




الكرامة
Alkarama

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**ANNUAL
REPORT**



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ABOUT ALKARAMA

Alkarama is a Geneva-based non-governmental human rights organisation established in 2004 to assist all those in the Arab world subjected to or at risk of extrajudicial execution, enforced disappearance, torture, and arbitrary detention. Acting as a bridge between individual victims and international human rights mechanisms, Alkarama works towards an Arab world where all individuals live in freedom and dignity, and are protected by the rule of law. In Arabic, Alkarama means dignity.

Assisting victims of human rights violations

Alkarama brings pro bono legal assistance to victims of the most serious human rights violations, without any discrimination. The organisation focuses its efforts on violations of the right to life, human dignity, physical integrity and freedoms such as, [extrajudicial executions](#), [enforced disappearances](#), [torture](#), and [arbitrary detention](#).

Using the international human rights mechanisms and working closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), we document individual cases of violations through direct contact with the victims, their families or lawyers, and submit complaints on their behalf to the United Nations (UN) Special Procedures and Treaty Bodies, asking them to intervene with the State in question to put an end to these violations.

Alkarama also gives a voice to the victims or their families by sharing their stories, as well as the recommendations issued by the various UN mechanisms on their cases, both on our website and through our social media channels. We also use the media, lobbying, advocacy campaigns, and collaboration with other NGOs and civil society to ensure the protection of victims.

Advocate for reforms to respect and protect human rights in all Arab countries

Based on our expertise on the Arab world and the individual cases Alkarama documents, we prepare in-depth reports on the human rights situation in each of the 20 countries we cover. These can be public reports, submissions to the Treaty Bodies – such as the Committee against Torture (CAT), the Human Rights Committee (HRCtee), and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED) – ahead of a country’s review, or contributions to the Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) that takes place every four to five years. We also work with local civil society to participate in the reviews of National Human Rights Institutions in the Arab region by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

On the basis of information submitted to them, all of these mechanisms issue recommendations aimed at improving the human rights situation in a given country, which can in turn be used by the local civil society to lobby for their implementation.

Raising awareness on human rights in the Arab world

Alkarama also brings media attention to the cases and situations it covers, helping victims to have their voices heard and shedding light on the human rights situation of a country, through press releases as well as public reports and analyses published in various media outlets. In order to reach a broader audience, we increasingly rely on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook.

FORWARD

The state of denial and double standards in human rights issues is a prominent feature in a turbulent world

As the end of 2023 approached, a new Israeli-Palestinian war broke out in the Arab region. The Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have been suffering a fiercer and bloodier attack than ever before. Tens of thousands of civilians, most of them children and women, have been killed amidst a suffocating siege, appalling humanitarian conditions in the Israeli genocidal crimes committed with an implicit support from most Western countries.

Throughout the Arab world, human rights issues remain outside the concerns of governments, regardless of their political systems, and the state of denial coupled with the prevailing impunity remains a clear embodiment of the lack of political will towards the civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of citizens.

Alkarama continues its tireless struggle, despite the challenges, against the trivialisation of murder, violation of the right to life, torture, enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention in the Arab region. It strives to reach the truths from the mouths of the victims, their families and brave human rights defenders.

The cases Alkarama worked on during 2023 are only the tip of the iceberg in a turbulent reality of armed conflict on more than one level, and they are examples that reveal part of the patterns of violations. Alkarama continued to submit individual complaints to the Special Procedures and succeeded in obtaining opinions of a number of independent international human rights experts in favour of the victims.

As in previous years, when Arab countries were scheduled to appear before one of the treaty bodies at regular intervals to assess the extent of their commitment to the treaties and to review their human rights situation, Alkarama found itself in a race against time to complete parallel reports, and its team, which had accumulated years of experience, was mobilised to investigate the facts and update the data. On the basis of previously filed complaints, the team contacted its sources in the field, verified and analysed information, prepared reports according to strict standards that contribute to enriching the debate, identifying deficiencies and putting forward the necessary remedies and recommendations.

