



**Australian Government**  
**Refugee Review Tribunal**

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# Country Advice

## Bahrain

Bahrain – BHR36231 – Lel Hasereba Habel  
El Nadiya – Salah Al Bandar – Shia  
Muslims  
25 February 2010

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**1 Please provide any information on a group in support of the Shia Muslims in Bahrain called Lel Hasereba Habel El Nadiya, and its leader Salah Elbender?**

No information was found regarding a group called Lel Hasereba Habel El Nadiya or similar. A Google translation of 'Lel Hasereba Habel El Nadiya' into Arabic characters and subsequent search using these characters did not produce any results. A translation of 'Lel Hasereba Habel El Nadiya' into English using Google Translate resulted in 'For/Of Exclusive Rope Club', for which no relevant results relating to Bahrain were found.

Annual reports published by the US Department of State, Freedom House and Amnesty International identify a Dr Salah Al Bandar, a Sudanese-born British citizen and former advisor to the Bahraini government's "president of the Central Informatics Organization, which originally had responsibility for conducting elections". In September 2006, Al Bandar published and "distributed a report to selected individuals and political societies claiming the existence of a group of high-level individuals in the government that attempted to manipulate the election process", particularly the outcome of the November 2006 parliamentary elections, at the expense of Bahrain's majority Shi'a Muslim population. Al Bandar "was accused of seizing official government documents and stealing private checks", and was subsequently deported to the United Kingdom on 13 September 2006. The report, and the publication of any related information, was banned on 4 October 2006 by a High Criminal Court injunction, which remained in effect at the end of 2008. Websites were also banned from discussing the report and the alleged election fraud. Al Bandar was convicted in absentia on 19 April 2007, and sentenced to four years imprisonment as well as a US\$265, or 100 dinar, fine.<sup>1 2 3 4 5</sup>

A number of articles on the BCHR website also refer to Dr Salah Al Bandar and the 216-page report, which was distributed by the Gulf Centre for Democratic Development (GCDD) and "contains almost 200 pages of cheques, receipts, letters, bank statements and accounts sheets" in support of Al Bandar's claim that "[a] secret web lead by a high government official, who is a member of the royal family, has been operating in Bahrain with an aim to manipulate the results of coming elections, maintain sectarian distrust and division, and to ensure that Bahrain's Shias remain oppressed and disenfranchised". The report also finds that "policies to subjugate Bahrain's Shia majority...are being practiced today by high ranking government

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International 2008, 'Amnesty International Report 2008', 28 May – Attachment 1

<sup>2</sup> US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006: Bahrain*, 6 March, Section 2a – Attachment 2

<sup>3</sup> US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007: Bahrain*, 11 March, Section 2a – Attachment 3

<sup>4</sup> US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008: Bahrain*, 26 February, Section 2a – Attachment 4

<sup>5</sup> Freedom House 2008, 'Freedom of the Press 2008 - Bahrain', Freedom House website, 29 April

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2008> – Accessed 23 February 2010 – Attachment 5

officials”.<sup>6</sup> One article claims that the ban on any media coverage relating to Al Bandar’s 2006 report has resulted in the prosecutions of journalists and human rights activists in Bahrain, including Nabeel Rajab of the BCHR. It is argued that the ban has also been used to prevent internet access to many websites, including that of the BCHR, which refer to the report.<sup>7</sup>

An article dated 21 September 2006 claims that Dr Salah Al Bandar had “worked as a strategic planning consultant to the Cabinet Affairs Ministry [since October 2005] and various private companies, up to his arrest and deportation”; and is the secretary-general of the GCDD. (The website of the GCDD is currently under maintenance.) Al Bandar’s Bahraini wife Layla Rajab is the president of both the GCDD and the National Liberal Thought Society.<sup>8</sup> The following news articles also describe Al Bandar’s activities and involvement in the publication of the so-called ‘Bandargate’ report and his subsequent deportation from Bahrain.<sup>9 10 11 12 13 14</sup>. In addition, video footage of a press conference by Dr Salah Al Bandar at the UK House of Lords in London on 5 October 2006, where he discusses the “Bandargate scandal”, can be found at the following website link:  
<http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/743>.

