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# Bahrain: Introductory country profile

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## Summary

Unless stated, sources for this paper were accessed in November 2022 and September 2023

The UK has strong diplomatic, military, and economic ties with Bahrain. In 2023, it plans to negotiate a trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council, whose six members include the country. However, Bahrain's human rights record has been of significant concern to the UK Government, and Bahrain was, until 2023, one of the UK's 31 human rights priority countries.

This briefing introduces Bahrain's politics, human rights, trade, and international relations. It also signposts further reading. Please visit the Library's [Middle East pages](#) for further analysis on the region's politics.

## Bahrain's Gulf neighbours



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### Headline statistics

- **2022 population:** 1.5 million (UK: 67.0 million).
- **2022 Gross domestic product (GDP):** US\$44.4 billion (UK: US\$3.1 trillion).
- **2022 GDP per capita** (GDP divided by population): US\$30,200 (UK: US\$45,900).
- **2022 GDP growth:** 3.0% (UK: 4.0%). **2023:** 3.8% (UK: -0.3%).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Data from [World Bank](#) and International Monetary Fund, [World economic outlook](#), April 2023, pp9, 147. All sources accessed November 2022 and 1 September 2023 unless stated.

# 1

## Economy

Bahrain is a high-income economy, heavily reliant on migrant labour.

It operates a sponsorship system of labour ([the “kafala” system](#)) whereby migrants must seek permission to change jobs and leave the country (see below, page 7).

While oil is important to its economy, constituting 18% of its GDP, the service sector, particularly financial services, now accounts for the majority (58%) of economic output. Manufacturing, driven by the production of aluminium and petrochemicals, forms 14% of its economy (data for 2020).

Non-oil sectors were worst hit during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic, seeing a contraction of 6.2%, compared to 0.1% in the oil sector.<sup>2</sup>

Oil and gas are major sources of government revenue, given the absence of personal income taxes. This means changes in oil prices have a significant impact on the Government’s programmes and revenues. Falls in oil prices since 2014 led the Bahraini Government in 2019 to introduce a value-added tax on most goods to strengthen revenue.<sup>3</sup>

As a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) (formed of Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)), Bahrain applies low external tariffs with its neighbours and is working towards a common market. This is still in progress. It will provide for freedom of movement, residence and access to social services for GCC citizens.

The GCC has also entered negotiations for free trade agreements with the EU, India, Japan, and the UK (see page 8, below, for the UK).<sup>4</sup>

### Bahrain’s Economic vision 2030

Launched in 2008, Bahrain’s [Economic vision 2030](#) sets out the Government’s plan to strengthen the Kingdom’s private sector, competitiveness, and to increase “fairness” under the law and in access to services.

Plans include supporting gender equality, reducing reliance on oil, and to invest oil revenues in future growth rather than subsidising current spending.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> World Trade Organization (WTO), [Trade policy review: Kingdom of Bahrain, full report](#), November 2021, paras 1.6-1.7

<sup>3</sup> Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, [VAT hike in Bahrain points to fiscal challenges, unattractive choices government faced](#), December 2021, pp1, 7

<sup>4</sup> WTO, [Trade policy review: Kingdom of Bahrain, full report](#), November 2021, section 2.3.2.1

<sup>5</sup> Government of Bahrain, [Bahrain Economic Vision 2030](#)

## 2

## Leadership and politics

From 1975 to 2002 the Kingdom was an absolute monarchy. In 2002, a constitutional monarchy and two-chamber parliament were established.

### Monarch and ministers

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (born 1950) has been in power since 1999, succeeding his father. The King is the supreme commander of the armed forces and appoints the Prime Minister and Cabinet (though the legislature approves the Cabinet). The King's eldest son, Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, is Prime Minister.

### National Assembly and the 2022 elections

The National Assembly consists of an upper house: The 40-member Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council), appointed by the King, and a lower house: The 40-member Majlis al-Nuwab (Council of Representatives), which is elected. The upper house can veto the lower. Only the Cabinet can initiate laws.

