got arrested and his current predicament. We had to build their file based on the format ADHRB followed in English and had to be very

⁶² Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, August 9). *Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of Children (CRC)85th Session of the CRC Committee*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019.08.09_ADHRB_Kuwait-CRC-submission_FINAL.pdf

⁶³ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, September). *Breaking the Silence: Bahraini Women Political Prisoners Expose Systemic Abuses*. https://www.adhrb.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/ADHRB_BreakingTheSilence_Web.pdf

careful and meticulous about the details mentioned because our errors could very well directly affect prisoners. We were told by Mrs. Salma, that a mistake done by a previous intern regarding the name of the prison affected the individual himself when they were working on his release and so it was of utmost importance to be as precise as possible when documenting the prisoners' file.

In addition to documenting their cases, Rita and I were asked to document in an excel sheet their release. In Bahrain, the King often decreed royal pardoning which coincided with Bahrain national holidays, political circumstances, etc. Regardless of the motives behind these decrees, it benefitted some of the political prisoners. At the time, King Hamad of Bahrain issued a decree pardoning 269 prisoners on the eve of the country's National Day. The task was time consuming and exhausting as Rita and I had to monitor Instagram accounts which post about prisoners in order to be able to track which prisoners have been released and which have not. We would spend hours looking at videos and pictures to make sure that the name we are crossing off the list and adding to the clean excel sheet was indeed released. Our meticulousness and attention to detail was needed because the organization had to work on the rest of the cases involving people who are still locked up.

❖ ***Documenting violations of freedom of expression/religion:***

- Ashura generally:

At the time when I was interning at ADHRB, the organization was compiling lists of violations committed by Bahraini police officers in relation to Ashura ceremonies. Interns were asked to translate and compile different documents from Arabic to English when necessary.

From the 1st till the 9th of September 2019, religious men, preachers, funeral organizers, and activists were summoned for investigations by Bahraini police officers. The purpose of the investigations was to remind the preachers and religious men that they were indeed under constant surveillance and to cease any political or politically influenced subject from ever being discussed.

- Ashura in prisons:

Every year, prisoners in all prisons in Bahrain go on contact strikes (refusing to contact their families) or hunger strikes to demand more religious freedom in special

regard to Ashura. Religious freedom is a right guaranteed by international law, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

During my internship at ADHRB, I got to work on translating documents related to what was happening inside prisons in regard to Ashura ceremonies during 2019.

Testimonies were either by prisoners themselves or their family members. I was asked to translate documents concerning three prisoners who were held in solitary confinement at Jau Prison in August 2019, which led to a hunger strike demanding the prison's administration to respect and give these prisoners their rights. Subsequently, hundreds of prisoners in Jau prison and other prisons followed foot and went on hunger strikes. ADHRB had filed complaints against the breach of these prisoners' rights to the United Nations (UN) after having received consent from their families.

Eventually, due to the deterioration of many prisoners' health conditions across the prisons, administrations did give in under the pressure and promised to allow the prisoners to practice their religious ceremonies. But unfortunately, the prisoners seemed to have been tricked as once having signed documents in which they approved to stopping their hunger strikes, the prisons' administrations failed to keep their promises. They proceeded to close mosques, forbid prisoners from gathering, and did not even allow them to have religious books. ADHRB represented at least two out of five prisoners on whom the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) published an opinion concerning the arbitrary deprivation of liberty. The task was hard as we were often pushed to work as fast as possible to ensure that the Washington DC office is advocating for prisoners on time.

❖ ***Translation of interventions done/to be done at the UN Human Rights Council and letters addressed to the UN working group; this included:***

- 1- Translation of the Letter sent by the UN working group containing the Bahraini's government's reply to ADHRB complaints regarding nine under-age detainees. The working group had mentioned within its letter that the organization had a limited timeframe to send its observations and comments to the government's reply in order for these to be considered during the 86th session. The task was

taxing as it required us to provide fast and accurate translations for the Washington DC office.

- 2- Translation of a speech, from Arabic to English, delivered by an ADHRB officer outside the United Nations Human Rights Council. ADHRB urged the Human Rights Council to demand that the Bahraini authorities to allow a political prisoner (Ali AlHajee) to see his family and to access appropriate medical care, as well as to fulfill Bahrain's obligations in respecting the human rights of all prisoners.
- 3- Translation of interventions by ADHRB officers, from English to Arabic, during the 42nd session of the United Nations Human Rights council. The interventions were related to:
 - Bahraini activist Najah Yusuf, who was arrested for her activities on social media and convicted in an unfair trial. Najah's prosecution is part of a broader suppression of human rights defenders and government critics in Bahrain.
 - A reply to comments by the Special Rapporteur concerning Bahrain use of broad definitions of terrorism to detain protesters and convict opposition leaders. In Bahraini law, the definition of terrorism extends to any non-violent act the government deems "disrupting public order" or "damaging national unity." In May 2019, this was applied broadly to social media to the extent that liking a Tweet or following an account can be prosecuted as "support of terrorism." ADHRB urged Member States to pressure Bahrain to bring its actions in line with international standards of human rights, including the establishing of a moratorium on the death penalty and releasing all political prisoners.
 - Drawing the Working Group's attention to Saudi Arabia's continued detention of women human rights defenders. In June 2018, the Saudi government lifted the ban on women driving. However, ahead of this move, the government took steps to silence many of the women and activists who had fought for this, arbitrarily arresting seven activists including Eman Al-Nafjan and Loujain Al-Hathloul. ADHRB bravely asked the working group: what can the Council do when Member States such as Saudi Arabia continue to arbitrarily detain and

