

Testimony of Prisoner of Conscience,
Younis Al-Nasiri,

ON DISTURBANCES IN JAU CENTRAL PRISON

BAHRAIN IN APRIL 2021



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June - 2021

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(Bahrain Forum for Human rights – SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights)

Introduction

The Bahrain Forum for Human Rights and SALAM for Democracy and Human Rights publish this lengthy statement of Bahraini prisoner of conscience Younis Al-Nasiri, who is arbitrarily detained in Building 15 of Jau Central Prison. The testimony sheds light on the nature of the deteriorating prison conditions and the violations that occurred during the disturbances that occurred at Jau Central Prison last April.

The outline of the testimony is as follows:

- Introduction to Younis al-Nasiri, Prisoner of Conscience
- The Situation of Political Prisoners in Jau Central Prison
- The Reality of the Health Conditions
- The April 17 Protest in Building 13
- Bloody April 17
- Traces of Blood on the Walls, Everywhere
- 8 days and Traces of Wounds, Bruises and Blood Remain
- The Public Prosecution Office Fabricating the Events and Forging the Truth

Note: This statement was authenticated on 17th May 2021.

Younis al-Nasiri, Prisoner of Conscience

Younis Abdel Aziz Mansour Hussein Ahmed Al-Nasiri, born on March 28th, 1997. He was arbitrarily arrested on October 31, 2018. At the site of the arrest, Younis was severely beaten and suffered degrading treatment. Ten days from the date of his arrest, he was subjected to an enforced disappearance until October 9th, 2018, when he was transferred to Jau Central Prison.

Younis informed his family that he was held in the criminal investigation building, and during that period, he was subjected to various types of physical and psychological torture, including electric shocks, continuous beatings, sleep deprivation, and being forced to stand for long hours amongst other forms of ill-treatment.

In Jau Central Prison, he was deprived three times from communication because he published the facts about the ill-treatment of prisoners inside the prison. He was tried for 7 political cases and sentenced to prison for a total of 24 years. There are still cases for which he awaits the convictions.

Before his arrest, he was subjected to illegal security pursuits for two years, during which his family's home was raided more than 20 times illegally and violently, while the family was dealt with harshly by the security authorities. Two of his brothers, Mirza and Ali, were arrested in an effort to pressure him to surrender. They were subsequently released after 40 days of arbitrary detention.

The following is the transcript of the full statement of prisoner of conscience Younis Al-Nasiri

The Situation of Political Prisoners in Jau Central Prison

The political detainees are held in eight separate buildings: Building 7 is dedicated to figures of the opposition leadership; Building 1 holds prisoners on death row, Building 21 – which holds more than 350 prisoners – is the building in which the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus happened and continues to happen today; Building 23, Ward 1 in which there are more than 120 prisoners; and Buildings 12, 13 and 14 are the buildings in which more than 700 prisoners are held, where they have the largest share of restrictions, tightened security, targeting and deprivation of rights because of their lengthy sentences. Today, myself and 70 other political prisoners are in Building 15 – we call it the ‘Torture Den’ – as we are isolated from the rest of the prison buildings due to the recent events that were caused by the prison administration and the Ministry of the Interior.

Building 22 holds criminal prisoners and is used by the prison administration as the focus of their fabricated propaganda media coverage. As the doors of the cells in the building are open almost all day and the prisoners there enjoy some of the luxuries that are not given to the prisoners in the other buildings. If any circumstance were to arise, the prison administration would use those conditions to its advantage to film the building and broadcast its theatrics. The doors of the prayer rooms are opened, and the classroom organized and arranged to welcome the oncoming media tour. In the event of a visit by a diplomatic or human rights delegation, their destination would always be Building 22 and its façade of adherence to human rights. They would not be visiting the other buildings where there are political prisoner victims of deteriorating prison conditions and torture.

The Reality of the Health Conditions

Regarding the situation of health conditions in prisons in recent years, I will not go into the details of the death of victims of torture, ill-treatment or, denial of treatment. The details of which you know, such as the cases of Muhammad Mushaima', Muhammad Sahwan, Abbas Malallah, and others who came out of prison with many, many diseases and the latest incident of victims of deliberate deprivation of medical treatment and its complications, the death of the young man, Sayed Kazem Al-Sahlawi.