Members are appointed for four-year terms. The most recent election was in November 2022. Both the 2018 and 2022 contests have seen high turnovers: Only three of the 24 outgoing deputies who stood for re-election were returned in 2018. Only 11 of 40 current members have been elected before.<sup>6</sup>

Analysts suggest the low rate of return in 2018 was related to the Kingdom's austerity programme (involving, for example, a freeze on public sector pay), implemented because of lower oil and gas revenues.<sup>7</sup>

In 2018, six women were elected to the Majlis al-Nuwab and eight were appointed to the Majlis al-Shura.<sup>8</sup> In the 2022 elections, eight were elected.<sup>9</sup>

### Political participation

Tensions have long been present between Bahrain's majority Shia Muslim population and Sunni Muslim minority, which includes the monarchy.

Some political societies are allowed, but Al-Wefaq, a Shia Muslim political group which had taken nearly half of the seats in the 2006 and 2010 polls, was outlawed in 2016 and did not take part in subsequent elections.<sup>10</sup> The

<sup>6</sup> [Election results bring about significant shift](#), Bahrain News Agency, 20 November 2022

<sup>7</sup> Europa World Plus, [Bahrain: Constitution and contemporary political history](#). Accessible via a Commons Library log-in

<sup>8</sup> Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, [Bahraini women make gains amid tightening political freedom](#), 25 July 2019

<sup>9</sup> [Election results bring about significant shift](#), Bahrain News Agency, 20 November 2022

<sup>10</sup> Europa World Plus, [Bahrain: Constitution and contemporary political history; Results arrive in Bahrain poll held without opposition](#), Al-Monitor, 13 November 2022

Shia cleric described as the “spiritual inspiration” for Al-Wefaq, Sheikh Isa Qassim, was stripped of his citizenship in 2016. He is now in Iran.<sup>11</sup>

UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy (BIRD) and members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf have [highlighted continuing restrictions against opposition groups](#).<sup>12</sup> Amnesty International has also been critical of restrictions on freedom of speech, association and assembly in the run-up to the 2022 polls.<sup>13</sup>

The UK Government says they were well-organised, monitored by local NGOs and formed an “important democratic element” of Bahrain’s politics.<sup>14</sup>

Around 75% of the population cannot vote, as non-citizens make up most of the population: The electorate was 365,000 in 2018 and 345,000 in 2022.<sup>15</sup>

### 3

## Political rights

### The 2011 protests and their legacy

Bahrain is the only Gulf state to have a Shia Muslim majority population. This has resulted in a long history of tension between the population and the Sunni monarchy.

Repression has been heightened since 2011, when an uprising of mostly Shia opponents was suppressed with the support of Saudi and UAE forces. The protests were not solely driven by sectarian demands, but also for greater openness in the country’s politics.

An independent inquiry into the protests, commissioned by the King, found at least 19 protesters were killed by the authorities due to torture or excessive force. Few prosecutions of the security forces implicated in the excessive use of force have occurred. Since 2011, many opposition activists remain in prison and opposition groups have been subject to bans.<sup>16</sup>

Limited reforms have been introduced. For example, in 2012 Bahrain’s Assembly was awarded more scrutiny power over the Cabinet. However, recommendations of the independent commission to relax censorship laws and allow opposition voices onto Bahraini media remain unimplemented.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> [Bahrain’s Shiite leader announces move to Iran \[...\]](#), Radio Farda, 3 February 2019

<sup>12</sup> BIRD, [UK: BIRD and MPs concern over Bahrain’s elections amidst findings they are a “sham.”](#) 16 November 2022 and report [“The Entire political process is fraudulent.”](#) 11 November 2022

<sup>13</sup> Amnesty International, [Bahrain: Elections, but no civic space](#), 10 November 2022

<sup>14</sup> PQ 92356 [[Bahrain: Elections](#)], 29 November 2022

<sup>15</sup> [Bahrain votes in parliamentary elections](#), Al-Jazeera, 12 November 2022

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Nine years after Bahrain’s uprising, its human rights record has only worsened](#), 25 February 2020

<sup>17</sup> Amnesty International, [Bahrain: Dreams of reform crushed ten years after rising](#), 11 February 2021; Europa World Plus, [Bahrain: Constitution and contemporary political history](#) (for cabinet powers).