punish women human rights defenders for their work? And should continuous targeting of these women be a reason to remove a Member from the Council?

- Drawing the Working Group's attention to the plight of the bidoon in Kuwait, a community of 100,000 stateless persons. Even though they do not know any state or homeland other than Kuwait, the Kuwaiti government systematically violates their fundamental rights. ADHRB urged Kuwait to halt its practices and to undertake developmental policies that empower and support bidoon. ADHRB asked Mr. Rapporteur for recommendations which, if implemented, would ensure equal access to development in Kuwait. Furthermore, the organization urged the Rapporteur to request a visit to Kuwait to further assess the situation and advise on development.

❖ *Twitter:*

All interns were asked on a continuous basis to tweet about ADHRB's reports, articles or any relevant event happening in both Arabic, English, and sometimes French in order to engage with a larger audience.

Twitter is a free social networking service that allows registered members (exceeding 330 million a month) to broadcast short posts called tweets. Members of this social networking service can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Unlike other social media platforms, Twitter is largely used by Governments, private firms, startups, NGOs, UN Agencies, etc. Fundamentally speaking, social media is about participation and connecting people to one another. Using social media, in this case Twitter, allows NGOs in particular to move away from the one way communications and move toward a type of communication through which they can interact directly and engage with the public, important stakeholders, key policy makers, potential donors, etc. ADHRB has more than 11k followers on their Twitter account, which counts for a lot when compared with other small sized NGOs.

This task was relatively easy for interns who are used to using social media and a bit more complicated for those who are not as familiar with the platform. I unfortunately belonged to the latter category. Extracting the most important phrases out of texts and videos was easy to ensure. However due to Twitter's 280 characters' limit for tweets I found a bit of

difficulty in trying to fit in the most important information while also making the tweet seem appealing to Twitter's and ADHRB's audience.

Below are some of the tweets I posted on the account in AR:

- في #البحرين #حسين_علي_مهنا البالغ ٢٣ عاماً بدون أي مذكرة #MOI و #CID اعتقلت عناصر من #Jau_prison قضائية و ادين في محاكمة جماعية غير عادلة و هو الان في
- البحرين بالحفاظ على التزاماتها من خلال الغاء ادانة #حسين_علي_مهنا في ضوء #ADHRB تطالب #Bahrain #Coerced_confession الاعتراف القسري و بالتالي المحاكمة غير العادلة #Unfair_trial
- من السلطات البحرينية التحقيق في مزاعم #حسين_علي_مهنا المتعلقة بسوء المعاملة #ADHRB تطالب #Bahrain #CID #Torture و التعذيب في مديرية التحقيقات الجنائية
- يعتبر استخدام اعتراف #حسين_علي_مهنا الحاصل تحت الكراه و التعذيب مخالفاً لعدة #معاهدات دولية #UNCAT #Bahrain #ICCPR
- الى الإهانة و الضرب و #CID تعرض #حسين_علي_مهنا خلال فترة احتجازه التي طالت ٤٠ يوماً في #Bahrain #Torture #Coerced_confession التعذيب كما اجبر على الاعتراف بجرائم لم يقترفها

Our supervisors made sure to send us a correction of each task we were assigned to do. My case was a bit special since my English proficiency was significantly better than my Arabic one, which is something I made sure to point out to both coordinators during my first month. They, gladly, aided me and explained some essential Arabic grammar rules, how to write numbers and how to divide paragraphs. By the end of the internship, I had a lot of respect towards both of my coordinators as they worked to sincerely ensure that the interns felt comfortable through their internship and that the interns gained skills as well as improved their already acquired ones while working for the organization.

Part II: Key Learnings Acquired Throughout the Internship

This part will be discussing the achievements and shortcomings that were experienced throughout my short internship at ADHRB. It will also include some reflections/analyses of the human rights situation based on knowledge acquired during the time spent interning at the organization.

1- Achievements and Shortcomings

Continuous advancement of skills is vital in any career field, so going through one or more internships is of the essence before obtaining a degree. Towards the end of an internship program, interns are expected to have gained a range of new skills and knowledge. Through this internship, I was able to go the extra mile and discover more of my professional talents. I have personally gained new proficiencies and skills during the 16 weeks spent as a Translation & Documentation intern at Americans for Democracy & Human Rights. Surprisingly, this internship, despite not corresponding to what I have initially expected, has enriched me with knowledge beyond just office work basics.

