



Annual Report of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights

HUMAN RIGHTS

in the Middle East Countries

2025



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“ABOUT GCHR”

WHO WE ARE

The Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation that was founded in April 2011 by human rights defenders (HRDs) in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries. It receives guidance from an Advisory Board composed of regional and international human rights advocates, including academics and lawyers.

WHERE WE WORK

GCHR is based in Lebanon and documents the environment for HRDs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with an emphasis on the Gulf region and neighbouring countries, specifically Bahrain, Kuwait, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. GCHR regularly covers violations in other countries in the region, such as Egypt, Tunisia or Palestine. GCHR includes other MENA countries in consultations and activities based on our theory of change that suggests the human rights situation is more likely to improve in the Gulf countries once other important countries in the region such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria and Iraq have witnessed a peaceful change in terms of the human rights situation.

MISSION

GCHR is an independent, non-profit non-governmental organisation (NGO) that provides support and protection to human rights defenders (HRDs) in order to promote human rights, including but not limited to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

VISION

To have vibrant civic spaces in the Gulf region and neighbouring countries in which human rights are fully respected and HRDs, including journalists and Internet activists, can work free from oppression and fear.

DONORS

GCHR's work in 2025 was funded by the European Union, Swiss Confederation - Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA), Sigrid Rausing Trust, the Norwegian Human Rights Fund, National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Institute of the German Office of Foreign Relations IFA ZIVIK via IFEX, among other donors. We do not accept funds from any governments in the countries in which we work. Thanks to donor partners for their support for this Annual Report. See more at: <https://www.gc4hr.org/our-purpose/>

MEMBERSHIPS

GCHR is a member of IFEX, CIVICUS, FIDH, OMCT SOS Torture Network, the WHRD International Coalition, WHRD-MENA Network, Global Forum for Media Development, the UK Bar Human Rights Committee, the Arab Alliance for Digital Rights (AADR), the EuroMed Rights Network and the Civil society coalition on Information and Democracy. In addition, GCHR and Access Now co-founded the MENA Coalition to Counter Surveillance. GCHR's campaigns, joint actions and news are amplified and supported by these networks, including through the VUKA! Coalition and the CIVICUS Monitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) is to foster a vibrant and safe civic space in which human rights defenders (HRDs) and other civil society actors are free to work for the protection and promotion of human rights. Throughout 2025, GCHR continued to support HRDs, including independent lawyers, journalists, academics and online activists, across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with an emphasis on the Gulf region and neighbouring countries, through its core activities of documentation and research, monitoring and publicising cases of HRDs at risk, capacity building and protection and assistance.

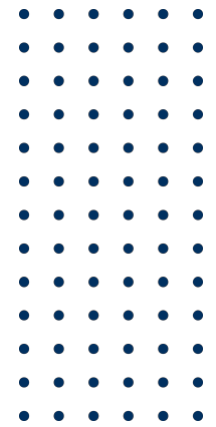
Throughout 2025, GCHR, alongside its local partners and international allies, played a vital role in ensuring that cases that might otherwise not receive the attention they deserve are brought to the fore in predominantly English-speaking media and advocacy circles. GCHR continued its work in coalitions with partner organisations on campaigns for imprisoned HRDs including its co-founder **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** in Bahrain and Advisory Board member **Ahmed Mansoor** in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), as well as women human rights defenders in prison in Iran and Saudi Arabia.

In 2025, GCHR issued 56 appeals and seven urgent actions, joint statements and letters relating to WHRDs and HRDs across the region. GCHR also published 21 reports, either alone or jointly with partners, including reports on human rights in Lebanon, the US AI Action Plan, the protection of journalists, the systemic repression of human rights defenders in Jordan, an overview of human rights in Bahrain, freedom of expression on the internet and anti-cybercrime laws in the MENA region, the situation of women and women's rights defenders in Syria, amendments to Kuwait's nationality law, opportunities and challenges for women human rights defenders from the Middle East, submissions to the UN Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) on Lebanon and Oman, six periodic reports on Yemen and two periodic reports on Iraq.

We also organised and participated in events and carried out other advocacy at sessions of the UN Human Rights Council. GCHR provided advocacy, research and capacity-building grants to CSO partners, and emergency grants to W/HRDs at risk, and worked with UN and EU protection mechanisms, including ProtectDefender.EU and the EU Temporary Relocation Programme.

We marked important UN days such as International Women's Day, World Press Freedom Day, the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day and International Human Rights Day.

Once again, on 04 December 2025, GCHR, working with two dozen partners, organised the online Alternative Human Rights Expo – this year focusing on women human rights defenders.



INTRODUCTION

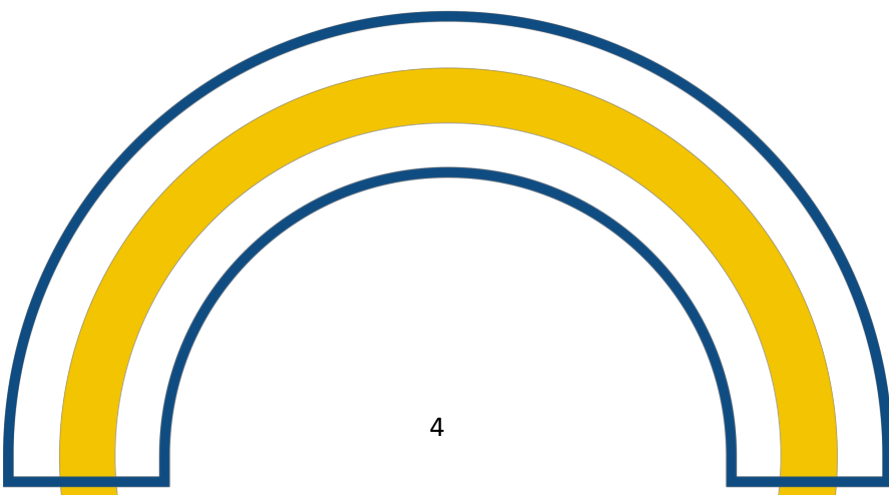


This annual report covers the period between 01 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. It summarises GCHR’s activities advocating on behalf of human rights defenders (HRDs), activists, academics, journalists, protesters and citizens so that they can exercise their human rights peacefully and free from oppression. In addition to documenting our advocacy efforts and activities, the report also covers the ways in which we have helped to strengthen the capacity of HRDs and other civil society actors working to peacefully promote and protect human rights throughout the region and neighbouring countries.

At the outset, GCHR wishes to recognise and pay tribute to its local, regional and international partners, including UN experts, with whom it has continued to enjoy fruitful relationships in our mutual work to amplify and support the work of HRDs and civil society organisations (CSOs) across the Gulf region and neighbouring countries.