Tyranny in the Arab world stills haunts the elite seeking democratic change and those working for human rights, yet human rights defenders all over the World are witnessing an even more

pernicious challenge. The extremist Western support for Israel in its horrendous crimes against the Palestinian people threatens the international human rights system and constitute an unprecedented setback to shared global values.

The dire consequences of the “double standards” policies that have unfortunately become a clear feature of most Western countries may ultimately be a greater threat to the values of human rights and peace in the world.

At the level of the Arab world, governments continue their repressive campaigns against peaceful opponents, journalists, and human rights activists, using the banners of the “war on terrorism” and “protecting national security” as pretexts to silence voices and prohibit freedom of expression, in parallel with the enactment of legislation that lacks objective and legal standards that are fair and consistent with the obligations of various countries towards international human rights law.

The methods of tyranny have evolved, but so have the methods of peaceful struggle, and the Arab peoples have become more able to reach positions of influence to express their demands due to the new media and growing number of civil society organisations and human rights defenders. Sacrifices will pay off and lead to the moment of

emancipation and breaking of the shackles to achieve well-being, development, and lasting and just peace.

THE GULF

In the Gulf, Alkarama documented serious violations against the right to life and security of the person, as well as the right to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

In **March 2023**, the Human Rights Council adopted the Universal Periodic Report (UPR) of **Bahrain** and raised concerns over undue restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression recommending to make appropriate amendments to the press and electronic media law.

The situation in **Oman** and **Kuwait** remains concerning as restrictions over fundamental freedoms such as freedom of expression and association are still being used to limit civic space.

Alkarama's main efforts in **Qatar** involve monitoring the effects of the country's counter-terrorism legislation which results in several unjust restrictions on due process, such as extended pretrial detention without judicial review.

Furthermore, Alkarama continued to follow-up on issues raised before the UN human rights mechanisms in previous years which include the lack of protection of fundamental guarantees, detentions under the counter-terrorism law, and the extradition of individuals to countries where they may encounter torture and ill-treatment.

In **Yemen**, Alkarama documented infringements against journalists and human rights defenders which continue to be committed by all parties involved in the conflict. On 11 October 2023, Alkarama submitted **its contribution** on the human rights situation in Yemen in view of its next UPR by the Human Rights Council scheduled between 29 April and 10 May 2024.

In **May 2023**, the Human Rights Council held the UPR of the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** during which issues documented by Alkarama were raised by the UN members States in their recommendations. Among other things,

the UAE was called upon to take steps to ensure the freedom of opinion, expression and association, eradicate arbitrary and incommunicado detention practices. Additionally, the UAE was urged to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

This year, Alkarama's efforts mainly focused on the human rights situation in **Saudi Arabia** with [numerous cases of violations](#) submitted to the UN human rights experts as well as a [report](#) to the Human Rights Council for the upcoming UPR [scheduled](#) to be held early 2024.

Public freedoms: right of association, peaceful assembly, expression and media, human rights defenders

In its October 2023 UPR [report](#) on Yemen to the Human Rights Council, Alkarama highlighted concerns regarding attacks on civilians hindering humanitarian aid, torture in custody and retaliation against journalists, human rights defenders and political dissidents. Alkarama recommended ceasing reprisals against journalists, human rights defenders, peaceful activists and political opponents, ensuring their protection and bringing to justice those responsible for human rights violations against them.

On the occasion of the International

Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, Alkarama issued a [joint statement](#) emphasising acts of violence against journalists and the prevailing culture of impunity in the country.

Human Rights advocacy and litigation successfully secured [the release of four Yemeni journalists](#) after eight years of enduring suffering and ill-treatment in Houthi prisons. While Alkarama shared the joy of their families, it reminded in strong terms that their release does not absolve perpetrators from their criminal responsibility for the violations committed against them.

Alkarama stressed the preoccupying deterioration of freedom of expression in Yemen, and issued a [joint statement](#) condemning the censorship and blocking of internet access. The statement emphasised the urgent need for immediate action to end the rampant violations of digital freedoms, the right of access to information and the right to protest and demonstrate.