## List of Sources Consulted

### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information & Reports**

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

Amnesty International <http://www.amnesty.org/>

Freedom House <http://www.freedomhouse.org/>

#### **United Nations**

UNHCR Refworld <http://www.refworld.org/>

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<sup>6</sup> Al Sitari, Z. 2006, “‘Al Bander-Gate’: A Political Scandal In Bahrain - Maintaining Sectarian Division and Penetrating NGO’s: The Al Bander report: what it says and what it means’, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/528> – Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 6

<sup>7</sup> ‘Authorities reinforce sweeping media ban, Internet censorship on controversial report’ (undated), Bahrain Center for Human Rights website <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/1635> – Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 7

<sup>8</sup> ‘Adviser deported after allegations’ 2006, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Gulf Daily News, 21 September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/484> - Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 8

<sup>9</sup> ‘Briton denies being a spy, describes plot to rig upcoming elections in Bahrain’ 2006, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Herald Tribune, 24 September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/502> - Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 9

<sup>10</sup> Hameed, K. T. 2006, ‘Probe Call’, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Gulf Daily News, 27 September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/508> - Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 10

<sup>11</sup> ‘Secret report exposes the rape of a country by Al Khalifa’ 2006, Bahrain Freedom Movement website, 6 October <http://www.vob.org/index.php?show=news&action=article&id=1&lang=english> – Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 11

<sup>12</sup> Fattah, H. M. 2006, ‘Report cites bid by Sunnis in Bahrain to rig elections - Africa & Middle East - International Herald Tribune’, *The New York Times*, 2 October [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/02/world/africa/02iht-web.1002bahrain.2997505.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/02/world/africa/02iht-web.1002bahrain.2997505.html?_r=1) – Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 12

<sup>13</sup> Ravi, M. (undated) ‘Embassies: nothing to do with Al Bandar issue’, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Bahrain Tribune <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/507> - Accessed 19 February 2010 – Attachment 13

<sup>14</sup> ‘Bahrain Summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ 2008, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, 25 February <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/1924> – Accessed 18 February 2010 – Attachment 14

## **International News & Politics**

*The New York Times* <http://www.nytimes.com/>

*Reuters* <http://www.reuters.com/>

## **Region Specific Links**

*Al Jazeera* <http://english.aljazeera.net/>

Bahrain Center for Human Rights <http://www.bahrainrights.org/>

Gulf Centre for Democratic Development <http://www.gulf21.net/>

## **Search Engines**

Google <http://www.google.com.au/>

Google Translate <http://translate.google.com/>

## **Databases:**

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

## **List of Attachments**

1. Amnesty International 2008, 'Amnesty International Report 2008', 28 May.
2. US Department of State 2007, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2006: Bahrain*, 6 March.
3. US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007: Bahrain*, 11 March.
4. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008: Bahrain*, 26 February.
5. Freedom House 2008, 'Freedom of the Press 2008 - Bahrain', Freedom House website, 29 April <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2008> – Accessed 23 February 2010.
6. Al Sitari, Z. 2006, "'Al Bander-Gate": A Political Scandal In Bahrain - Maintaining Sectarian Division and Penetrating NGO's: The Al Bander report: what it says and what it means', Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/528> – Accessed 19 February 2010.
7. 'Authorities reinforce sweeping media ban, Internet censorship on controversial report' (undated), Bahrain Center for Human Rights website <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/1635> – Accessed 19 February 2010.
8. 'Adviser deported after allegations' 2006, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Gulf Daily News, 21 September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/484> - Accessed 19 February 2010.
9. 'Briton denies being a spy, describes plot to rig upcoming elections in Bahrain' 2006, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Herald Tribune, 24 September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/502> - Accessed 19 February 2010.
10. Hameed, K. T. 2006, 'Probe Call', Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Gulf Daily News, 27 September <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/508> - Accessed 19 February 2010.
11. 'Secret report exposes the rape of a country by Al Khalifa' 2006, Bahrain Freedom Movement website, 6 October

<http://www.vob.org/index.php?show=news&action=article&id=1&lang=english> – Accessed 19 February 2010.

12. Fattah, H. M. 2006, 'Report cites bid by Sunnis in Bahrain to rig elections - Africa & Middle East - International Herald Tribune', *The New York Times*, 2 October  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/02/world/africa/02iht-web.1002bahrain.2997505.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/02/world/africa/02iht-web.1002bahrain.2997505.html?_r=1) – Accessed 19 February 2010.
13. Ravi, M. (undated) 'Embassies: nothing to do with Al Bandar issue', Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, source: Bahrain Tribune  
<http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/507> - Accessed 19 February 2010.
14. 'Bahrain Summary prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' 2008, Bahrain Center for Human Rights website, 25 February  
<http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/1924> – Accessed 18 February 2010.