Part I of this report summarises GCHR’s thematic and country-specific campaigns, advocacy before international organisations such as the United Nations and legal advocacy. Part II highlights the various thematic and country reports published by GCHR over the past year. Part III summarises the practical support GCHR has provided to HRDs and civil society actors throughout 2025. Part IV provides “snapshots” of the human rights situation in each of the countries we work in across the Gulf region and the report concludes with a regional human rights overview at Part V and recommendations for the coming year at Part VI.

This report is dedicated to all human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), particularly women and members of minority groups across the MENA region who are under severe stress and threats for their work, including those living in countries targeted by war and violence.



PART I: ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

Campaign and Advocacy Events

GCHR, with the support of 27 partners held the [Alternative Human Rights Expo](#) focusing on women human rights defenders on 4 December 2025. The online event called for the freedom of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) from prison in Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia and honoured the memory of women journalists, photographers and poets from Gaza, who will not be forgotten.



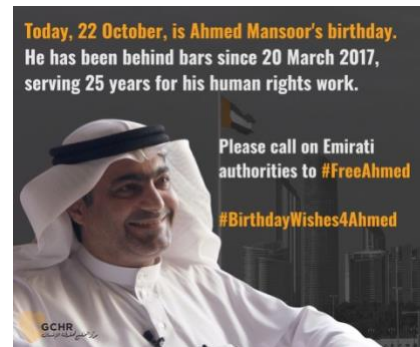
On International Human Rights Day, marked every year on 10 December, GCHR [amplified the #StandAsMyWitness](#) campaign by CIVICUS, which features our co-founder **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja**, and our Board member **Ahmed Mansoor**, among HRDs and WHRDs imprisoned worldwide. GCHR also contributed to the content on the CIVICUS Monitor that is used for the annual [CIVICUS People Power report](#).

As part of the [#SpreadingTheEcho](#) campaign by the WHRD-International Coalition during the [#16Days](#) of activism Against Gender-Based Violence, GCHR raised the cases of imprisoned Saudi WHRDs **Manahel Al-Otaibi**, **Nourah Al-Qahtani** and **Amani Al-Zain**, and **Fatima Al-Arwali** of Yemen, and supported imprisoned WHRDs in Egypt and Iran. The 16 Days of Activism started on 25 November 2025, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and ran until 10 December, International Human Rights Day. During the campaign, working with two dozen partners, we organised the online Alternative Human Rights Expo to help free these women human rights defenders who were mentioned in the #16Days campaign, among other countries, and highlight the plight of stateless women from Kuwait.

On [10 October](#), the [#WorldDayAgainsttheDeathPenalty](#), GCHR [joined ALQST and 34 NGOs in a joint action](#) to express our horror at the alarming surge in executions in Saudi Arabia. As of that point, at least 292 people had been executed in 2025, amid egregious violations of international human rights law.

On 22 October, GCHR and Friends of Ahmed Mansoor [did a social media campaign](#) for Ahmed Mansoor's 56th birthday. He's been behind bars in Abu Dhabi UAE since 20 March 2017, serving a combined 25-year-sentence for his human rights work.

GCHR has been very active on the themes of digital rights and surveillance. GCHR continues its work leading the now 15-member **MENA Coalition to Combat Digital Surveillance**, co-founded with Access Now in 2021. Other members are ARTICLE 19, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Front Line Defenders, Human Rights Watch, Iraqi Network for Social Media (INSM), Jordan Open Source Association (JOSA), Masaar - Technology and Law Community, Red Line for Gulf, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), SMEX, ALQST for Human Rights, Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) and the Middle East Democracy Center. GCHR and the Coalition members advocate for halting the use, sale, and transfer of surveillance technologies especially to authoritarian regimes in the region as well as shedding light on the opaque and secretive surveillance tech industry who has been profiteering from human rights abuses around the world with full impunity.



We are also members of the **MENA Alliance for Digital Rights**, initiated by our digital rights partner SMEX to discuss threats and opportunities and how we can strengthen and develop areas of cooperation and think strategically about digital rights policies in the MENA region. The coalition routinely circulates joint appeals to its members for support, and had a meeting in October 2025 at Bread and Net in Beirut.

During [RightsCon](#) in Taipei in February 2025, GCHR helped organise a session on Cyber security for activists: challenges and best practices. GCHR's Executive Director **Khalid Ibrahim** moderated the session where he was joined by Bahraini WHRD **Maryam Al-Khawaja** and other speakers on cyber security who called for the immediate release of Internet activists including **Ahmed Mansoor** in UAE and **Alaa Abd El-Fattah** in Egypt. Participants also did a solidarity action for Abd El-Fattah, a well-known blogger who has spoken at RightsCon in the past.

In June, we participated in the **OMCT Global Week Against Torture**, speaking at two events on [Breaking the Silence: Torture Against Human Rights Defenders](#), which explored the root causes, long-term impacts, and concrete pathways to justice and accountability for torture committed against HRDs. It brings together activists, civil society actors, and defenders to exchange knowledge, amplify voices, and strategize on stronger protection mechanisms in repressive contexts.

In October 2025 at Bread and Net in Beirut, GCHR organised a session about “online freedom of expression: challenges and hopes”, with speakers from ARTICLE 19, Access Now, among others. Speakers focused on the legal challenges to online freedom of expression and the latest report on cybercrime laws published by GCHR.

To mark the 12th anniversary of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists, GCHR and partners organised an event calling for [“No Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists in the Arab Region.”](#)



UN Advocacy

UPR Submissions & Statements

In 2025 GCHR engaged with the UN including through the Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR) of Oman and Lebanon as well as follow up on Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar, in which national authorities were involved:

Lebanon

In a [joint submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#), GCHR, Maharat Foundation, IFEX and OMCT examined the Government of Lebanon's compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society. Ahead of **Lebanon's UPR Pre-Session** on 27 November and its UPR review in January 2026, GCHR organised an event in Geneva on 19 November to communicate the recommendations from the joint submission to the UPR.



Oman

In a [joint UPR submission](#), the Omani Centre for Human Rights & Democracy (OCHRD) and GCHR examined the Government of Oman's compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society. During the **UPR Pre-Session on Oman on 28 November**, GCHR [presented a statement](#) to make recommendations from [GCHR and OCHRD's joint UPR submission](#).



UPR Follow-Up

Iran

GCHR and CIVICUS made a [joint UPR submission](#) on Iran's compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society. Specifically, we analysed Iran's fulfilment of the rights to freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly and unwarranted restrictions on human rights defenders since its previous UPR examination in November 2019. On 01 July 2025, GCHR delivered a statement at the UPR adoption for Iran, remarking that Iran had "noted" (rejected) all recommendations on adopting international legal instruments, limitations on the death penalty, the release of protesters and the vast majority of recommendations on freedoms of expression, assembly, or association.