I will promptly focus on the situation of health conditions in which we are today, one which is more and more catastrophic than before. A condition where tumors appear in a number of prisoners, as if they were the common cold and in which no action is being taken to effectively save those inflicted with it, for example, the suffering of brother Hussein Al-Sahlawi today and many others. There is still also the case of delayed and prolonged treatment applicable to everyone, whose latest casualty was prisoner Hussein Al-Bayaa' and his ruptured appendix. There is also the delay of transfer to the intensive care unit of the prisoner Muhammad Al-Da'sky – though a decision was issued to release him later – though there were vigorous demands being made by his fellow inmates that lasted for more than 9 days to transfer him without any response. Note that Al-Da'sky is still in a coma and was taken to the hospital after two previous delays. Also the cases of those whose health condition

worsened due to the cardiac pain they suffered, such as Mansour Khalaf, Hussein Mahdi, and Jaa'far Al-Jamri.

This is in addition to dermatological, esophageal, and visual diseases, from which there is almost not a single prisoner left unaffected. This led to the recent outbreak of the COVID-19 virus in prison. The death of the victim of deliberate medical neglect, Abbas Malallah is a result of procrastination and clear disregard for our souls while we are shackled behind the walls of death.

The April 17 Protest in Building 13

All these accumulations made our movement to send our voices outside these walls inevitable. After we received news of Abbas Malallah's death, we were in Building 13 and deprived of sunlight for a week and of outside communication to get our voices out, because we were publicising the details of the COVID-19 disaster in the prison. The day after the death of Abbas Malallah, the prisoners in Cell 8 came out to the corridor and said, "We will not accept the cell doors be shut to us after today, where there is the inevitable death due to any emergency or chronic illnesses." Prisoners of Cell 3 came out with them after about a week when they were allowed the opportunity to do so.

Their three demands were:

- Firstly: To hold accountable those involved and those responsible for Malallah's death.
- Secondly: Immediate release of us prisoners of conscience.
- Thirdly: Until the administration refers to a competent authority on the issue of release and its admittance of not being able to handle the catastrophic health condition that is happening to us in the prison, we will not be shutting the cell doors in the wards, as is the case in Building 22.

The demands were rejected, and they were threatened. The prisoners refused to enter the cells, demanding to meet with an official third-party other than the administration that was

involved in everything that was going on. The matter was not dealt with seriously, rather, they would argue with the prisoners at the sit-in, either to threaten them some more or to procrastinate on the issue.

The youths protested peacefully until their last breath during the sit-in, then two cases from our ward who had been suffering from heart pain for a while were transferred to Salmaniya Medical Complex. Had it not been for the youths' pressure, they would not have been transferred; the administration was applying pressure in different ways, one of them being through deprivation of medicine for two weeks, which caused severe cases of fatigue in some patients that had sickle cell, diabetes, blood pressure, and heart problems, ignoring the most basic rule of humanitarianism.

Bloody April 17

On Saturday, April 17 2021 at noon, after the end of the noon prayer, the corridor was shut off. We were surprised to see security forces in large numbers – the so-called riot forces – accompanied by a number of officers of different military ranks from the prison administration and it seems there were some from the Ministry of Interior, as well.

Those who were present in our building and supervised the process of repression and abuse were Abdulsalam Al-'Oraifi, the Director of the prisons; Hisham Al-Ziyani, the Director of the prison; Major Su'oud Falah; Captain Ahmed Al-Emadi and others. The process of repression and beatings of the youths protesting in the corridor began, so we knocked on the doors of the cells and chanted the *takbeer* in refusal to what was happening to our brothers in terms of the abuse and beatings. The officers and forces used to come to us and threaten us from the windows of the doors, cursing at us and making offensive gestures at us, threatening "we will kill you."