The US State Department's 2022 report on human rights in Bahrain cited ongoing restrictions on political participation:

- **Free expression:** Constitutional protections for freedom of speech do not extend to social media or matters considered to be sectarian in nature, threatening of unity, or challenging of central Islamic belief.
- **Free media:** The Government owns all domestic TV and radio, and exercises “considerable control” over privately owned domestic print media. Books and publications are subject to censorship, and some websites are blocked. This includes access to the sites of international human rights groups and opposition groups.
- **Freedom of assembly/association:** A ban on public demonstrations has been in place since 2015. Some “political societies” have been allowed to develop platforms. Two leading opposition societies, Al-Wefaq and Wa’ad, were dissolved in 2016 and 2017 through legal action. All civil society organisations must first register with the Government.<sup>18</sup>
- **Imprisoned dissidents:** Many opposition figures have been detained since the 2011 protests. These include two leaders of opposition Shia group Al Haq and Sheikh Ali Salman, the leader of Al-Wefaq (on charges of spying for Qatar in 2018).<sup>19</sup>

## 4 Human rights

Bahrain's National Institute for Human Rights was established in 2014 to promote and protect human rights. The Kingdom [has a national human rights plan covering 2022 to 2026](#), which includes undertakings to protect freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) and of opinion.<sup>20</sup> While the UK Government argues there is “increasingly transparent” reporting by oversight bodies, it has urged Bahrain to hold investigations that meet international standards.<sup>21</sup>

Ongoing concerns include the below.

- **Death sentences continue to be imposed:** At least 51 people have been sentenced to death since 2011, according to BIRD and rights group Reprieve. This compares to seven in the previous decade. Since 2017, six have been executed. There are 26 people on death row.<sup>22</sup> The UK Government says 17 people have been executed from 1971 to 2022.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> US State Department, [2022 country reports on human rights practices: Bahrain](#), April 2023, sec A & B

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, [Universal periodic review submission on Bahrain](#), 5 April 2022

<sup>20</sup> Bahrain.bh, [The national human rights plan 2022-26](#)

<sup>21</sup> FCDO, [Human rights and democracy: 2020 report](#), July 2021, ‘Bahrain’

<sup>22</sup> [Death sentences in Bahrain “dramatically escalated” since 2011](#), Al-Jazeera, 13 July 2021

<sup>23</sup> HL Deb, [24 November 2022](#), c1549

- The Bahraini constitution provides for **gender equality** in social, economic, and political spheres. Women can vote in local and national elections. However, family laws continue to discriminate against women transmitting Bahraini nationality to their children on an equal basis to men (children take citizenship from their fathers). Protections on gender-based violence are considered lacking.<sup>24</sup>
- **Prison conditions:** International rights groups have accused Bahrain of holding many political prisoners, mostly on terrorism charges. They cite issues of overcrowding and poor health care in Bahrain’s prisons.<sup>25</sup> In August 2023, it was reported at least 800 prisoners were on hunger strike in Bahrain over detention conditions.<sup>26</sup>
- **Worker rights:** There have been consistent complaints that migrant workers, who numbered around 600,000 in 2019, are exploited and lack protections. A minimum wage and collective bargaining are absent.

Bahrain’s Government has introduced reforms to the [kafala \(“sponsorship”\) system](#), under which migrant workers must obtain visas, exit permits and permission to change jobs from a sponsor. Flexi-permits allow migrant workers to apply to the Government rather than employers, but rights groups say it is too costly for many to afford.<sup>27</sup>

- The country **decriminalised same-sex relationships in 1976**. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) state LGBT+ persons continue to lack other protections in law.<sup>28</sup>

## What’s the UK Government assessment?

Until 2023, Bahrain was listed as one of the UK’s 31 human rights priority countries. The UK Government cited Bahrain’s “consistent and systemic progress in a range of human rights” as the reason for its removal.<sup>29</sup>