Repressive legislation is regularly used in Kuwait against anyone who criticizes the executive branch, the judiciary or political relations with foreign countries or who disseminates messages on social media that are deemed critical of the authorities.

On 6 November 2023, Alkarama [submitted](#) to the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the promotion

and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the case of Salman AL KHALDI, a Kuwaiti activist sentenced in absentia on 26 September 2023 to five years in prison by the Supreme Court for posts on social networks. He was found guilty of "defaming" Saudi Arabia, spreading "false news" and "offending the emir" through social media.

In its UPR [report](#) to the Human Rights Council on Saudi Arabia, Alkarama [pointed out](#) the systematic breaches of freedom of association and expression and expressed its concern about the situation of journalists, human rights defenders and social media users who remain under close surveillance even abroad.

In April, Saudi authorities [released](#) and deported Yemeni journalist Marwan Al Muraisy to his home country, after subjecting him to nearly five years of arbitrary detention and ill-treatment.

In its [contribution](#), Alkarama has recommended to lift restrictions on freedom of expression and association, to end persecution and reprisals and to repeal provisions that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

In UAE, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) has for the [fourth time](#) called for [the release of](#)

[peaceful dissidents](#) detained after unfair trials and arbitrarily detained, despite the expiry of their sentences, by Emiratis authorities solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression and demanding political reforms.

Right to liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

In its October 2023 UPR [report](#) to the Human Rights Council on Yemen, Alkarama [outlined](#) the widespread practice of enforced disappearance, torture and arbitrary detention throughout the country. Alkarama recommended to clarify all cases of enforced disappearance, to investigate all allegations of torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities by all parties to the conflict and ensure that all deprivations of liberty are carried out in compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

Alkarama issued a joint [urgent appeal](#) to the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council to intervene to end the political trials of detainees in Yemen.

Additionally, Alkarama [addressed UN human rights experts](#) on the situation of Yemen politician and Islah

party leader, Mohammed QAHTAN, who disappeared following his arrest in 2015 at his residence in Sana'a.

On 10 December 2023, Alkarama joined approximately forty NGOs in raising awareness about the human rights situation in Yemen on the occasion of International Human Rights Day. The joint statement emphasized the significance of upholding justice, equality, and human dignity, and reiterated the importance of justice in respecting human rights.

In its UPR [report](#) to the Human Rights Council on Saudi Arabia, Alkarama noted that the practice of arbitrary detention remains systematic against all dissidents and expressed its concerns regarding the “[Munasaha centers](#)”. Presented by the Saudi authorities as a program for rehabilitating and reintegrating “terrorists” who have completed their prison terms, these centres result in the arbitrary detention of numerous individuals, without any judicial review, in practice. The detention is based on the grounds that they might represent a “threat” in the future due to their potential to continue holding dissenting opinions after being released.

In April, Alkarama referred to the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions and the Special Rapporteur on torture the [case](#) of Abdulsamed Esmail Mohammed Salem, a Yemeni

businessman tortured to death by members of the Saudi security services during his detention at the General Administration for Drug Control centre in Jazan (Southwest of Saudi Arabia).

This year Alkarama has documented violations against pilgrims visiting Mecca. In previous years, Saudi authorities have violated the right to liberty and integrity rights of numerous pilgrims based on their perceived political views and affiliations. This was the [case of Yemeni pilgrims](#), Abdullah Moqbel Zayed Al OSIMI, Hemyar Abdullah Moqbel Al OSIMI, Mahmood Hamid Qaid AL BROUSHI and Arhan Moqbel Zayed Moqbel HAMAEEELAH and Abdulrab Mansoor Moqbel Ahmed GEHAM who were all [apprehended](#) in last April while on their way the Holy Land. All of them recently [resurfaced](#) in Al Abha prison.

