



Committee to Protect Journalists

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April 27, 2017

HM Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa

Office of HM the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace
Kingdom of Bahrain

Via Fax: +973 1766 4587

Your Majesty,

We write today to express our collective concern about Bahrain's seeming attempt to silence independent reporting within the country.

The government has over the past year refused to grant accreditation to several of its own citizens who report for foreign and independent media, including those working for The Associated Press, Agence France-Presse, France 24, and Monte Carlo Doualiya. It has on multiple occasions not granted media visas to foreign journalists seeking entry. One of the Bahraini journalists refused a routine accreditation renewal, Nazeeha Saeed, now faces prosecution for continuing to work.

As recently as last month, Mohammed Al-Shaikh, who worked as a photographer for Agence France-Presse until Bahraini authorities refused to renew his accreditation last year, was arrested upon his return from a trip overseas and held for more than 24 hours over his work for AFP.

For several days in January, the government of Bahrain banned *Al-Wasat* newspaper from publishing online. In rescinding that order, the government warned all media outlets to avoid "posting anything that incites divisions or discord within the community, undermines national unity or disturbs the peace."

That wording is so broad that it could be used to justify targeting almost any legitimate newsgathering that authorities do not like. We strongly call on the government to reverse these needless policies.

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330 7th Avenue, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10001 USA
PHONE: +1 (212) 465-1004
FAX: +1 (212) 465-9568
info@cpj.org

www.cpj.org



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These recent actions have had a chilling effect on the media's ability to cover Bahrain at a time when the country faces a growing set of challenges. The apparently coordinated action against journalists working for international news agencies suggests that Bahrain—which prides itself as being a business friendly, reform-minded beacon of openness and tolerance—aims to block independent news and images from reaching the wider world.

We collectively call on you to instruct your government to allow journalists to freely operate in Bahrain and to give foreign media organizations equal access to the country. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the matter further.

Sincerely,

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)

Agence France-Presse (AFP)

The Associated Press (AP)

France 24

International Press Institute (IPI)

Monte Carlo Doualiya

Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

CC:

H.E. Ambassador Shaikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Khalifa

Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain

3502 International Dr. NW,

Washington DC 20008

USA

Fax: 1 202 362 2192

Email: ambsecretary@bahrainembassy.org