The UK has raised concerns about Bahrain’s use of the death penalty, restrictions to freedom of expression, challenges in international journalists accessing the country, and allegations of torture and mistreatment of prisoners. It welcomed the drafting of a National Human Rights Action Plan in 2020 and the release of over 900 prisoners from custodial sentences.<sup>30</sup>

The Commons debated the issue of Bahraini political prisoners in 2022. The Government argues its relationship with Bahrain allows it to “positively influence” human rights, and that Bahrain is taking “important and effective

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<sup>24</sup> ADHRB, [Women’s rights in Bahrain...Postponed dreams](#), 24 January 2022

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch and others, [Free imprisoned rights offenders \[...\]](#), 6 April 2020

<sup>26</sup> [Bahrain political prisoners rejected government offer, extend hunger strike](#), Reuters, 31 August 2023

<sup>27</sup> European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, [Migrant workers’ rights](#), June 2019

<sup>28</sup> ILGA, [State-sponsored homophobia, 2020](#), December 2020, pp100, 327

<sup>29</sup> PQ 194938 [[Bahrain: Human rights](#)] 26 July 2023

<sup>30</sup> FCDO, [Human rights and democracy: 2020 report](#), July 2021, ‘Bahrain’

steps” to address allegations of torture and mistreatment. It also cited its work to support independent oversight bodies of prisons and security forces like the National Institute for Human Rights.<sup>31</sup>

The UK Government states Bahrain has a “long tradition of respecting and enabling FoRB,” and attended the UK conference on the issue in July 2022.<sup>32</sup>

## 5 UK-Bahrain relations

Bahrain gained independence from the UK in 1971.

### Plans for a trade agreement

Trade between the UK and Bahrain takes place on [World Trade Organisation \(WTO\) terms](#), meaning the countries must treat each other’s goods and services the same as those from other WTO members.<sup>33</sup> A preferential agreement would allow for more favourable terms.

Following a consultation, in June 2022 the Government [launched free trade negotiations with the Gulf Cooperation Council \(GCC\)](#). The issue of human rights in the region is likely to be an area of scrutiny. Total trade in goods and services between the GCC and the United Kingdom reached £41.4 billion in 2019. This would make the bloc, as a whole, the UK’s tenth largest trading partner. However, trade fell to £30.4 billion in 2020.<sup>34</sup>

### UK-Bahrain trade in 2022

- **Trade with the UK:** Was the UK’s 60<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner in 2022.
- **Total UK-Bahrain trade (exports and imports):** £3.1 billion in 2022, up £1.5 billion million compared to 2021 (when it was £1.6 billion).
- **Top five UK goods exported to Bahrain:** Jewellery, power generators, cars, miscellaneous electrical goods, and general industrial machinery.
- **Top five UK goods imported from Bahrain:** Refined oil, power generators, iron and steel, jewellery, and non-ferrous metals (copper and aluminium, for example).<sup>35</sup>

Notes: Data on the top five services traded are not available.

<sup>31</sup> HC Deb, [13 January 2022](#), cc721-2

<sup>32</sup> FCDO, [Human rights and democracy: The 2022 report](#), 13 July 2023, “FoRB”

<sup>33</sup> Department for International Development (DIT), [Trading under WTO terms](#), 31 December 2020

<sup>34</sup> DIT, [Consultation relating to future trade negotiations between the UK and GCC](#), October 2021, p9

<sup>35</sup> DIT, [Trade and investment factsheet: Bahrain](#) (updated monthly, accessed July 2023), pp1, 5

## Gulf Strategy Fund (GSF)

The UK's GSF works in several Gulf countries, including Bahrain. Through it, the UK supports criminal justice reform, research in the health and education sectors, and strengthening of human rights oversight bodies.<sup>36</sup>

In 2021, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf argued the fund should be suspended as it failed to contribute to progress on human rights in the region. The Government disagreed, arguing all funding is subject to checks to ensure it does not impact negatively on human rights and says funding has improved the country's prisons and ability to hold security personnel to account.<sup>37</sup>