Iraq

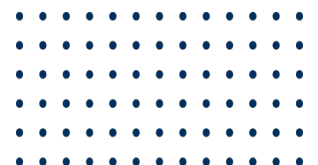
During the 48th UPR on 27 January 2025, Iraq was [reviewed](#). In a [joint submission](#), GCHR and partners reviewed Iraq's compliance with its international human rights obligations to create and maintain a safe and enabling environment for civil society. Specifically, we analysed Iraq's fulfilment of the rights to the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, and its unwarranted restrictions on human rights defenders and civil society since its previous UPR examination in November 2019. The submission was done jointly with CIVICUS, FIDH and Iraqi partners, INSM for Digital Rights, the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR), and Metro Center for Defending Journalists' Rights. On 02 July 2025, GCHR delivered a statement at the UPR adoption for Iraq. GCHR noted that while recommendations on legal instruments and the death penalty were refused, most recommendations on Freedoms for Expression, Association, and Assembly, were accepted. However, GCHR highlighted the fact that laws punishing criticism of the authorities or vague defamation laws were used to silence peaceful dissent.

Kuwait



On 20 February 2025, at the [UPR-Info: UPR Pre-Session on Kuwait](#) GCHR's Geneva Representative made a statement which [advocated](#) for freedom of expression and the newly stateless. GCHR called on Kuwait to reform defamation legislation and grant citizenship to the Bedoon community members who reside in the country. On 29 September, GCHR delivered a statement at the UPR adoption for Kuwait. GCHR noted that Kuwait rejected all recommendations to adopt international legal instruments, end the use of the death penalty, resolve the status of the Bedoon community. It did accept a few recommendations on the Freedoms of Expression, Association and Assembly. GCHR and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) made a [Joint](#)

[Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of Kuwait](#) for the 49th Session of the UPR Working Group.



UN Human Rights Council's 58th session

At the UNHRC's 58th session, GCHR organised an event on Yemen and co-sponsored various events on Syria and how to protect HRDs against new and emerging forms of technology-facilitated rights violations. GCHR's Geneva Representative also made a statement on nationality at the HRC.

Side Events

On 29 February 2025, GCHR organised a well-attended UNHRC side event on Yemen sponsored by the UN Missions of Belgium, Canada, Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands which was attended by 16 member states. This event discusses the "Need for the UN Human Rights Council to Take Action on Yemen". Now approaching 12 years of conflict, and in the absence of any accountability, civilians remain the main victims. Several speakers from Yemen spoke online or in person during the event, including from [Yemen Archive](#), the Yemeni Teachers Network and SAM Organization for Rights and Liberties. A representative of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) also spoke. Watch the video [here](#).



On 07 March, GCHR co-sponsored an event with partners including Access Now and the International Service for Human Rights, which moderated the event, to discuss how to protect Human Rights Defenders against new and emerging forms of technology-facilitated rights violations.



On 17 March 2025, GCHR co-sponsored an event on [Upholding Fundamental Freedoms & Rights: The Role of Syrian #CivilSociety in Enabling Syria's Path to Democracy and the Rule of Law](#). The event was organised with partners including the Syrian Centre for Media and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, and had speakers from DAR Association of Victims of Forced Displacement, Syrians for Truth and Justice and the White Helmets.

On 24 March 2025, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) hosted a side event to address Freedom of Information in Bahrain: the role of WHRDs. The panelists were from BCHR, FIDH, CIHRS and GCHR.

Oral Statements

On 20 March 2025, GCHR's Geneva Representative spoke during the UN HRC58th's session about the new nationality laws in Kuwait and Oman, which will deprive thousands of people of their citizenship, including wives of Kuwaiti citizens.

UN Human Rights Council's 59th session

GCHR was very busy at the 59th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) between 13 June to 08 July 2025.

Side Events

On 20 June 2025, GCHR in co-operation with Amnesty International (AI), the Iraqi Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR) and the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), organised a side event focused on Iraq and entitled, "The fragile human rights situation in Iraq: International mechanisms including the UN system must act now".



GCHR also supported a side event organised by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) [to shed light](#) on the ongoing human rights crisis in Bahrain and the urgent need for meaningful reform, including by sending invitations to relevant member states.

Oral Statements

On 18 June 2025, GCHR made a statement with ALQST for Human Rights at the *Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions*, who delivered a report on the rights of families of victims of unlawful killings.

On 23 June 2025, GCHR delivered a statement at the *Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children*, who delivered a report on the abuses of domestic workers, whom even when legally employed, often suffer extreme abuses by their employers within contexts where the legal framework allows for impunity.

UN Human Rights Council's 60th sessions

At the UNHRC's 60th session held between 08 September to 08 October 2025, GCHR [carried out many activities](#) in Geneva to help free detained human rights defenders and enhance the protection of public freedoms across the MENA Region, with a focus on Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.



Side Events

On 12 September 2025, GCHR in co-operation with ALQST for Human Rights, Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights (ESOHR) and MENA Rights Group (MRG), organised a side event entitled, "Human Rights Concerns in Saudi Arabia on the 20th Anniversary of the National Human Right Commission".

GCHR co-sponsored [a side-event with the Bahrain Center for Human Rights \(BCHR\), in cooperation with other international and regional](#) partners, focused on shrinking civic space, digital repression, and the targeting of activists, women and children.

Oral Statements

GCHR [presented an Oral Statement](#) on the Interactive Dialogue – SG Report on Reprisals. The statement noted ongoing reprisals in the UAE, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, although in Saudi Arabia those reported on had been released, but remain silenced. GCHR also made [two statements on Saudi Arabia](#) with partners including ALQST for Human Rights, notably on the case of child defendants at imminent risk of execution, such as **Abdullah Al-Derazi**, and on the interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on Older Persons (IE) on her visit to Saudi Arabia, which highlighted her lack of access to older detainees at Al-Ha'ir prisons as well as the fact that foreign domestic workers employed under the Kafala system are vulnerable to economic and physical abuse, trafficking and exploitation.

GCHR signed on to the [HRC60: Joint NGO end-of-session statement](#) with other partners including CIVICUS, FIDH and the International Service for Human Rights.

CSO Coalition on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism

Throughout the first half of 2025, GCHR's Geneva Representative participated in meetings with the CSO Coalition on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism, which made a Submission to the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism's call for input on the Human Rights Impacts of Administrative Measures to Counter Terrorism and (Violent) Extremism. The Submission includes information related to the UAE94 and UAE84 cases, HRDs in Saudi Arabia, and **Maryam and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** in Bahrain.

EU Advocacy

Throughout 2025, GCHR has attended meetings with the European External Action Service (EEAS) after the EU human rights dialogues with Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and in advance of the planned human rights dialogue between the EU and the UAE.

