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Bahrain’s Inhumane Torture of Detainees

Bahrain is a small island located on the continent of Asia in the Persian Gulf. It was a former colony of England, and is now a constitutional monarchy. King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has been in power since 2002. Recently, there has been a lot of discussion in the news media about whether the government of Bahrain is aware of and potentially condoning the purposeful infliction of anguish on detainees in prisons. After reading several articles, most prominently one from the *New York Times*, it appears that Bahrain is in fact abusing its inmates in the most violent ways.

“According to a report released by Human Rights Watch, The King of Bahrain publicly pledged approximately four years ago that he would end the violent torture of detainees using electric shocks, beatings and sexual abuse.” (Paraphrased [NYTimes.com](http://nytimes.com)) Since this pledge, it is evident on several accounts that this inhumane torture is still being carried out. “A series of ten interviews with detainees [including political dissidents accused of attending protests] were conducted. One of them, Hussain Jawad, a human rights advocate who was arrested in February, said officers had squeezed his genitals, beaten him in a hallway and “threatened to rape his wife.” Several of the other detainees described similar practices.” ([NYTimes.com](http://nytimes.com)) When interviews are conducted, the answers to the questions posed are not known on a factual basis, rather there is a likelihood this “could be” the case. It was unfortunate to see the outcomes of these interviews, and imagine the lack of human respect and dignity these prison guards have for the detainees. Of course it is appropriate to state that not all of the guards condone this process, regardless however this infliction of torment is still being carried out.

In addition, “Bahrain’s ruler, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, earned international praise four years ago for commissioning an independent committee to investigate weeks of unrest in his country.” ([NYTimes.com](http://nytimes.com)) “The Obama administration, a major ally of Bahrain, praised the report, and King Hamad vowed to heed its findings, including the “systematic” abuse of detainees. “We do not tolerate the mistreatment of detainees and prisoners,” King Hamad said at a news conference on Nov. 23, 2011.” ([NYTimes.com](http://nytimes.com)) The lack of human rights and respect for demonstrated in the nation of Bahrain is an example of the international system in an intriguing way. There are certain rules and patterns formed for interacting between nations, and Bahrain is hindering the relationships it has with other nations, such as the United States of America. Human rights is a freedom everyone deserves and is entitled to. With the United Nations recent release of the updated Millennium Development Goals which suggest peace, justice, and global partnerships throughout the World, ties will be severed in the future if these atrocities committed by Bahrain’s executive employees continue. The United States along with several other countries will ethically be unable to continue a friendship with an actor who subjects its detainees to unwarranted agony. Praise had previously been given to King Hamad and his efforts, the fairly immediate actions he took to address these atrocities was commendable. However, evaluating its current standing is dishonoring the Declaration of Human Rights. Article five states, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

([UN.org](http://un.org)) As well as article one which says, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” ([UN.org](http://un.org)) The international system must address current events in a specific way, not too swiftly but swiftly enough; whether it be terrorist attacks on others or the persecution of a specific group of people, i.e. detainees. Bahrain’s actions are disappointing and may eventually lead to a rift between itself and nations that hold themselves to higher degrees of respect and dignity for all.

Bahrain’s maltreatment of its prison inhabitants demonstrates the dominance principles drawbacks such as oppression which in turn often creates resentment. The King initially may have been trying to instill stability and order within the prison system, based off of his initial remarks. However, abusing detainees is an unacceptable method by modern day societies standards. In the twenty-first century countries all over the globe face issues within their prison systems, and resorting to heavy uses of violence is not the solution. America, with one of the highest inmate rates, does not use physical torture in its prison systems, yes sometimes you have to be a little rough, extremely strict and there is always that one exception, but overall physically abusing another and going as far as electrically shocking a detainee is inexcusable.

In addition, the “Human Rights Watch said that although Bahrain had set up three government bodies to end torture in detention facilities, the authorities had “…failed to fulfill their mandate.” The group confirmed that the Bahrainian government had not convicted, or even prosecuted, a single security officer of torturing domestic dissidents, despite hundreds of complaints.” ([NYTimes.com](http://nytimes.com)) The term power plays a very unique role in this situation. Actors are powerful because they have the ability to affect others with their rules, guidelines, and processes more than any other individual could ever affect them. They have the power to influence, therefore a hypothesized theory that the King of Bahrain convinced the prison guards the only method to command respect and ensure the prisoners “payed for their crimes” would be to inflict pain. It is clear that Bahrain is abusing its power, and this violation of human rights needs action taken against it to protect the innocent lives at risk. Prisoners are not “innocent” but they are entitled to certain freedoms and codes of conduct. This Middle Eastern nation is discarding proper etiquette in prisons and swapping them for ideals they believe will be more effective.

Additionally, the promises Bahrain has made to several countries assuring that their concerns will promptly be addressed has proven to be false thus far. Nonviolent detainee practices has been pushed aside entirely, and yet nonviolent interaction and communication is a more effective method. The actions Bahrain is carrying out demonstrates the difference between realismand idealism. Ideally it would be nice to have your faith reassured that what King Hamad stated in his discussions would be repaired, reevaluated and restored. Reforming this issue and making it into a nation that the United States as well as others wish it to be, having the prison guards treat the inmates in ideal methods of conduct would be appreciated, but unrealistic. Realistically, Bahrain is a very difference scenario. Regardless of how we would like detainees to be treated the truth is more brutal and horrendous than people like to envision. The difference between the idealism and realism of the situation in Bahrain is what we wish things would be like versus what they are in actuality.

Overall,