



# BAHRAIN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

*Defending and promoting human rights in Bahrain*

**Mr. David Kaye**

**1 November 2016**

Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection  
of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10  
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**Subject: Submission on freedom of expression and the telecommunications and Internet access sector in Bahrain**

Mr. Kaye,

In response to the call for submissions from NGOs and other stakeholders, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) respectfully submits the **Questionnaire for States**, as advertised on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In this questionnaire, BCHR has documented freedom of expression violations in the Telecommunications and Internet Access Sector in the **Kingdom of Bahrain**.

BCHR is a non-profit, non-governmental organization, whose objective is to promote freedoms and basic rights (civil, political, economic) in Bahrain, combat racial, gender and religious discrimination, engage in local and international advocacy, and enhance the skills of human rights defenders through human rights education or training.

Through this Questionnaire, BCHR shares information regarding trends by the Bahraini government to directly and indirectly control the flow of information in the Kingdom. A thorough analysis of the legal scheme reveals that the activity of Internet Service Providers (ISP) is subject to strict scrutiny. Not only are ISPs bound to follow governmental orders, but they are also obliged to share information concerning their customers' data. Altogether, these governmental requests affect the ISPs' ability to respect freedom of expression and the privacy of their customers. On a larger scale, the Bahraini government also directly restricts access to websites, the Internet and telecommunications networks without disclosing any justification for

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its actions. This lack of transparency, paired with the absence of fair remedies, is a shared concern among social media activists in Bahrain.

For that matter, BCHR wishes to submit the present Questionnaire for States to shed light on the multiple restrictions to access to information online and to the exercise of freedom of expression on the web in Bahrain.

In support of this letter, please find enclosed the following documents:

1. BCHR's Questionnaire for States 2016
2. BCHR's Report "Digital Rights Derailed in Bahrain"
3. Resolution No. (12) of 2016 Promulgating the Internet Safety Regulation
4. Resolution No. (8) of the year 2009 Promulgating a Regulation requiring Licensees to implement Lawful Access
5. The Telecommunications Law of the Kingdom of Bahrain

Respectfully Submitted,

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights

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