## Other UK-Bahrain engagement

- **High-level meetings:** In July 2023, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak hosted the Crown Prince of Bahrain in the UK. They discussed issues including Ukraine, human rights, and addressing Iranian influence in the region.<sup>38</sup>
- **UK military forces** are based in the Gulf to protect shipping and conduct operations against groups such as Islamic State/Daesh. The UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain is the main facility in the Gulf for UK vessels.<sup>39</sup>
- **UK universities** allowing Bahrain institutions to issue their degrees include Salford and the University of London.<sup>40</sup>
- **Strategic investments:** In July 2023, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on strategic investments. Bahrain aims to invest £1 billion into the UK.<sup>41</sup>
- **Travel:** From 2022, Bahraini citizens can apply to travel to the UK for tourism, study, medical treatment, or business for up to six months with an electronic visa waiver. This is intended to be faster than a usual visa.<sup>42</sup>

# 6 Foreign relations

The Sunni-Shia Muslim divide is a significant one in the Middle East, with Shia and Sunni states often seeking to support sectarian groups beyond their

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<sup>36</sup> FCDO, [GSE](#), updated 26 August 2022

<sup>37</sup> Commons Library, [The Gulf in 2021](#), section 2; HL Deb, [24 November 2022](#), c1549

<sup>38</sup> Ten Downing Street, [PM meeting with Prime Minister of Bahrain](#), 3 July 2023

<sup>39</sup> [New "big ship jetty" opens at British naval base in Bahrain](#), UK Defence Journal, 23 June 2020

<sup>40</sup> University of Salford, [Study in Bahrain](#); University of London, [Study in Bahrain](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Bahrain signs deals to invest \\$1.3 billion in UK economy](#), Reuters, 3 July 2023

<sup>42</sup> Home Office, [Bahrain and Saudi Arabia get UK electronic visa waiver status](#), 11 May 2022

borders. Bahrain is rare in having a Shia-majority population but a Sunni Muslim Monarchy. Iran is the largest Shia-majority state in the region.<sup>43</sup>

## The United States

Bahrain hosts around 7,000 US military forces and is a significant importer of US arms. The US Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain and conducts security operations in the Gulf. Bahrain was designated a “major non-NATO ally” in 2002 (a status also held by Japan and Australia). This allows preferential access to US equipment and technology.<sup>44</sup>

## Other Gulf states

Bahrain is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), whose members include Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and the UAE. The GCC aims to build political and economic ties between its members.<sup>45</sup>

Bahrain is particularly close to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The two countries sent forces to Bahrain to help suppress the 2011 protests (see page 5, above).

Bahrain backed the Saudi military offensive in Yemen in support of the internationally recognised Government against the Houthi rebels (aligned with Iran) and backed the GCC’s decision to isolate Qatar from 2017 to 2021.<sup>46</sup>

## What was the “Qatar crisis”?

In June 2017, some GCC states and others cut diplomatic relations with Qatar and imposed limits on trade and movement. The countries alleged the country supported terrorism, including through being too close to Iran and supporting political Islam organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

In contrast to other Gulf states, for example, Qatar had supported the Egyptian Presidency of Mohamed Morsi, a member of the Brotherhood, while Gulf states backed his overthrow in 2013. The Brotherhood has ties with groups across the Middle East, but Saudi Arabia and the UAE have worked to suppress it, seeing it as a threat to their regimes.

An agreement ending the dispute was signed in January 2021. It detailed no actions for Qatar to take.<sup>47</sup>

Bahrain and Qatar announced a restoring of diplomatic ties in April 2023.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> [Sunnis and Shias: Islam’s ancient schism](#), BBC News, 4 January 2016

<sup>44</sup> US Congressional Research Service, [Bahrain: Unrest, security, and US policy](#), updated 24 March 2023

<sup>45</sup> [What is the GCC?](#), Al-Jazeera, 4 December 2017

<sup>46</sup> Commons Library, [The Gulf in 2021](#), section 5.2

<sup>47</sup> As above, section 5.1

<sup>48</sup> [Qatar and Bahrain to resume diplomatic ties](#), Al-Arabiya News, 13 April 2023

## Iran

While regional tensions with Iran are high, due to its nuclear programme and support for groups hostile to Gulf states such as the Houthis in Yemen and Shia Muslim militias in Iraq, relations between Bahrain's monarchy and Iran are particularly poor.<sup>49</sup>