Achievements

This internship has changed and improved my professional skills. The achieved professional development has and continues to aid me as I am progressing in my career. The quality of my work by the end of this internship had significantly improved compared to what I was handing in on my first week as an intern. Below are some of the areas where I felt that I have genuinely improved:

❖ *Organizational/ Professional Communications skills:*

Communication within a work setting is said to be one of the most important things to guarantee work efficiency and progress, especially in a non-governmental organization that works in different countries and focuses on issues regarding a range of countries with different cultures. Because a lot of the tasks required to co-operate with fellow interns and higher-ups, I was able to learn how to improve my communication skills in an organizational setting and how to address my supervisors appropriately while also being able to clearly give across what I need to inform or acquire about.

This skill was further attenuated through the guidance done by my supervisor Ms. Salma. She had always made sure to point out any mistakes or errors that I have made while communicating with others through our emails, and she was able to provide me with insight as to how to fix those mistakes and which tones were more acceptable. The internship did not just allow me to better my communication skills in a professional setting, such as in an office; it also extended outside of the office, as we often had organization lunches and other social activities.

❖ ***Time management:***

Having an overwhelming number of tasks can sometimes be daunting, especially if an intern does not have an already set time management routine. I realized how important it was to have one, as it helped increase my productivity rate. I am now much more competent with proper time management and effective implementation of tasks. Ms. Salma oriented other interns and I to have time management skills. She gave us new approaches that helped and encouraged us to attend the office on time and submit and complete all activities within a specific time frame. These new approaches included:

- Writing down daily tasks on one's tasks journal.
- Communicating with higher-ups to be informed on which tasks are a priority.
- Organizing a day-to-day life as a routine will keep us on track mentally as well.

By the end of the internship, I implemented 90% of the tasks assigned to me without any delay. I was considered one of the fastest to deliver translations from Arabic to English, which I am proud of as it highlights how these approaches are practical and not just a theory.

❖ ***Teamwork skills:***

As interns, we were required most of the time to work on the same task together. We coordinated with each other, shared information, and made sure each of us was on track. Additionally, when one intern was having difficulties, we always made sure to help as we considered that progress is to be achieved together. Ms. Salma showed good leadership skills as she often let us organize between ourselves and only gave instructions on how to proceed when tasks were very time demanding. The space

given to interns to coordinate with each other allowed each of us to improve. We develop our interpersonal skills, which, in return, improved our team spirit as each person had to adjust to the other. This type of work setting proved to be beneficial as it helped all of us gained crucial communication skills. It is essential to have good relationships with colleagues, especially when organizing an event or a project.

❖ ***Research skills:***

As mentioned in Part One, during the internship, I have prepared media reports on the human rights situation in the Gulf region on a daily basis. Performing this task enhanced my research skills. Through this experience, I learned how to search and choose trusted sources for a specific topic or event and address an issue through a research perspective and objectivity.

❖ ***Language skills:***

My Arabic language proficiency momentarily improved over the four months I spent at ADHRB. Towards the end, Ms. Salma confessed and voiced that when I had first joined, the translation work I was providing looked like something provided by a foreigner translating word by word English into Arabic. However, she insisted on complimenting me over the significant improvement. I honestly think that this would not have been possible without the constant guidance she and Ms. Rayan have continued to offer not just to me but to all other interns.

❖ ***Critical Thinking:***

I consider critical thinking to be one of the most valuable skills I have developed during the internship. It allowed me to interact, learn and share opinions and ideas with fellow interns surrounding: Human rights, governments, the concept of States, politics in general, and politics in Lebanon (as Lebanon witnessed an uprising in November 2019). Ms. Salma again showed her excellent leadership skills as we were given the space to have those debates. She would even often participate and share her own opinions, which made the debates we had more engaging and enjoyable. I would say this also relates to the point mentioned above about team building as this helped in further establishing a healthy dynamic between us and improved our bond as a team.

❖ ***Development of managerial capacity:***

The internship gave me an opportunity to understand the dynamics of ADHRB. I came to know the organization's goals, objectives, and management style. Understanding how the organization was functioning helped me be more meticulous in how I was doing my tasks.

❖ ***Helped in shaping future Career Plan:***

This internship was originally meant to be for three months. I was allowed to extend and stay. I ended up leaving the first week of January as I felt that I was not gaining any new knowledge and that it felt as if my ability to gain new skills has reached a plateau at this specific level of the organization. This feeling helped me assert that I wanted to further grow into a more senior position and to advance my career in the NGO sector. Whilst I was delighted to work on documents directly associated with human rights violations happening in the Gulf region, there were many shortcomings regarding the internship program itself that existed.