On 25 June 2025, five human rights organisations [held a gathering in front of the European Parliament](#) in Brussels in solidarity with detained women/human rights defenders in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, while calling for immediate action by EU and international human rights mechanisms on this issue. NGOs that participated in or supported the solidarity action include GCHR, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Egyptian Human Rights Forum, HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement, and the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS).



PART II: GCHR'S PRACTICAL SUPPORT TO HRDs AND CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Throughout 2025, GCHR continued to support and facilitate the work of HRDs throughout the region, including by providing grants and training to CSOs and HRDs, as well as linking them with UN experts. We also added to our online Emergency Resources Hub and launched a database of HRDs and WHRDs at risk.

A key way that we engage WHRDs and HRDs from the region with UN experts is through GCHR's in-person Regional Consultations with UN Special Rapporteurs, such as the fifth UN Consultation organised in November 2025 in Istanbul with five UN experts and 34 HRDs, 23 (or 68%) of whom were women HRDs, invited from 16 countries.



The consultation served as a critical platform to amplify the voices of defenders on the ground and strengthen engagement with UN human rights mechanisms. Over four days, participants took part in thematic consultations, selected testimonies, world café discussions, bilateral meetings, and capacity-building sessions. Key issues addressed include the long-term imprisonment of human rights defenders, digital surveillance and its chilling effects on civil society, the misuse of counter-terrorism legislation, transnational repression, shrinking civic space, and emerging risks linked to conflict, securitization, and aid collapse. The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Gina Romero, used the opportunity to carry out a Consultation on the Impacts of Surveillance on Civil Society and Chilling Effects to [inform the thematic report of the Special Rapporteur](#), which will be presented to the 62nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in June 2026.

According to the evaluation, it was the most successful Consultation ever, and was perceived as highly relevant, effective, and impactful. The evaluation highlights the added value of participatory dialogue, direct engagement with international mechanisms, and regional solidarity among HRDs. One HRD said, “The consultation was extremely informative and helped me better understand how UN mechanisms work and how we can engage with them more effectively.” Another added, “Direct interaction with UN mandate holders was very valuable. It made international advocacy feel more accessible and realistic.” Another commented, “This consultation created strong connections between participants and strengthened a sense of regional solidarity at a time when civic space continues to shrink.”

In 2025, GCHR organised two Training of Trainers (TOT) Capacity Building Workshops in Tunis in September and Istanbul in February for 31 HRDs and WHRDs from 9 countries, covering documentation, advocacy, well-being and digital security. Many participants expressed their intention to apply these skills through local trainings, reporting, and advocacy initiatives, thereby multiplying the impact of the workshop beyond the immediate participants. The second training's emphasis on practical advocacy tools, real-life examples, and interactive methods significantly contributed to participants' confidence in applying newly acquired knowledge and skills.

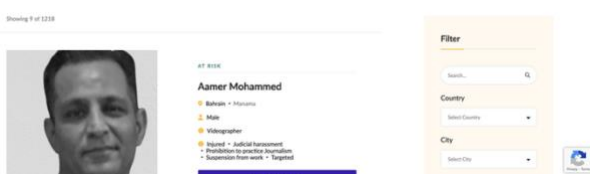
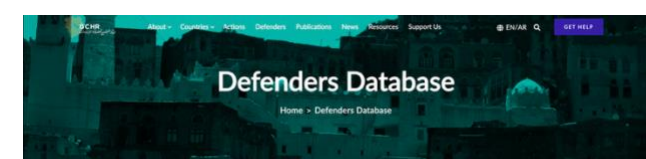


In 2025, significant support was provided to HRDs and civil society actors through a combination of emergency, security, advocacy, and capacity-building grants across the MENA region. This support enabled defenders to relocate from high-risk environments, secure legal representation, strengthen digital and operational safety, and continue their human rights work under safer conditions.

Grants to CSOs included advocacy grants supported international engagement through participation in global human rights forums, policy dialogues, and strategic advocacy initiatives for CSOs from Bahrain, Jordan, Oman and Saudi Arabia. These efforts contributed to increased international awareness, strengthened collaboration with diplomatic and human rights mechanisms, and expanded outreach through advocacy campaigns.



GCHR has published 30 new resources on its [website](#) about grants and fellowships, digital security and surveillance protection, feminist and GBV resources, such as *Contextualising MHPSS: A Feminist, Community-Based Framework for the Middle East*, *UNESCO and IWMF Guide for Psychologists to in the Emergency Care of Journalists*, and the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*.



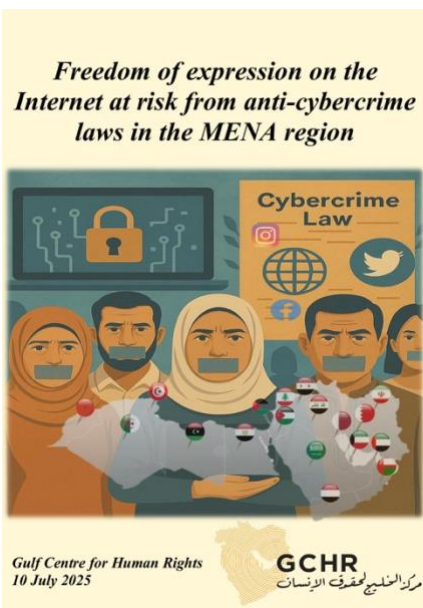
In order to make it easier to carry out advocacy for individual HRDs and WHRDs, GCHR's database has 1200 profiles of HRDs and WHRDs loaded in English and Arabic, online and searchable in the database since we began documenting cases in 2011.

PART III: GCHR's THEMATIC AND COUNTRY REPORTS

In 2025, GCHR published the following reports and joint UPR submissions.

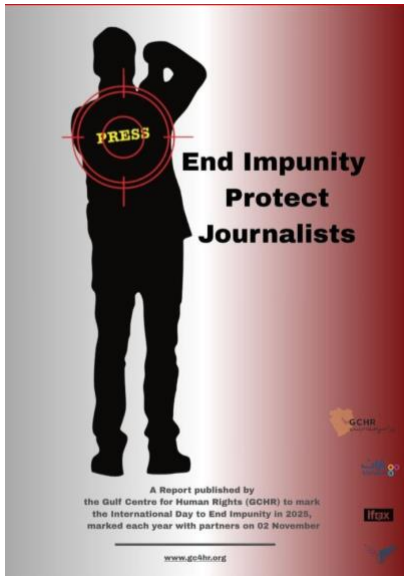
MENA Region

GCHR published a report on [*Opportunities and Challenges for Women Human Rights Defenders from Middle Eastern Countries*](#), based on a survey of MENA WHRDs which reveals that “physical harm and abuses, including being beaten and raped, or threats of such acts of physical abuse or death, either to the women or their family members, were reported by WHRDs.” Furthermore, “An overwhelming majority of WHRDs reported adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety and depression, but few received any medical attention.”