Shia Iran has been accused by Bahrain of involvement in the 2011 protests, shipping weapons to the opposition, and providing support to dissident groups.<sup>50</sup>

Bahrain criticised the 2015 agreement reached between Iran and global powers such as the US and China, which lifted sanctions on Iran in exchange for the country adhering to limits on its nuclear programme. Bahrain's Government has argued for a wider deal that curtails Iran's ballistic missile programme and support for armed groups abroad.<sup>51</sup>

There has been some reconciliation with Iran in 2023, however. Several Gulf states, including Bahrain, cut their diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016 following an attack on the Saudi embassy in Iran and Saudi Arabia's execution of a Shia religious leader convicted of terrorism charges. Chinese brokered talks saw ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia restored in 2023.<sup>52</sup> Iranian officials are reportedly working to restore ties with Bahrain.<sup>53</sup>

## Israel

In September 2020, Bahrain became the fourth Arab country to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, after Egypt, Jordan, and the UAE, under the US-led Abraham Accords.

Both Israel and Bahrain share concerns for Iran's nuclear programme, its support for non-state groups in the Middle East, and maritime attacks in the Gulf. Cooperation has since increased: In 2021 they held joint naval exercises in the Gulf and in 2022 signed a security cooperation agreement.<sup>54</sup>

The two countries began negotiations on a free trade agreement in September 2022. Reports had suggested a deal would be reached in 2022.<sup>55</sup>

Israeli settlement activity, Israeli-Palestinian violence, and the actions of some in the new Israeli Government in 2023 have put some strains on the relationship. In July 2023, Bahraini plans to host the Israeli Foreign Minister

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<sup>49</sup> Commons Library, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#)

<sup>50</sup> International Crisis Group, [Flashpoint: Bahrain](#), 13 April 2022

<sup>51</sup> [Top Bahrain diplomat says Iran nuke deal fuelled violence, chaos](#), Times of Israel, 8 August 2021

<sup>52</sup> Commons Library, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#), section 4.2

<sup>53</sup> [Iran, Bahrain likely to restore diplomatic ties soon: US](#), Mehr News Agency (Iran), 14 June 2023

<sup>54</sup> [Israel PM meets Bahrain's king in push to strengthen ties](#), ABC News, 15 February 2022

<sup>55</sup> [Bahrain, Israel free trade deal "expected by year end."](#) The Daily Tribune (Bahrain), 1 November 2022

were postponed following a visit of the Israeli Security Minister to the [Temple Mount/Al-Haram al-Sharif](#) earlier in July.<sup>56</sup>

## Russia

Russia sold arms to Bahrain for the first time in 2011, though it remains a less significant source than the UK and United States. In February 2022, Bahrain voted in favour of the UN General Assembly Resolution calling for Russian withdrawal from Ukraine and has called for negotiation.<sup>57</sup>

# 7

## Further resources

### General background/profiles

- Europa World Plus, [Bahrain profile](#). Provides economic and political data and describes key events. Accessible via a Commons Library log-in.
- CIA, [Middle East: Bahrain](#). Headline statistical information on population, economy, and energy.
- BBC News, [Bahrain profile—Timeline](#), November 2018. Events to 2018.
- US Congressional Research Service, [Bahrain: Issues for US policy](#), 95-1013. 25-page briefing on politics, foreign policy, and economic issues from the perspective of US-Bahrain relations.

### Recent UK Parliament proceedings

- HL Deb, [Gulf states: Human rights abuses](#), 24 November 2022, cc1522-50
- HC Deb, [Bahraini political prisoners](#), 13 January 2022, cc703-22
- HL Deb, [Bahrain: Human rights abuses](#), 15 July 2021, cc1947-50
- HL Deb, [Bahrain: Human rights](#), 13 March 2019, cc1093-1107
- HC Deb, [Royal Navy base: Bahrain](#), 20 November 2018, cc263WH-269WH

### Human rights: General issues

- Amnesty International, [Everything you need to know: Human rights Bahrain 2022](#). Summary of seven key issues.