Shortcomings

It is a universal truth that without failure, no success can be achieved. Similarly, when there are no challenges, there is no development. These are some of the shortcomings I have experienced and felt during the internship:

❖ ***Working from home during the October 17 Uprising:***

Before the pandemic that took over the world in 2020, Lebanon witnessed an uprising on October 17, 2019, and several daily protests were happening across the country. These occurrences led us to work from home even before the pandemic started. We adjusted to a world that has not yet taken to the habit of working from home. It was very distressing at first as many of us suffered from poor internet connection and issues concerning devices. The laptops that the organization provided to us were too slow to be used; hence we had to use our personal devices, and I did not own a laptop but only an iPad. Additionally, the mental toll that was overtaking us due to the protests and the uprising that were both a sign of hope and a sign of upcoming chaos.

❖ ***Issues concerning translation:***

Translating from one language to another is a difficult task in and of itself. The translator's job is to ensure that provided material is coming across as close to the meaning of its original language as possible. Language proficiency aside, other interns and I struggled translating due to the poor quality of some of the audios and audiovisuals that we got from different sources, such as inmates. Often, the mics would be of inferior quality, rendering the audio very taxing, especially with the accent being a foreign accent of the Arabic language compared to our Lebanese accent. Sometimes a task will take twice the time expected to translate simply due to the poor quality of the audio and us having to listen to it multiple times in order to be as precise as possible.

Another issue that I was not expecting while translating is how much power a translator has over a text. A translator's perception can sometimes switch the tone of the translated text compared to the original. This matter was another challenge in building my critical thinking skills, as it was essential to decipher the correct tone of the text. My choice of words regarding translations can sometimes affect the prisoner or the political advocate whose rights are being violated. We had to be extremely meticulous.

❖ ***Lack of engagement:***

As mentioned in the introduction, I genuinely believed that the Beirut Office was the main key to all the work being done at the Washington D.C office as well as other offices. However, interns at the Beirut Office were not being involved in the organization's advocacy work or any real research. The lack of inclusivity, of course, resulted in interns often leaving even prior to the ending of the expected three months ended. Interns were simply discouraged; there was a lack of engagement, lack of understanding of the severity of the human rights situation in the Gulf region, Etc. I feel that the experience would have been different and much more fulfilling if we were included in all of the advocacy work being done.

❖ ***Lack of clarity on how the organization works:***

We knew what the organization's goals and objectives were and how it was mainly devoted to the cause of advocating to make governments in the Gulf region, especially Bahrain, respecting its international obligations and ending the human rights violations it

has been committing. Nevertheless, we did not have a clear image of how the organization was technically working towards achieving these goals and objectives. What we understood was gained through the material we were working on or those available to the public. In a way, we were a team, but inclusivity within the organization as a whole was not there. The internship program description differed significantly from the reality. This gap made me feel a bit disappointed after the first month. Interns are considered to be the lowest in the hierarchy of an organization, and we, as interns, of course, were well aware of that. However, we still hoped for more for inclusivity and opportunities that would allow us to be more involved in the change the NGO is working towards to feel more motivated and driven. This point will be further developed in the recommendations section, in which I will try to recommend ways to improve the internship program being done at the Beirut Office.

2- Analysis of the Human Rights situation based on time spent interning for ADHRB

As mentioned in the introduction of this report, there is no precise definition of what constitutes an NGO. The challenge of analyzing and comprehending the phenomenon of NGOs remains remarkably difficult. This difficulty can be explained by the fact that NGOs are a diverse group of organizations that defy generalization, ranging from small informal groups to large international agencies. NGOs play different roles and take different shapes within and across different contexts, cultures, and societies. Regardless of this, the report's primary goal is not to discuss and argue how NGOs came to be and the continuous complexity surrounding their classification. Hence, we will adopt a simple definition given by the United Nations which states that an NGO is:

“Not-for-profit, voluntary citizen's group organized on a local, national or international level to address issues supporting the public welfare. Usually, task-oriented and composed of people who share a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of services and humanitarian functions, bring citizen's concerns to Governments, monitor policy and program implementation, and encourage the participation of civil society stakeholders at the community level.”

NGOs range from small pressure groups to huge international organizations with hundreds or thousands of branches and staff in different world regions. For example, they can be NGOs working on specific environmental concerns or specific human rights violations through educational charities, women's refuges, cultural associations, religious organizations, legal foundations, humanitarian assistance programs, Etc. However, they can also be ones tackling several topics all at once.

ADHRB is a non-governmental organization that focuses on human rights violations. ADHRB, as an NGO, documents human rights violations committed by the states it covers. Furthermore, it launches continuous advocacy campaigns in the aim of protecting individuals who are/were threatened by the power of the state (committing systematic human rights violations). The organization does this through a multitude of different means, including:

- Fighting individual violations of human rights either directly or by supporting particular 'test cases' through relevant courts, in this case: UN/Interpol.
- Offering direct assistance to those whose rights have been violated.
- Lobbying for changes to national, regional, or international law.
- Promoting knowledge of the violations being committed by States, in this case, gulf ones in general and Bahrain specifically.