FOCUS ON KSA

CRACKDOWN ON RELIGIOUS SCHOLARS

This year, Alkarama continued to document the large-scale crackdown on religious figures who publicly opposed Mohamed bin Salman's policies as illustrated by the case of prominent scholar Safar bin Abdulrahman AL HAWALI (71), who has been arbitrarily detained since July 2018 after publishing a book criticising Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's policies and making recommendations to his attention.

Expected to be released after completing his [sentence](#) by the end of November 2022, he is being arbitrarily held in detention by Saudi authorities which are refusing to set him free.

In [June 2023](#), following Alkarama's [request](#), the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ([WGAD](#)) issued [Opinion No.26/2023](#) and called on Saudi Arabia to immediately release the 71-year-old religious scholar.



Mohammad Fahad Muflih al-Qahtani, one of the founders of the Association for Civil and Political Rights in Saudi Arabia, is back on trial after a decade in detention.

Since his arrest, despite his speech impairment and extremely fragile health, he has been denied adequate care and access to the outside world. As a form of punishment for his criticism of the Crown Prince, AL HAWALI is effectively being left to die in detention, cut off from the outside world and his loved ones, and living in fear of harassment and threats to his relatives.

AL HAWALI's critical outspokenness against the authorities led to the arrest of his four sons and brother by State Security forces, amounting to a form of collective punishment. Additionally, the Saudi Court of Appeal **doubled** their prison sentences in retaliation for refuting the charges and rejecting the injustice they have suffered.

While Saudi Arabia was **urged** by the WGAD to "ensure that AL HAWALI's relatives do not suffer any reprisals for his activities or for the exercise of their own rights", United Nations (UN) experts noted that Saudi authorities did not dispute Alkarama's allegations over the harassment and reprisals against the Hawali family, "in particular the alleged arrest of family members as a form of punishment for his activities".

Strongly concerned about AL HAWALI's situation, Alkarama cited his case in its **report** to the UN Secretary-General (UNSG) as a clear example of reprisals by the Saudi authorities against people who turn to the UN to seek its

intervention in cases of violation of their rights.

On 31 May 2022, Alkarama **submitted** to the UN WGAD the case of Dr Salman Fahed ALODAH, a renowned and celebrated religious thinker and philosopher of contemporary Islam, who has used his religious and intellectual standing to peacefully advocate for civil rights and freedoms, making him a recurring target of the Saudi royal power's crackdown, as well as his brother, Khaled ALODAH.

Dr ALODAH was arrested on 7 September 2017, during a crackdown on dissent that targeted popular figures who refused to publicly support the policies of Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman. On 12 September 2017, Khaled ALODAH was arrested as punishment for publicly denouncing the arrest of his brother.

Held in solitary confinement since his arrest and denied medical care, he has been subjected to severe physical and psychological torture. His trial is ongoing before the Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) of Riyadh under 37 charges related to his advocacy and for which the prosecution required the death penalty. Since his arrest, several UN Special Procedures mandate holders **considered** his trial unfair and called for his immediate release.

In response to the numerous

communications to UN procedures and other international and regional human rights mechanisms, his detaining authorities – acting under the direct control of the Crown Prince himself – have intensified the use of torture and solitary confinement, leading to a significant deterioration of his physical and mental health and permanent disability.

On 26 January 2021, Alkarama [submitted](#) a communication to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on behalf of Alodah, while his family was again [denied](#) the right to contact him or visit him. The SCC continues to postpone hearings effectively keeping ALODAH's in a state of indefinite detention and under the constant threat of being sentenced to death, which constitutes an utterly cruel and inhuman treatment for him and his family.

At Alkarama's request, the WGAD [recognised](#) in its [Opinion No.56/2023](#) the arbitrary character of his deprivation of liberty. The UN independent experts noted that "Mr. Salman ALODAH is being detained on discriminatory grounds, that is, on the basis of his political and religious opinions and due to his status as a human rights defender". As for Mr. Khaled ALODAH, the WGAD stressed "that guilt by association and discrimination by the Government on

the basis of political opinion that aims at ignoring the equality of human beings are the only plausible explanations for Khaled ALODAH's arrest and detention."