In July, GCHR released GCHR published a report on [**Freedom of expression on the Internet at risk from anti-cybercrime laws in the MENA region**](#). The report states, “In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), many journalists, bloggers and Internet activists are imprisoned, exiled or silenced for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression.” GCHR “has reported on numerous digital rights violations against human rights defenders, including several emblematic cases which document these violations ranging from jailing bloggers to monitoring critical journalists via intrusive technologies, to the systematic criminalisation of digital expression in the name of national security or public order.” It notes, “While Yemen, Libya and Kuwait each illustrate in their own way the effects of inadequate or circumvented legal frameworks on cyberspace, other countries in the region such as Iran, Qatar, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates or Iraq are distinguished by the adoption of more elaborate legislation on cybercrime, which, far from guaranteeing freedom of expression, often institutionalise its repression through vague legal provisions, extensible and incompatible with international standards.”

GCHR also published an [analysis](#) of the United States’ [AI Action Plan](#) to [cut down on regulation](#) of developments and innovations in artificial intelligence (AI). This Plan comes two months after the US President’s tour in the Gulf where AI companies [secured deals](#) with Gulf governments. The call for deregulation comes in service of economic and national interests which sidesteps serious considerations for human rights, both in AI and in the Gulf. Oppressive governments in the MENA region including the Gulf states will be key actors in defining the trajectory for human rights due diligence and protections in AI. GCHR expresses its concern over the shift to de-regulate the AI industry and the emphasis on development, trade and cooperation without commitments to human rights protections.

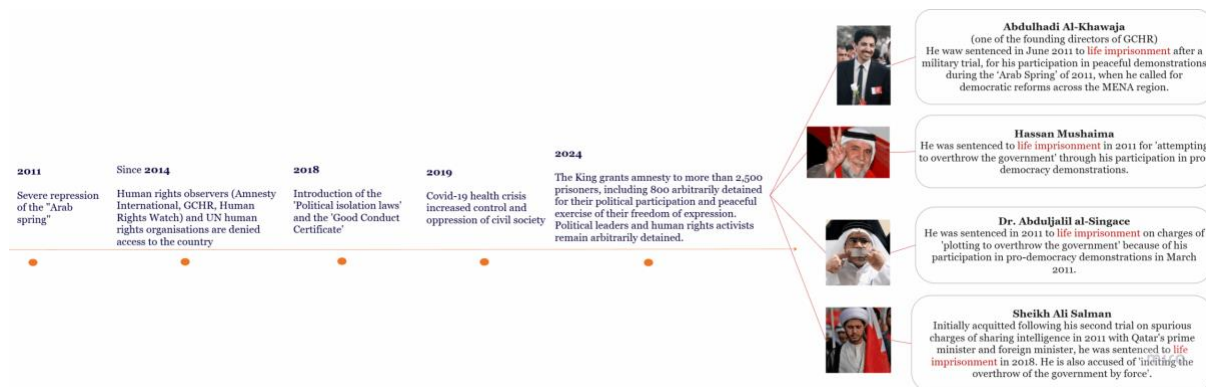


GCHR's report for the International Day to End Impunity entitled [End Impunity, Protect Journalists](#), which features journalists killed across the MENA region since 2023. The report notes, "With the escalation of the siege on Gaza, renewed clashes in Syria, the ongoing conflict in Sudan, and the intensifying repression in Saudi Arabia in 2025, journalists across the MENA region continue to face grave violations, including killings perpetrated by state forces, armed groups, or government authorities, often carried out with complete impunity. The situation in the Gaza Strip has been particularly catastrophic. Since the outbreak of hostilities, Israeli military operations have resulted in an unprecedented number of journalist deaths – many of them deliberately targeted, making the area the most dangerous place in the world for media professionals. Alongside Palestine, countries such as Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Saudi Arabia remain among the most perilous environments for journalists, where reporting the truth can cost

one's life or freedom."

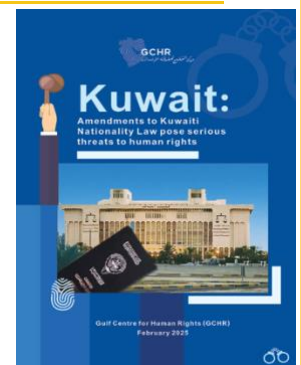
Bahrain

GCHR published an [Overview of human rights violations in Bahrain](#), which covers Bahrain's lack of compliance with the UPR, complicity of trade partners, violations of rights defenders including GCHR's Founding Director **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, and noting that since 2014, the Kingdom has also banned access to its territory for human rights observers including GCHR, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and UN human rights bodies.



Kuwait

GCHR released a report on ["Amendments to Kuwaiti Nationality Law pose serious threats to human rights"](#). GCHR notes, "The changes in the Kuwaiti Nationality Law, so far, have exacerbated the problem of stateless persons (Bedoon) in Kuwait, who number over 92,000, at one of the highest numbers in the world." This report highlights the Nationality Law's main amendments. The report also discusses "the implications on those who were stripped of their nationality, in terms of social and economic impact, access to life-saving healthcare, mobility and ability to resort to legal means."



GCHR issued a report [on the Systematic targeting of members of Bedoon community](#). They have been deprived of their basic human rights for a long time since the country got its independence in 1961. Kuwaiti authorities have been increasingly targeting the Bedoon community with measures that caused them greater distress. The Bedoon community is facing a humanitarian crisis due to an insistent denial by top authorities of their right to citizenship, any proper form of personal identification and travel documents, access to medical care, education and jobs, in addition to civil documents such as birth, marriage and death certificates. GCHR has recently documented the unfair sentencing of prominent Bedoon human rights defender [Mohammed Al-Barghash](#) to three years in prison. Many Bedoon activists have been targeted for posting demands on social media networks to resolve their issues or for writing about the ongoing injustices they face.

Jordan

GCHR published a [report in October](#) on [Jordan's Systemic Repression of Human Rights Defenders](#) which documents how legal, regulatory and informal measures in Jordan restrict the work of HRDs, and identifies the safeguards required to restore an enabling environment. It is based on research of cases documented by GCHR and many human rights partners, as well as analysis of laws such as the Cybercrimes Law. It focuses particularly on restrictions that impact the ability of civil society to enjoy Freedom of Expression, Media Freedom and Access to Information, Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association; Civil Society Organisations and Access to Resources; Digital Surveillance and Privacy; and Administrative and Court Restrictions.



Lebanon

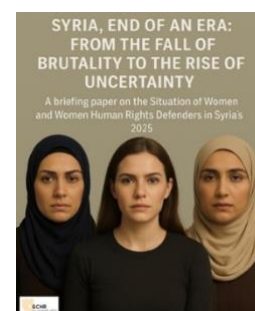
The report [Constant Crisis: Human Rights in Lebanon in 2025](#), was published in December 2025 by GCHR in partnership with Maharat and IFEX, through a project on freedom of expression. Based on in-country interviews and desk research, it analyses threats to freedom of expression, protection gaps, and accountability failures, and offers recommendations ahead of Lebanon's 2026 UPR and parliamentary elections.