The above-mentioned general definition of NGO work and the specific listing of ADHRB's objectives explain why ambitious students join internship programs created by NGOs. By joining such programs, students hope to expand their horizons, critical thinking and grow professionally and academically. Internship programs at NGOs offer interns knowledge of different problems in a particular country, region, or multiple. By gaining this knowledge, students gain analytical thinking and go on to apply what they have learned in their academic research or professionally if they ever choose to build a career in the human rights/humanitarian sector.

Internship programs constitute an extension or a complement to academic learning. These programs aim to expose young trainees/interns to the world of work and to provide a hands-on professional experience. Internships provide us, students/fresh graduates, opportunities to apply our knowledge and skills in an actual work environment and to adapt to new situations that may come up in this workplace. By taking part in an internship program, students/ fresh graduates learn what they like and dislike and are better oriented towards what they inspire to have as a professional career.

Regarding my case, as mentioned in the introduction of this report, one of the main reasons I joined this internship program in particular, is to learn about advocacy and because of the fact that it was targeted at young graduates. On the recruiting website, the organization listed the tasks and qualifications we interns should do/have. Among the qualifications, the organization required us to have; prior experience working in government affairs and/or advocacy capacity, extensive research and writing experience, and prioritizing, implementing, and delivering high-quality advocacy programs, sometimes within tight timelines and with minimal supervision. This led other interns and me to expect to learn about advocacy strategies being implemented by ADHRB, particularly to the regions it covers. Sadly, as mentioned previously, the work in the Beirut Office was slightly restrictive for both legal interns and translation & documentation interns because all of us interns were required to do the same tasks despite having huge capacities and potential.

Nevertheless, even without concrete guidance and exposure to advocacy campaigning being done by the organization, we were able to grasp the causes that drive the organization to advocate for what it does. These causes included: upholding justice, respect of human rights, and international obligations by States in the Gulf region, but mainly Bahrain.

Based on the knowledge I have gained throughout my experience as a Translation & Documentation intern at ADHRB, I came to understand the human rights situation happening in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. Consequently, this helped me comprehend why ADHRB and similar organizations advocate for solutions in different contexts.

Human rights violations in Kuwait

According to ADHRB⁶⁴ work, Kuwait violates several human rights among them: the Lack of favorable legislation to protect the rights of stateless persons and non-citizens, Lack of favorable legislation to protect the rights of stateless persons and non-citizens, Gender equality and non-discrimination, torture, inhumane prison conditions, and forced labor, Etc. We, as interns, specifically worked on tasks around Bidoon.

Bidoon (an abbreviation of Bidoon jinsiya, meaning 'without nationality' in Arabic, and alternately spelled as Bedoon, Bidun, and Bedun) are a stateless minority in Kuwait who were not considered as citizens at the time of the country's independence in the 60s. It is worth noting that the term Bidoon should not be conflated with Bedouin (something that I have done before whilst getting familiar with the subject) as the latter refers to a larger socio-cultural category of desert-dwelling, nomadic pastoralists in the region.

The Kuwaiti government currently categorizes Bidoon as 'illegal residents,' even though most do not have any real connections to any country other than Kuwait. Three main factors can explain why the Bidoon lack Kuwaiti nationality or have trouble obtaining nationality:

- Many Bidoons are unable to prove residential ties to Kuwait that pre-date 1920.
- Since Kuwait's independence and after failing to register as citizens, the Bidoon population numbers increased significantly. Since citizenship is passed through the father to the child, generational statelessness is passed to children born to male Bidoon.
- During Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, many Bidoon joined the Iraqi forces; this led to the perception of the Bidoons as foreign agents and further stigmatized the entirety of the Bidoon population in Kuwait.

Due to their stateless status, Bidoons face various difficulties obtaining civil documents, finding decent employment, having access to education, healthcare, and other social services provided to Kuwaiti citizens. Consequently, many live in relative poverty and are obligated to work in the informal sector. The Government of Kuwait's treatment of its own Bidoon population violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which

⁶⁴ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, July). *Systematic Human Rights Violations in the State of Kuwait*. file:///C:/Users/RayaneHassan/Downloads/ADHRB_UPR35_KWT_E_Main.pdf

prescribes that everyone has the right to a nationality. In July 2019, Amnesty International⁶⁵ (Amnesty International, 2019) reported how the Kuwaiti authorities have arbitrarily arrested more than a dozen protesters, including prominent human rights defender Abdulhakim al-Fadhli⁶⁶ and other activists, in a crackdown on peaceful protestors who were demanding their rights as Bidoon. Amnesty International's Middle East Director of Research, Lyn Maalouf, said that:

“These arbitrary arrests primarily targeting peaceful protesters, activists, and human rights defenders in Kuwait are not only unlawful but are only set to exacerbate an already tense situation brought to the fore by the young man's suicide. By continuing to deny the Bidun citizenship, the authorities are denying these long-term residents a range of basic rights, including their right to health, education, and work, which in effect exclude them from being part and parcel of and contributing to a vibrant Kuwaiti society⁶⁷.”