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<sup>56</sup> [Bahrain postpones plans to host Israeli FM \[...\]](#), Times of Israel, 28 July 2023

<sup>57</sup> [Can Bahrain count on Moscow to fill Washington's shoes?](#), Al-Monitor, 8 July 2016; Washington Institute, [The UN Resolution on Ukraine: How did the Middle East vote?](#), 2 March 2022

- Human Rights Watch, [Bahrain: Events of 2022](#). Overview of political opposition, prisoners, migrant workers, LGBT+ people and women.
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Human rights and democracy reports](#). Bahrain was one of the UK's 31 human rights priority countries until 2023. These reports provide a general assessment.
- US State Department, [2022 country reports on human rights practices: Bahrain](#), March 2023. Wide ranging report on political and other rights.
- UN Human Rights Council, [Universal periodic reviews: Bahrain](#). The Council conducts regular reviews of human rights in every country. Bahrain's most recent begun in 2022.
- SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights, [Decade of oppression](#), 2021. A mainly UK-based NGO summarises ten years of developments.
- Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, [Homepage](#). Based in the US but monitors Bahrain's human rights.
- Gulf Centre for Human Rights, [Homepage](#). Based in Lebanon but documents human rights issues in Bahrain.
- Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), [Homepage](#). Based in the UK but monitors human rights in Bahrain.

## Human rights: Specific issues

- Commons Library, [The ongoing detention of Bahraini political prisoners](#), CDP 2022-6. Three-page summary of the issue with parliamentary material. Includes links to reports by civil society organisations.
- Reporters without Borders, [Bahrain](#). Work on media freedom.
- Borgen Project, [The two sides of women's rights in Bahrain](#), March 2021. Short summary focusing on education and continuing discrimination.
- Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, [Women's rights in Bahrain...Postponed dreams](#), January 2022. Discusses gaps in Bahraini laws and implementation of international conventions.
- Human Rights Watch, [Continuing torture and mistreatment of detainees in Bahrain](#), November 2015. Argues for a lack of progress on the treatment of detainees since 2011.
- Human Rights Watch, [Quash religious freedom convictions](#), 3 July 2023. Convictions of three individuals on religious grounds in Bahrain.

- Human Rights Watch and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, [Bahrain: Death sentences follow torture, sham trials](#), October 2022. Argues there are human rights violations underlying convictions.
- International Labour Organization (ILO), [The ILO in Bahrain](#). Summary of the ILO's work in the country and efforts on worker rights.
- Minority Rights, [Bahrain](#). On migrant workers and Shia Muslims.
- UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, [Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Bahrain](#), CEDAW/C/BHR/CO/4, 2 March 2023. Assessment of women's rights in Bahrain, including continuing concerns for gender-based violence.
- US State Department, [2022 report on international religious freedom: Bahrain](#), May 2023. Describes legal and social practices on religion.

## Trade and economic profiles

- Department for International Trade, [Trade and investment factsheet: Bahrain](#), updated monthly. Provides a 15-page overview of the UK's trade with Bahrain.
- Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, [Economic factsheet: Bahrain](#), June 2021. Two-page summary with key economic indicators.
- Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, [Submission to the International Trade Committee on UK trade negotiations: Agreement with Gulf Cooperation Council](#), January 2022. Describes human rights issues raised by the potential trade agreement with the UK.
- International Monetary Fund, [Economic prospects and policy challenges for the Gulf Cooperation Council](#), December 2021. Discusses the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, changes in oil prices, and outlook for 2022.

## Bahrain's foreign relations

- Council on Foreign Relations, [Bahrain](#). Publishes analysis of Bahrain's foreign policy, including Gulf relations.
- Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [The UK's relations with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain](#), HC 88, 2012-13, November 2013. Section 4 describes the UK's ties and recommended greater UK support for Bahraini opposition groups.
- Commons Library, [Iran's influence in the Middle East](#), Describes Iran's influence abroad, why it is controversial, and outlook for the region.
- Institute for National Security Studies (Israel), [Three years to the Israel-Bahrain normalization: The forgotten peace](#), 31 August 2023

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