Oman

GCHR [published an update](#) on the Omani Citizenship Law issued in February 2025, which abolished the old citizenship law issued in 2014. The new law contains several arbitrary articles that deprive citizens, residents and women in general from enjoying their civil and human rights.

Syria

In a briefing paper written on [the Situation of Women and Women Human Rights Defenders in Syria's 2025](#), GCHR "aims to provide insight into the evolving political landscape of Syria. It seeks also to highlight the significant developments witnessed in the wake of the fall of the Assad government, capturing the complex dynamics of change, uncertainty, and resilience that define the nation's current state and their main effects on women."



PART IV: COUNTRY SNAPSHOTS

BAHRAIN

In 2025, GCHR published 2 appeals on Bahrain.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In November 2025, GCHR [expressed grave concern](#) over the well-being of prisoners who have been hunger-striking in Bahrain's Jaw prison. While welcoming the news that prominent human rights defender [Abdulahadi Al-Khawaja](#), a co-founder of GCHR and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), suspended his hunger strike after two days, GCHR calls for his immediate release.

In February 2025, GCHR submitted [an urgent appeal](#) to the King of Bahrain to release EU nationals Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and **Mohammed Habib Al-Muqdad**.



IRAN

In 2025, GCHR published 3 appeals on Iran.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In December 2025, GCHR [strongly condemned](#) the violent arrest of Iranian human rights defender and 2023 Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Narges Mohammadi**, who was detained on 12 December 2025 by plainclothes security forces in the city of Mashhad, according to eyewitnesses. Mohammadi has already spent more than 10 years of her life in prison due to her peaceful human rights work, including her advocacy against the death penalty, torture, and the systemic repression of women in Iran. She was [then sentenced](#) to seven years and six months in prison, following a summary trial before the Mashhad Revolutionary Court on 07 February 2026.



In August 2025, GCHR [expressed its alarm](#) at reports that woman human rights defender **Sharifeh Mohammadi** has had her death sentence upheld by Iran's Supreme Court. This comes during a recent broader pattern of intensified repression against human rights defenders and activists.



In July 2025, GCHR [reiterated in its statement](#) to the UN Human Rights Council, the concerns about the escalating risks faced by human rights defenders and journalists in Iran.

IRAQ

In 2025, GCHR published 2 periodic reports on Iraq and one on Iraqi Kurdistan.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GCHR has documented the human rights situation in Iraq during the past five years since the start of the popular movement in October 2019, including by publishing 36 periodic reports detailing the grave violations taking place in the country. They can be viewed [here](#).

The [36th periodic report](#) published in October 2025 addresses various types of violations, including the gross human rights violations witnessed in Iraq over the previous five months, including numerous killings of professionals and journalists, in addition to torture, arrests,



violations of media freedom and violence against peaceful demonstrators. It also covers violence ahead of the elections held on 11 November 2025. On 28 July 2025, security forces found the body of sports photojournalist **Wissam Al-Ghanimi** in a remote area of Al-Qadisiyah Governorate, two days after his disappearance. On 07 October 2025, former journalist and civil servant **Hamsa Hasim Mohsen Al-Hasnawi**, 30, was assassinated in front of her home in Kut, after receiving threats.

The [35th periodic report](#) covers various types of violations, including gross human rights violations that occurred in Iraq during five months until May 2025, such as numerous killings of bloggers, professionals and journalists, as well as torture, arrests, media freedom violations, and violence against demonstrators. In addition, protests were banned during the Arab Summit held in Baghdad on 17 May 2025.

The local government in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq continues to commit serious violations of the civil and human rights of citizens, including civil society activists, journalists, and protesters. GCHR documented these violations, which occurred over the past year, in a [periodic report](#) published in March 2025 and called on local authorities to work diligently to respect public freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of the press.

JORDAN

In 2025, GCHR published 2 appeals on Jordan.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In May 2025, GCHR was among two dozen CSOs who published a joint statement to protest the blocking of news websites in Jordan [following an order](#) by the Jordanian Media Commission for ISPs to block at least 12 news websites, most of which are independent media outlets.

In January 2025, GCHR reported that well-known writer and journalist **Ahmed Hassan Al-Zoubi** has been [released from prison](#) in Jordan.



KUWAIT

In 2025, GCHR published 11 appeals on Kuwait.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



In January 2025, GCHR reported that the Kuwaiti blogger, **Salman Al-Khalidi**, had been [extradited](#) from Iraq to Kuwait. On 11 January 2026, the Kuwaiti Criminal Court [sentenced him](#) to 15 years' imprisonment with hard labour, followed by deportation, after convicting him on charges including using his X account to deliberately challenge the authority of the Emir, insulting the head of the state, and committing a hostile act against the sister nation of Saudi Arabia.

In February 2025, GCHR expressed its concerns about [amendments to the Kuwaiti Nationality Law](#) which pose serious threats to human rights.

In June 2025, GCHR reported on escalating trend of the authorities' [revoking the citizenship](#) of thousands of Kuwaiti citizens and their families, the [illegal deportation of blogger Mesaed Al-Musaileem](#) from Malaysia to Kuwait, the [imprisonment of the prominent Bedoon rights defender Mohammed Al-Barghash](#) (who was later [sentenced to three years in prison](#) in July 2025) and the [unfair prison sentences](#) handed down to former parliamentarians.

GCHR has continued to speak out against the [systematic targeting of members of the Bedoon community](#) and the [continuous targeting](#) of former members of the Kuwaiti National Assembly.

LEBANON

In 2025, GCHR published 2 appeals on Lebanon.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In February 2025, GCHR issued an [urgent appeal](#) to end the enforced disappearance of poet **Abdulrahman Yusuf Al-Qaradawi** and calling for his release.



In May 2025, GCHR and the Omani Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (OCHRD) [denounced the ban](#) on Omani human rights defender **Nabhan Al-Hanshi**, President of OCHRD, from entering Lebanon.

OMAN

In 2025, GCHR published 11 appeals on Oman.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In February 2025, GCHR [reported on](#) the ratification of a [new citizenship law](#) that allows the authorities to use citizenship as a weapon to silence opponents and restrict opinions, in addition to its harshness against foreign women who marry Omani men. The law follows in the footsteps of [Kuwait](#), which has revoked the citizenship of thousands of citizens, most of them women.

In May 2025, GCHR [condemned the shameful prison sentence](#) upheld for Internet activist and religious preacher **Talal bin Ahmed Al-Salmari**.



