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Committee to Defend And Assist Bahrainis Abroad Being Formed

Habib Toumi
Gulf News
October 4, 2005

A Bahraini human rights society is setting up a committee to defend and assist Bahrainis detained in prisons abroad, a senior activist has said. "The Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society will provide through the committee the legal and rights assistance that the detainees need. The move is part of the society's role to consolidate the citizens' political, economic and social rights both in Bahrain and abroad," the society's public relations head, Ahdeya Ahmad, yesterday told Gulf News.

The official said that she was not aware of the number of Bahrainis detained in foreign prisons, but added that the society was working on gathering the data.

The human rights watchdog said that it was seeking information from the ministry of interior, the ministry of justice and the ministry of foreign affairs about the number of Bahraini detainees and inmates in prisons outside Bahrain.

The society will use the information to communicate with the detainees' families and monitor their cases.

"We will join hands with the human rights watchdogs in the countries where Bahrainis are being held in order to provide the necessary assistance and make sure that all their legal rights are respected," Ahdeya said.

"We know that according to the 2001 figures, there are 10,654 Bahraini men and women living abroad, and these include 8,012 living in the GCC states," she said. Six Bahrainis have been held without trial at Guantanamo Bay since 2001.

One of the detainees, Juma Al Dossari, according to a report quoting three Britons freed from the US naval base in Cuba, was repeatedly beaten by soldiers who slammed his face into the floor and broke his nose.

The Bahraini detainees' lawyer last week said that he was seeking information from the US authorities about their physical condition following speculation that some of them could be taking part in a large hunger strike to ask for better conditions and a trial date.

Society's regional and international relations head Faisal Fouladh yesterday said in a press statement that they would this week meet the US ambassador to Bahrain, William Monroe, to discuss a visit by a delegation from the society to the six Bahraini prisoners to monitor their condition and help in the repatriation process.