Furthermore, it was reported that in 2021 several persons who were stateless/Bidoon committed suicide because of the horrible, poor living conditions they continuously experienced. The latest was 26-year-old Yaqoub Mofreh Abdullah, who was found hanging from a tree next to the tent in which he lived in March 2021⁶⁸.

During the time I spent at ADHRB, the organization submitted an NGO submission ahead of Kuwait's Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review in January 2020. Sadly, as mentioned previously, interns at the Beirut Office were not included in writing the submission content; we were only involved in making sure we provided the correct translation into Arabic. The organization did not work enough on increasing inclusivity. This made interns feel demotivated and not concerned enough. Interns did not fully grasp the importance of the advocacy work the organization puts much effort into.

⁶⁵ Amnesty International (2019, July 17). *Kuwait: Authorities crackdown on protesters demanding citizenship rights*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/kuwait-authorities-crackdown-on-protesters-demanding-citizenship-rights/>

⁶⁶ Abdulhakim Al-Fadhli is a human rights defender promoting and defending the rights of the Bedoon community in Kuwait, of which he is a member himself. He has been detained and released more than five times for his activism.

⁶⁷ Amnesty International (2019, July 17). *Kuwait: Authorities crackdown on protesters demanding citizenship rights*. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/07/kuwait-authorities-crackdown-on-protesters-demanding-citizenship-rights/>

⁶⁸ Al-Amir, Kh. (2021, March 28). Kuwait: Young 'Bidoon' man hangs himself from a tree. *Gulf News*. <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-young-bidoon-man-hangs-himself-from-a-tree-1.78170152>

Violation of freedom of speech and women rights in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is known for its dire human rights record. The kingdom has continuously violated many human rights: freedom of speech, unfair trials, torture, Etc. Perhaps, the most flagrant one was the extrajudicial killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018⁶⁹. During the time I and others were interning at ADHRB, we mainly focused on human rights violations concerning women's rights.

Under Saudi Arabia's male guardianship system, women are restricted from independently making several daily decisions without first obtaining the permission of their male guardian – whether we are talking about their husband, brother, or father, or other male relatives.

In 2018, the country tried to polish its image by allowing women to drive⁷⁰. In 2019, it allowed Saudi women to obtain passports without requiring their male guardian's approval. Furthermore, they started to benefit from protections against employment discrimination and were allowed to register their children's births⁷¹. Some viewed these changes as a genuine step towards gender equality in Saudi Arabia. However, the truth was that the kingdom still oppresses women rights activists from expressing their opinions, forcibly detaining some either without charging them or based on false accusations. Despite the Saudi government's efforts to promote its image in 2020, human rights groups and activists have called to boycott the Group of 20⁷² (G20) summit hosted by Saudi Arabia. This call was pushed due to the kingdom's dire human rights record, which includes extrajudicial killings, the detention of women's rights advocates and journalists, the country's government-sanctioned executions, Etc.

An example of the work we as interns worked on was Loujain al-Hathloul's case. Loujain was one of the leaders of the Women2Drive campaign and is an activist that has fought

⁶⁹ Specia, M. (2018, October 19). Jamal Khashoggi's Killing: Here's What We Know. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/19/world/middleeast/jamal-khashoggi-case-facts.html>

⁷⁰ Saudi Arabia's ban on women driving officially ends. (2018, June 24). *BBC*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-44576795> (accessed April 16, 2021).

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch. (2019, August 22). *Saudi Arabia: Travel Restrictions on Saudi Women Lifted*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/22/saudi-arabia-travel-restrictions-saudi-women-lifted>

⁷² Khalel, Sh. (2020, November 20). Campaigns to boycott Saudi Arabia G20 summit gain momentum. *Middle East Eye*. <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/saudi-arabia-g20-boycott-campaign-gain-momentum>

for reforms on multiple fronts in Saudi Arabia. She was one of the first women to stand for elections in Saudi Arabia in 2015 – the first year women were allowed to both vote and stand for elections. Loujain and other activists were working on opening the first shelter for women fleeing domestic violence. Furthermore, she led the efforts to end male guardianship in the Saudi Kingdom.

Instead of recognizing Loujain and other activists for their efforts in pushing for reforms, the Saudi authorities condemned them. They labeled them as traitors in a public campaign without any evidence in May 2018. Loujain was sentenced to 5 years and eight months in prison, where she was tortured and sexually assaulted. ADHRB has and continues to advocate for the respect of gender equality, freedom of speech, and the respect of fundamental human rights guaranteed by international law and conventions by documenting women's rights defenders' arrests and human rights violations and speaking for their respect. Loujain's case is an example of how NGO advocacy work and determination do show positive outcomes. In February 2021, Loujain was released⁷³ but, sadly she still faces a travel ban and is restricted from speaking to the media, hinting at the refusal of Saudi Arabia to abide by international humanitarian norms.