In July 2025, GCHR [reported](#) that the prominent human rights lawyer **Awad Bin Ali Al-Sawafi** faces ongoing judicial harassment in Oman that violates his civil rights solely due to his peaceful and legitimate human rights activities. On 30 June 2025, the Court of Appeal in Muscat upheld the initial ruling, and rejected Al-Sawafi's appeal against the decision to dismiss him from his position as a legal affairs researcher at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, on security grounds. In December 2025, he was subjected to [yet another unjust court ruling](#).



In October 2025, GCHR [reported](#) on the decision of the Ministry of Information in Oman to issue the Executive Regulation for the Media Law pursuant to Ministerial Resolution No. (65) of 2025. The previous [Media Law](#) was issued on 10 November 2024, pursuant to Royal Decree No. (58) of 2024.

In December 2025, GCHR [reported](#) that human rights defender **Talib Al-Saedi** and other innocent citizens are facing an unfair trial in Oman simply for peacefully expressing their personal opinions about the [tragedy in Al-Amarat district](#), which resulted in the deaths of six members of one family.



QATAR

In 2025, GCHR published 3 appeals on Qatar.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In January 2025, GCHR noted that human rights lawyer **Rashid Al-Marri** had been [released](#), while local sources reported that security forces arrested a group of 90 juveniles and held them incommunicado for several days.



In April 2025, [GCHR reported](#) that two the Criminal Court sentenced internet activist **Umm Nasser** to three years in prison and a fine of 50,000 Qatari Riyals.

She was convicted of the charges of allegedly spreading false rumours, managing a social media account to spread such rumours, and disrespecting the Qatari judiciary. Multiple reports received by GCHR indicated that the defence team failed to fulfil its duties due to pressure from the authorities. The verdict was appealed.

Moreover, internet activist **Ahmed Abdullah Al-Saad Al-Kuwari** announced a hunger strike in his cell located in the seventh sector of the Central Prison, starting on 28 March 2025, in protest against the arbitrary prison sentence issued against him.



SAUDI ARABIA

In 2025, GCHR published 14 appeals on Saudi Arabia.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

In January and February, GCHR shared the [positive news of the release](#) of Dr. **Mohammed Fahad Al-Qahtani**, **Issa Al-Nukhaifi**, **Dr. Malik Al-Ahmad**, **Mohammed Al-Khudairi** and **Mohammed Al-Habdan** and [woman human rights defender Salma Al-Shehab](#). The rest of the year was less positive as, although [some additional activists and HRDs were released](#), others [continued to languish in prison](#).

GCHR has continued to raise its concerns about threats to Saudi activists and human rights defenders in the country or abroad, such as the risks facing human rights defender **Abdulrahman Al-Khalidi** of [deportation](#) from Bulgaria to Saudi Arabia.



GCHR also worked with partners to protest the extreme sentences of some HRDs and WHRDs, such as **Nourah bint Saeed Al-Qahtani**, a WHRD serving an unjust 35-year prison sentence, for whom GCHR and nine other CSOs issued a joint appeal after she was placed in solitary confinement. GCHR and 12 partners protested the continuing arbitrary detention of HRD **Mohammed Al-Bajadi**, who was held in prison two years after his sentence expired, before being [sentenced on 27 October 2025](#) to an additional 25 years in prison.



GCHR also worked with partners to highlight the high rate of execution in Saudi Arabia, including the [execution](#) of journalist and blogger **Turki Al-Jasser** after 7 years of imprisonment, and the [execution of Jalal Labbad](#) for participating in a peaceful protest when he was a minor.

Moreover, [prominent religious scholars and clerics remain in detention](#) and subjected to endless trials since 2017. GCHR continued to raise the case of the [10 Egyptian Nubian detainees](#) whose sentences were reduced.



SYRIA

In 2025, GCHR published 3 appeals on Syria.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GCHR started 2025 by noting its relief at the end of the dictatorial era in Syria and its hopes for a new era of respect for human rights for all citizens without exception. However, it also [noted its concerns about human rights violations and sectarian violence](#) committed in the country, including the murder of many civilians and attacks on media. Notably, GCHR reported on the credible information it had received on violence along the Syrian coast in March 2025 that led to the summary execution of entire families. According to reports, the systematic killings were carried out in the Governorates of Tartous, Latakia and Hama by unidentified armed groups, individuals claiming to be part of the security forces of the new Syrian government, and elements affiliated with and supported by the previous government. The killings were based on identity, and victims were asked about their religious affiliation before decisions were made to kill or spare them.

In May 2025, GCHR expressed its concerns about the [death threats received by WHRD Hiba Al-Hajji](#) for posting on social media about disappeared women.



In November 2025, artist **Raneem Ma'touq**, daughter of prominent Syrian human rights lawyer **Khalil Ma'touq**, [announced her father's death](#) on [her Facebook page](#): "I, his daughter, on behalf of my mother and brother, officially announce the death of Khalil Ma'touq – a man who mastered laughter in all circumstances, perhaps even in his final moments before his execution."

TUNISIA

In 2025, GCHR published 4 appeals on Tunisia.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GCHR expressed its concerns about the [challenges facing Tunisian democracy](#). Most representatives of opposition political parties and civil society organisations have disappeared from the scene after being threatened with imprisonment, forcing them to remain silent. Indeed, some of their leaders have been imprisoned by authoritarian decisions rather than fair sentences, after facing vague, fabricated, and unclear charges.



Notably, GCHR reported on the fact that journalists and human rights defenders were amongst [40 defendants convicted](#) for alleged conspiracy against state security.

GCHR also expressed [concerns about the independence of the Tunisian judiciary](#) due to an increase in recent years of the judicial harassment of civil society and political opposition activists, including journalists and bloggers.

[HRDs, lawyers, activists and journalists also remained at risk in Tunisia](#) throughout 2025, with many being targeted under [Decree-Law No. 54 on Combating Cybercrime](#) (adopted in 2022), which has been applied to impose harsh prison sentences and exorbitant fines. There were several prominent politically-motivated cases such as the case against the Instalingo Company which involved security personnel, bloggers, journalists, businesspeople and politicians who were charged with “conspiring against state security, attempting to change the structure of the state, and insulting the President of the Republic” under the Tunisian Penal Code. On 05 February 2025, a Tunis court issued severe sentences ranging from five to 54 years in prison for 41 defendants, some of whom managed to leave the country.

Some good news – journalist [Sonia Dahmani](#) was released on 27 November 2025 after a year and a half in prison, after being sentenced to four years and two months on different charges, and detained at the Manouba Women’s Prison, under harsh and humiliating conditions. She was featured during the [Alternative Human Rights Expo 4](#).



UAE

In 2025, GCHR published 6 appeals on the UAE.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

GCHR expressed its deep concerns in February 2025 about the enforced disappearance and the lack of information surrounding the due process, whereabouts, and well-being of Egyptian-Turkish poet and writer [Abdulrahman Yusuf Al-Qaradawi](#), following his extradition from Lebanon to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on 08 January 2025. Since that date, his family and legal representatives have been unable to contact him, and no official statement has been issued regarding his detention status or legal situation.