This year again, Alkarama has continued to follow the cases of prisoners of conscience in Saudi Arabia, including those of members of the Association for Political and Civil Rights (ACPRA), through individual complaints to the UN Special Procedures and alternative [reports](#) to several UN bodies.

As a means of silencing critical voices in Saudi Arabia, prisoners of conscience are silently and slowly killed through prolonged arbitrary detention. Even after serving their full sentences, they are kept in 'Munasaha centres' under the pretext of rehabilitation.

In early January, the Saudi authorities have [released](#) academic Abdulkarim AL KHODR, Saudi human rights defender and a founding member of ACPRA, but immediately relocated him in to Munasaha center.

Despite the UN Working Group's [call](#) for his release, and having served his [full eight-year sentence](#), the law professor is still being held in these centres, which are used in practice to continue the detention of peaceful dissidents who have served their

arbitrary sentences but are still considered a threat to the regime because they may continue to express dissident views after their release.

The 'Munasaha Programme', launched in 2007, is presented by the Saudi authorities as a reintegration and rehabilitation programme for convicted 'terrorists'. According to the government, these centres provide therapy and treatment "consisting of psychological, social and religious sessions aimed at eradicating terrorist and extremist ideologies" on the basis of "fear of committing a terrorist offence upon release from prison" and "threat to public security". It is up to the Ministry of Interior to determine the eligibility of such persons for release. Nevertheless, these centres arbitrarily detain many individuals beyond their sentences without judicial review on the pretext that they may continue to pose a "threat" in the future. While peaceful dissidents are detained under the anti-terrorism legal regime, the Munasaha centres are designed to coerce political prisoners into expressing absolute loyalty to the royal authority.

Another ACPRA member and human rights activist, Dr Abdul Rahman AL HAMID, aged 61, was also [released](#) by the Saudi authorities this year after spending nine years behind bars following an unfair trial for his peaceful

activism. However, he remains under a travel ban for a further nine years.

Saudi Arabia has continued to use the judiciary as a political tool, sentencing opinion leaders and activists to death on charges related to the exercise of the right to opinion, expression and peaceful dissent.

Alkarama raised concerns after a Saudi court decided to postpone the trial session of prisoner of conscience, Mohammed bin Fahd AL QAHTANI, who is serving a 10-year prison sentence in reprisal for his peaceful human rights activism.

Harassed and subjected to repeated physical and psychological violence during his detention, AL QAHTANI announced a hunger strike in December 2020 in protest at the authorities' refusal to allow him to contact his family and receive books and medicine.

In November 2022, AL QAHTANI's wife called for the disclosure of her husband's fate who has been cut off from all contact with the outside world. AL QAHTANI was detained in Al-Ha'ir Prison in Riyadh and transferred to a wing of the prison where inmates suffering from mental disorders are held. In May 2022, it was reported that he had been physically assaulted by one of them.

Following a request from Alkarama, the WGAD issued [Opinion No. 2015/38](#) in 2015 on the case of nine Saudi activists, including AL QAHTANI, confirming the arbitrary nature of their detention, and calling for their immediate release.

Despite repeated calls for his release by UN experts, as well as his case being raised twice in the UN Secretary-General's annual report on reprisals, AL QAHTANI remains in detention and is currently on the verge of being [condemned twice](#) for the same facts in violation of the principle of ne bis in idem principle, which states that a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime.

AL QAHTANI was awarded the 2018 Right Livelihood Award along with two Saudi human rights defenders – Abdullah Al-Hamid and Waleed Abu Al-Khair – "for their enlightened efforts and courage, guided by universal human rights principles."

This year, Alkarama closely monitored the situation in Saudi Arabia as the country pursued its violent crackdown against online dissident expression.

The case of Mohammed AL GHAMDI, a retired teacher sentenced to death for his tweets and YouTube activism, is a prime example of the Saudi government's increasing repression of free speech and peaceful political dissent in the country.