Violations of fundamental human rights and freedom of speech in Bahrain

Based on the extensive tasks I have executed as an intern at ADHRB, I noticed that Bahrain violates the fundamental human rights of political prisoners and commits systematic violations of freedom of speech by oppressing its own citizens from speaking up or demanding a change.

❖ *Violations of fundamental human rights of political prisoners:*

By working on the following: providing transcripts and translation of audios sent by inmate themselves, translating cases for the Files of Prosecution section on the organization's website, and working on documentation of prisoners' cases, I came to understand that the Bahraini government not only was arbitrarily detaining political activists who were pushing for a change but was also making sure to violate their rights inside prisons.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch. (2021, February 12). *Saudi Women's Rights Defenders Released, But Not Free*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/12/saudi-womens-rights-defenders-released-not-free>

Audios provided by inmates proved that Bahraini prison administrations such as Jau and Dry Dock and Madinat Issa prisons were violating inmates' fundamental human rights by:

❖ ***Denying inmates health care rights:***

I came to understand the severity of the violations through audios I have translated and provided their transcripts. These audios were often sent by inmates themselves and sometimes by their family members. In these audios, inmates or family members often described how prison administrations were not providing needed healthcare treatments: physiotherapy, dentist appointment, Etc. However, one violation topped everything else. According to inmates, in December 2019, in Jau prison, inmates started developing allergies which caused itching all over their body. Little did they know that it was a scabies outbreak. At first, inmates were isolated in another cell in order to prevent them from contaminating other people. They were given medication, but the number of pills was not enough for all of them. According to an inmate's audio: "A prisoner receiving the treatment was sitting next to one who was not, and the medication he has been taking for three months has not improved his condition. The proper environment needed to complete the treatment is not provided". The situation did not improve as the prison administration continued to place inmates in a separate bloc without medication. Inmates who asked for doctor appointments were placed in solitary confinement and faced many other problems. Even if they were able to meet with a doctor, the person was often not a specialist and was not able to diagnose scabies to be able to prescribe the correct medication. Inmate MA could not sleep due to the rash (most likely scabies) he was suffering from. According to the audio he sent, he and others were not taken to the clinic. They were left to bleed despite urging the Jau prison's administration, the Ombudsman, and the Ministry of Interior for solutions.

❖ ***Denying inmates the right for seeing their families:***

This violation was flagrantly detected from audios and documentation cases, and solidarity stands we as interns worked on translating. According to inmates and their families, a glass barrier separates inmates from visitors and prison administrations still until today ignore demands for their removal. Ali Al Hajee sent an audio recording urging the president of the Human Rights Council to put an end to these systematic violations.

He himself has been denied healthcare and deprived of seeing his family for more than two years. Inmate H.I.M and others, who were sentenced to death, were constantly urging to remove this glass partition separating the inmates from visitors, increasing visitation rights to twice a month and for one hour, and authorizing private spouse visits. For inmates, implementing these humanitarian demands was needed as it would make parents and children happy, and it would have helped calm the situation.

❖ *Denying inmates the rights to exercise their religious beliefs:*

This violation was flagrant as prison administrations deliberately and systematically aimed to oppress political prisoners based on their religious beliefs. Audios sent by two female inmates imprisoned in Madinat Issa Prison for their activism on social media stated that the prison's administration forbids them from gathering on religious occasions such as "Muharram," and forbidding them from access to any religious books. Additionally, when these two inmates were visited by the National Institute for Human Rights representatives, an organization created by the Bahraini government itself, the representatives allegedly ignored complaints said by both inmates and blindly sided with the prison's administration. In a letter addressed to the US Department of Freedom of Religion, another inmate explained the extent of the restrictions. They included the following: the prohibition of exercising one's Religion daily in the allotted location, the confiscation and banning of books related to such beliefs, banning inmates from exercising their beliefs even inside their cells. They punished every inmate that commemorated any religious feast. According to a testimony provided by him, he and other inmates were denied their sun hours, their phone call rights, got physically ill-treated, and placed in solitary confinement for their religious practices. It is worth adding that according to another inmate's testimony, the prison's administration deliberately stalled to open prison doors when the electricity was gone for more than five hours. Prisoners were allegedly suffocating due to the Lack of oxygen caused by the lousy ventilation systems in prison cells.

Prisoners often used food strikes to urge prison administrations to comply with their basic demands, but it never worked. Prison administrations most often conditioned giving nutrients to those on strike unless prisoners signed papers in which they state that they

will stop the strike. When they refused, they were brought back to their cells without any treatment.