This made us angrier and none of us were intimidated. Due to the severity of what the young men in the cells witnessed of the hateful abuse against our brothers in the corridor, we started to throw cans of deodorant and shampoo and poured water; only in an effort to relieve the pressure on the prisoners who were being beaten in the corridor. It was in a mat-

ter of minutes that all the protesters were taken from Cell 8, beaten, kicked, and abused – the prison guards were just trying to land a hit anywhere. The ward was filled with the prisoners' blood, and we saw them mercilessly dragging them out of the ward, the pounding on the doors still resonating loudly because of how intensely we protested what was happening.

After a few seconds, the riot forces, Captain Al-Emadi, and a number of officers gathered at the door of Cell 11. They opened the cell door's window and threw a stun grenade. They opened the door and tried to enter the cell, but the detainees in the cell resisted them as much as they could, eventually preventing them from entering. They then threw 5 stun grenades into the cell one after the other, and after the cell was filled with stun grenades and the pepper spray that the officers were shooting, the detainees were forced to retreat.

The officer came forward and swore that no one would be harmed and demanded that the young men leave the cell one by one. One of the young men came out, and we saw from the windows of the cell doors how the forces approached him: before his feet could touch the ground, he was beaten and kicked by all of them.

After that, the prisoners refused to leave the cell at first, and told the officer "We are in our cell, what do you want from us? You go out and shut the door, we will not leave our cells having witnessed what you have just done to our brothers." But after the officer swore an oath, the detainees responded to their request to enter.

The forces entered with a quick sudden movement and continued to heavily beat the prisoners. Sa'eed Al-Imam sustained many injuries, one of them to his eye, and he fell unconscious.

Sadeq Al-Alwani and Sayyed Alawi Al-Wada'i sustained various injuries all over their body. They took them outside the cell and everyone in the cells saw – and I saw with my own eyes – Sayyed Alawi being brutally beaten, blood covering him while he was sitting, covering his head with his hands.

They took us all to the reception counter where the beatings increased there and the cursing did not stop. Then they boarded us on buses to take us to the den in Building 15, and on the

buses we were subjected to another round of brutal and cruel treatment. Someone, possibly named Ahmed Freeh, was singing “We will step on the Shiites”, taking out his sectarian diseases on us, ordering the prisoner Ali Mahdi to put his shoes into his own mouth. Ali, who was handcuffed, refused and was thrown onto his chest, after which he was beaten.

The person who suffered the largest share of the abuse and beatings was Sayyed Alawi Al-Wada’i. His glasses were broken –and he is still without glasses to this day – one of his eyes suffered an injury, along with his head, and he was seriously beaten all over his body. His condition remained thus until the wounds healed themselves, but the pains remained.

Cell 11 paid the non-entry tax for the rest of the cells, saving them from the abuse. Cell 11 changed the minds of those in charge of the sinister security operation and bore the burdens to spare everyone from the criminal cycle planned that day.

Traces of Blood on the Walls, Everywhere

Noon passed and the remains of the crime were still present everywhere; blood was scattered on the walls, the corridors, everywhere. The prisoners were transported to Building 15 and they had found abuse there as they had found it here. I will go into what happened at the building later.

We were deprived of *fitoor* and water on the first day, and the forces came in with a collection of forensic evidence and officers to continue weaving their theatrical play. The cell doors were pounded on and *takbeer* was made, condemning what happened and continued to happen until their withdrawal.

We were also deprived of our *suhoor* meal and water on the first day, and no one entered our ward for two days. We were also deprived of food and water all those two days, only confined to the one biscuit we would get at iftar, which would be the same for our *suhoor* meal as food was scarce in the canteen in the prisons. We would drink water from the bathroom taps, which they’d shut off for long periods of time, along with the air conditioning systems.

On the third day, we were allowed water, but the prison administration deliberately brought in a torturer (his name is Besai) from the Asian community to hand out the food, but we refused to accept the breakfast. We entered a two-day hunger strike demanding they bring back our brothers from the den and reveal their fate. The administration continued its stubbornness and, in fact, sent us threats.

8 days and Traces of Wounds, Bruises and Blood Remain

5 days after the incident and hunger strike, prisoner Ja'afer Al-Jamri, afflicted with heart problems, collapsed and was transferred to Salmaniya Medical Complex after his condition was determined to be critical. At the same time, Muhammed Hadi collapsed but refused treatment and was transferred to Building 15 with his fellow inmates.