Several UN human rights experts including the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the WGAD have urged Saudi Arabia to immediately [revoke](#) the death sentence handed down to AL GHAMDI.

Alkarama has submitted an [urgent appeal](#) to the UN Special Procedures regarding the case of prominent reformist preacher Awad bin Mohamed AL QARNI (68) who also faces the death penalty. The Saudi Public Prosecution had requested the death sentence after convicting him on a number of charges, including owning a Twitter account and using WhatsApp to spread messages described as "hostile" to the Kingdom.

In response to Alkarama's [request](#), the UN WGAD [issued Opinion No.55/2023](#) in which it recognized the arbitrary nature of his deprivation of liberty noting that he "is being detained on discriminatory grounds, that is, on the basis of his political and religious opinions".

THE MAGHREB

This year started with the adoption of the outcomes of **Algeria, Morocco** and **Tunisia's** Universal Periodic Reports (UPR). In March 2022, Alkarama submitted a shadow report for **each country** expressing its concerns over the violations of the most fundamental human rights and highlighting the States' failure to cooperate with the United Nations (UN) mechanisms to address these issues.

During the periodic reviews, numerous countries made recommendations on issues raised by Alkarama in its reports including the necessity to **amend** the counter-terrorism law, to take steps to **prevent** all acts of torture and ill-treatment, including during arrest, interrogation and detention and to **guarantee** full respect for the rights to freedom of expression, the press, association and peaceful assembly.

All through the year, Alkarama continued to document violations highlighted in its previous reports, particularly cases related to reprisals against human rights defenders,

journalists and other peaceful activists and violations to the right to life, liberty and security of persons.

This year, the prevention and fight against torture also remained among the core objectives of Alkarama.

On **21 April 2023**, Alkarama submitted its contribution to the draft general comment of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) on Article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT). This article obliges States parties to allow their National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) and the SPT to visit places of detention "with a view to strengthening, if necessary, the protection of these persons against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

In its submission, Alkarama recalled that the obligation of States parties to provide access to places of deprivation of liberty must be fulfilled in such a way as to strengthen the protection of persons deprived of their liberty.

Alkarama stressed that the failure of States to ensure that their NPMs are sufficiently funded and able to carry out their mandate independently is a major obstacle to ensuring effective visits to places of deprivation of liberty. Alkarama has presented its analysis of the main challenges to be discussed in this context. The analysis is based on practical observations made by Alkarama while carrying out its work in several countries including Morocco and Tunisia.

In **Mauritania**, Alkarama remains concerned about violations of the right to peaceful assembly through an excessive use of force and arrests of demonstrators, judicial persecution of human rights defenders and peaceful political activists, as well as poor conditions of detention in prisons and a lack of independent and effective preventive and complaint mechanism for acts of torture and ill-treatment.

Alkarama pursued its efforts in **Libya** to document arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances across the country in order to promote accountability on both sides. Through individual cases submitted to the United Nation (UN) human rights mechanisms, Alkarama shed light on the systematic practice of enforced disappearance, torture and arbitrary detention by both sides of the conflict, seriously undermining the rule of law.

Public freedoms: right of association, peaceful assembly, expression and media, human rights defenders

In **Algeria**, the crackdown on civil society remains one of the most pressing concerns with hundreds of people currently detained for peacefully expressing dissent or supporting the Hirak Movement. On [22 February 2023](#), UN experts have [expressed concern](#) over an escalating crackdown against civil society by Algerian authorities after the dissolution of “La Ligue Algérienne pour la Défense des Droits de l’Homme” ([LADDH](#)), one of the most important human rights associations in Algeria. Ms [Mary Lawlor](#), [UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#) urged the Algerian authorities to put an end to all “acts of intimidation, silencing and repression against the human rights movement”.

In [September 2023](#), the [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#) conducted a visit to Algeria lauding the Hirak as an example of “remarkable civic spirit”. The expert urged the government to “address the climate of fear caused by a string of criminal charges against individuals, associations, trade unions and political parties under overly restrictive laws, including anti-terrorism legislation contrary to Algeria’s international human rights obligations”.