❖ *Violation of freedom of Religion and speech:*

Throughout the documentation tasks that involved compiling the list of violations committed by the Bahraini government during "Ashura" in September 2019, I understood that these violations have been continuing for years now. Following the ones that happened in 2019, ADHRB sent a letter to Justin Siberell⁷⁴, the American ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain. In that letter, ADHRB gave an example of past violations to illustrate the continuity and the systematic nature of these human rights violations: "In September 2018, at least 14 Shia clergymen and orators were harassed by authorities, and several were arrested over the content of their sermons in the run-up to Ashura. In addition to clerics, officials arrested several activists [...] on charges of "illegal gathering."

⁷⁴ Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB). (2019, September 4). *ADHRB Sends Letter to Ambassador Siberell Calling on Him to Uphold Human Rights Promises He Made During His Confirmation Hearing Two Years Ago*. <https://www.adhrb.org/2019/09/adhrb-sends-letter-to-ambassador-siberell-calling-on-him-to-uphold-human-rights-promises-he-made-during-his-confirmation-hearing-two-years-ago/>

Conclusion

Internship programs are normally designed to allow interns to gain insight into how things are run inside a firm/a public establishment, or a non-governmental organization. Through this gained insight, interns are able to notice where improvements can be made. In that regard, the following are my personal recommendations to improve the internship program at the ADHRB office in Beirut. These recommendations are based on my sole and personal experience at the organization.

First, when it comes to the recruitment category, I believe that the organization has a very well-established policy wherein the communication between the directors and the potential new intern is very straightforward and non-intimidating. Nevertheless, I personally did not know that I had to take a test on my interview day and hence was a bit perplexed as I was not anticipating a test and was not prepared for one, which I would have had I been informed. In that regard, there are two aspects that I would recommend for the organization to improve on:

- To have more clear requirements of what they expect the intern to have as skills as this was information that was not available and that had to be asked about through email.
- To mention on their recruitment ad that the recruitment does involve a written test and a trial period. By being clearer on these two points, the applicant/potential intern would be at ease and would have a complete understanding of what is expected of them and where to put their efforts to achieve the best results for them personally and the organization.

Second, when it comes to introducing how the organization works, I find that the material offered by the organization on the first day is very informative but, unfortunately, not enough. Of course, I appreciate that other fellow interns and I were given the first day to skim through the website and other reports on which the organization has worked, but we needed more. Hence, I recommend that the organization creates a two-week induction schedule within which interns get to be introduced to all aspects of the work being done by ADHRB. By letting interns interact directly with the head office and opening space for questions on the organization's work, and ensuring that interns' expectations are met,

the organization would achieve significant improvements. These would include: ensuring the success of its internship programs and ensuring that those young fresh graduates are truly included in all the effort being done to achieve the organization's goals. Inclusivity is key to the success of internship programs and assures that interns' work is truly appreciated and essential. Of course, the inclusivity aspect cannot be fulfilled by the sole introduction of an induction period and by the full involvement of interns in the organization's work. It signifies that interns would have to be included in weekly meetings with all staff located in different regions of the world. Interns would be included in drafting the organizational strategy even if it means that they will only be observant and not heavy contributors. An internship program at an iNGO should be able to introduce to the intern all aspects of the work and not just one side, as this would help them decide where to go next in their career.

Finally, from a translation aspect, I believe that the organization can implement new methods and techniques such as online softwares and tools that allow for the intern's job to be easier and more efficient. Everything we did was purely manual, and tasks were often done using the old laptops that were handed to us by the organization. Many new translation tools are curated to help make the translation process easier for users, their implementation would help bring up the productivity level and uniformity regarding the level of translations provided. One such suggestion as a beginning step for implementing new tools would be to curate a keyboard shortcut list for the interns' laptops that would boost productivity.

The Internship program at ADHRB is an important occasion for students/fresh graduates to practice working in an iNGO, as it enables them to improve their professional skills. However, as I have stated in several parts of the report, this period had many challenges hindering optimal benefits and growth an intern would expect. After exposing the gaps that existed, I have listed recommendations, which suggest ways to improve its internship programs to attract more people and benefit those who succeed in joining the programs.

The internship was about around 16 weeks as it started from 5th September 2019 up to 7th January 2020. This internship report has exposed that whilst internship programs are not perfect, they are beneficial for those who seek to build a career in the NGO sector. It

has described the host organization, its work to help readers understand its nature and the environment under which it operates. Here, I added elements such as the historical background, explaining why ADHRB does what it does, its objective, vision, and some of its notable work. Furthermore, I have listed the list of tasks I have carried out to show what kind of training I exposed to.

I conclude by mentioning that even though I criticized some of the missing aspects from my training at ADHRB, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity it has given me. Being an intern at ADHRB led to my acceptance as a Political Affairs intern at the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL) and my acceptance in my current position as a Research Assistant in Crisis Action.

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