In March 2025, the Supreme Court [upheld the sentences of those convicted the UAE84 case](#), including 15 years in prison for GCHR's Board member **Ahmed Mansoor** and academic **Nasser Bin Ghaith**, in addition to defendants from a previous case – the UAE94 case - who were tried again for essentially the same charges. GCHR noted that the [authorities continue their repression of civil and human rights](#) and the targeting of residents, migrant workers and refugees.



GCHR [called for the release of Dr Mohammed Al-Roken and his two sons](#), and [condemned the sentencing of 24 people to life in prison](#) in the malicious UAE84 case in July 2025.

In November 2025, GCHR [mourned the death of prisoner of conscience Ali Al-Khaja](#).



YEMEN

In 2025, GCHR published 6 period reports on Yemen. It also issued 2 further appeals.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The periodic reports documented a consistent and alarming pattern of arbitrary arrest, enforced disappearance, torture, and severe restrictions on freedom of expression targeting journalists, media professionals, human rights defenders, civil society workers, and UN staff. Violations are attributed to multiple actors, most prominently the Houthi de facto authorities in Sana'a, but also the internationally recognised government and affiliated forces, the Southern Transitional Council, and other armed groups.

In its [Periodic Report on Serious Human Rights Violations in Yemen](#) published in January 2025, GCHR documented arbitrary arrests of United Nations employees, as well as ongoing violations of the civil and human rights of citizens, including journalists. GCHR is concerned about reports that journalist **Mohammed Qaid Al-Maqri** was executed in December 2024 by the so-called Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and that an educator, **Mohammed Khammash**, died in prison in October 2024.

In a [periodic report published](#) in April, GCHR documented the continued arbitrary detention of UN staff members and others, as well as ongoing violations of the civil and human rights of journalists, one of whom was sentenced to death. GCHR's [Periodic Report on Serious Human Rights Violations](#) published in June 2025 documented the continued targeting of journalists, media professionals, and other activists, the application of fabricated charges against them, and the imposition of severe restrictions on freedom of expression and press freedom. GCHR's [Periodic Report on Serious Human Rights Violations](#) published in August 2025 documented continued arbitrary detention of a number of innocent journalists, media professionals, and UN and civil society staff in Yemen.

GCHR's [periodic report on Yemen](#) in September documented the disappearances and arrests of a poet, journalists, media professionals, and other activists, and the imposition of severe restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of the press. On 18 September 2025, **Iftihan Al-Mashhari**, the director of the Cleaning and Improvement Fund in Taiz Governorate, was assassinated in Taiz, leading to huge protests demanding that the perpetrators be arrested and brought to trial; and an end to the series of assassinations, the state of security chaos, and impunity. GCHR's [periodic report](#) on Yemen, published in December 2025, documented the continued arbitrary detention of 69 UN staff, a prominent human rights lawyer and journalist.

There was some good news. On 25 October 2025, actress and model **Intisar Abdulrahman Al-Hammadi** was released after serving most of her five-year prison sentence - based on fabricated charges. The appeals included a joint statement by eight organisations, including GCHR and Human Rights Watch, condemning a decision by the Yemeni Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour to ban all civil society actors from engaging with [Mwatana for Human Rights](#) — one of Yemen's leading independent human rights organisations — on the basis that it is an "unauthorised" body with alleged ties to the Houthis. Furthermore, GCHR and over 40 organisations marked [World Press Freedom Day](#) by expressing their deep concerns about Yemen's status as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists.

PART V: REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OVERVIEW

Whilst 2025 brought cautious hope to the region with the fall of the Al-Assad government opening the possibility of a new chapter for the Syrian people, the year was quickly overshadowed by alarming reports of sectarian violence and summary executions along the Syrian coast, a stark reminder that political transition does not automatically bring protection for human rights. It is also deeply concerning to note the continued sportswashing of serious violations in countries such as Saudi Arabia, where executions reached at least 356 in 2025 alone, and where prominent HRDs and journalists continued to be imprisoned, tried and in some cases executed.

Similarly to previous years, arbitrary arrest and detention remain one of the most pervasive forms of repression used against peaceful HRDs across the MENA region, and HRDs and other civil society actors continue to face torture and ill-treatment, particularly in places of detention, with impunity. This is starkly illustrated in Yemen, where a consistent pattern of enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture was documented across all parties to the conflict, including the detention of 69 UN staff members by the Houthi authorities; and in Bahrain, where prisoners of conscience including GCHR co-founder **Abdulahdi Al-Khawaja** continue to be held after years of imprisonment.

2025 has continued to evidence a deeply worrying crackdown on women's rights, with the re-arrest and sentencing of Nobel Peace Prize laureate **Narges Mohammadi** in Iran in December 2025 serving as a powerful symbol of the ongoing and intensifying repression of women human rights defenders across the region. From Saudi Arabia, where WHRDs such as **Nourah Al-Qahtani** and **Manahel Al-Otaibi** remain imprisoned, to Kuwait, where amendments to the Nationality Law have had a disproportionate impact on women, to Oman, where the new citizenship law further entrenches discrimination against foreign women who marry Omani citizens, there is no sign of this pattern abating.

Finally, the systematic silencing of men and women HRDs, journalists, internet activists, peaceful protesters and other civil society actors through arbitrary arrests and detentions, judicial harassment, enforced disappearance, attacks, threats and assassinations, has once again been a recurring theme across the region. Particularly troubling is the increasing weaponisation of the judiciary and of counter-terrorism and cybercrime legislation to criminalise peaceful expression, as documented across Yemen, Jordan, Tunisia, Qatar and the UAE, and the shrinking of civic space through bans on civil society organisations, as seen in Yemen with the government's decision to prohibit engagement with Mwatana for Human Rights.

PART VI: RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of these patterns of oppression across the region, GCHR recommends that:

- 1** Governments across the MENA region repeal vague and punitive legislation that exerts a chilling effect on or even criminalises peaceful human rights work, freedom of expression and freedom of association;
- 2** Governments across the MENA region enact legislation on human rights, freedom of expression and assembly and information technology in line with international human rights norms;
- 3** Governments across the MENA region repeal archaic and oppressive laws limiting women's freedom and enact progressive, rights-protecting legislation fit for the modern era;
- 4** Authorities across the region tackle impunity by enabling thorough, transparent and independent investigations into the perpetration of attacks, assassinations, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture and ill-treatment against HRDs, civil society activists, journalists, lawyers and academics;
- 5** The international community cease to embolden the region's governments in committing human rights violations with impunity by pandering to the efforts of oppressive countries to sanitise their image on the world stage.



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