On the following day, dated April 22nd, my condition worsened after the noon prayer. After an hour, I was transferred to the clinic and examined, as my pulse and sugar levels were not normal, and my blood pressure and temperature were high. I got swabbed for COVID-19 and, after, I refused treatment, demanding for them to reveal the fate of my brethren. I was isolated in Building 6 with Asian prisoners for 2 days, despite my test showing that I was not infected.

In these two days, I was interviewed by many lieutenants, some sympathize, others threatening me to stop my hunger strike. One of them came to me and told me derisively, "You won't go back to the building until you stop your hunger strike," I replied to him, "even if I die". I knew then that isolating me was an attempt to soften my position and a punishment to deter me from hunger striking.

More importantly, I was promised at dawn the next day to take me immediately to check on my brothers in Building 15 in exchange for my stopping the hunger strike. After some matters, I was transferred and isolated with my brethren in the building at dawn of that day. I met with the prisoners who were in a state which you would not wish to see your enemy in. Even though 8 days had passed since their arrival at Building 15, the traces of the scars, bruises, and blood were still visible on their bodies. When I arrived at the Torture Den, there had been brought some clothes for some of them. That is, 8 days after the incident, they

remained in their bloodied clothing without bathing. The brothers told me all that had happened to them.

Since the occurrence of the incident and up until their arrival to Building 15, the prisoners slept in chains and handcuffs for two days without any blankets or mattresses. After two days, they received blankets and mattresses, but the men remained for another 6 days in the chains and handcuffs, and 8 days in their soiled clothing.

After around 10 days or more since the incident, the Public Prosecution came to see the men at the visitations building, but the men refused as there is no protection for anyone leaving the Den against being subjected to torture and abuse once again. In the first place, there is no credibility or honesty in the Public Prosecution, which had ignored the messages and calls to it since the first day of the prisoners' sit-in up until the day of the incident, and has only come now to criticise the protestors.

I was also surprised that they had approached me, as they did to the others, more than 3 times to meet with the Deputy Prosecutor. I refused, asking for the attendance of my lawyer, and, during the last attempt, the Deputy Prosecutor came to the building and was in the Lieutenant's office. The sergeant asked me in front of the Deputy Prosecutor about my refusal, and I answered him, "I want to meet my lawyer first, and I have told you this more than once. If the administration has a problem with it, then I do not mind meeting the Prosecutor." I wanted to secure myself against them, as I didn't know if they would have involved me in the case with prisoners as well or anything else; their scenes and acts are mixed up in their play.

The Public Prosecution Office Fabricating the Events and Forging the Truth

After some determined promises by the Deputy Prosecutors and Administration not to harm anyone to ensure the security of the young men, a group of them went and met up with the prosecution. The focus of the Deputy Prosecutors' investigating was to collect some of the men's confessions through identifying them and convicting them based on short video clips trimmed to a few seconds. The men asked the prosecution to play all the videos in their en-

tirety and not to cut out the catastrophic truth that they went through – clips of them defending themselves which were, regrettably, being used to convict them.

The Public Prosecution continued penning its play and said that the only authority with the competence to get a hold of the whole videos were the Special Investigations Unit. The latter body continued the script, investigating in the same breath that which was investigated by the Public Prosecution.

Around two weeks after the incident, some of the men were taken to a medical doctor, who did not add anything new to the matter and did not even request for the men to be transferred so that they would be given the appropriate treatment.

Finally, several people came and identified themselves as being affiliated with the Ombudsman, to continue the acts of the play that they all have started. They stopped at a cell or two, and in the yard, urgent in their steps to get the footage that was recently released, as we have heard.

My brother and I are still isolated in the Torture Den in Building 15. We are not safe from any revenge to be inflicted in the coming days. We have mentioned some that occurred these past days, such as the transfer of some to solitary confinement, the restraining of men from some cells and spraying them again with pepper spray, leaving them restrained in chains for three days, and other violations taken in revenge.

We fully believe that the continuation of the movement and our demands and the shedding of light on the reality of the detainees is the guarantee to our safety and the absence of revenge on us.

End.



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