Prior to the [visit](#), Alkarama submitted a report analysing the current situation with regard to peaceful assembly and association, highlighting the use of anti-terrorism laws and narratives to vilify and persecute those who continue to carry the Hirak's message of changing the country's governmental structure from a military-controlled state to a fully civilian and democratic one.

In **Morocco**, Alkarama highlighted the use of defamatory and slanderous news and accusations against human rights defenders, journalists and other peaceful activists to suppress peaceful criticism of the country's security services. In previous cases following the same pattern, UN experts have expressed their concern about the use of charges related to offenses against morality and decency, to discredit and ultimately silence critical voices, with serious and lasting social consequences for the victims. This year, Alkarama brought again such cases to the attention of the UN human rights mechanisms.

On [16 May 2023](#) and [22 December 2023](#), Alkarama submitted a communication to the UN Special Procedures informing them of the multiple violations suffered by Ouahiba KHOURCHECH, a former police officer, and her minor daughter. KHOURCHECH joined the ranks of the national security in 2003 and was later appointed head of the department to combat violence against

women. Paradoxically, while performing her duties, she was subjected to sexual harassment by her hierarchical superior. She refused to remain silent and initiated administrative and judicial proceedings in August 2016 to denounce the treatment she had received. Since then, she has been continuously harassed, either directly by agents of the Moroccan state or indirectly by media platforms acting on behalf of the intelligence services.

Violations of freedom of expression have also targeted environmental activists such as Mohamed ATTAOUI a committed human rights defender and environmental activist, who has been the victim of reprisals and acts of intimidation by the local and regional authorities of Midelt (Middle Atlas) since he denounced the smuggling of cedar wood in rural communes of the region

On [22 August 2023](#), Alkarama addressed the [UN Special Rapporteur on the right to the environment](#) noting several violations of Mohamed ATTAOUI's rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Alkarama reported that he was arrested in retaliation for the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression and association following his denunciation of wood smuggling by those he described as the "cedar mafia" and the silence of the local authorities. He has once again faced legal repercussions

due to his commitment and was sentenced to eight months in prison on 18th December 2023 in a case brought against him.

In **Tunisia**, the takeover of President Kaïs Saïed in July 2021 was followed by a series of restrictions on individual and collective freedoms, including arrests of members of parliament and senior officials such as judges.

On **07 February 2023**, Alkarama submitted to the UN **Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers**, the situation of Bechir AKREMI, a Tunisian magistrate who had been arbitrarily suspended and victim of intimidation and reprisals in the exercise of his duties. Despite a final judgement annulling his illegal suspension, he was not allowed to return to his functions yet.

On several **occasions** throughout the year, Alkarama has **voiced** concern about the intensifying crackdown in the country on perceived political opponents.

On **12 April 2023**, Alkarama and Abderrahmane BHIRI's lawyer, Kilani ABDARRAZZAK, also addressed the UN **Special Rapporteur on torture** regarding the case of both Noureddine BHIRI, lawyer and former Minister of Justice and Bechir AKREMI, victims of torture during their arrest and/or detention by the police.

On **05 December 2023**, Alkarama submitted to the UN WGAD the situation of Rached GHANNOUCHI, 82 years old, President of the Tunisian Parliament and leader of the opposition political party Ennahda, sentenced on May 2023 to one year in prison under the pretext of “apology of terrorism”. A prominent political figure, GHANNOUCHI had been particularly targeted by the police since he strongly condemned the takeover of 25 July 2021 and advocated a return to constitutional legality and democracy. Since then, he has been the subject of a multitude of police investigations launched on various pretexts, including because of his political stance and his public statements to various local and foreign media.

Throughout the year, Alkarama monitored the situation in Tunisia. On **18 December 2023**, Alkarama submitted its contribution to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC) as part of the follow-up procedure to the recommendations made by the Committee following the **6th periodic review** of Tunisia in 2020. Responsible for monitoring the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by States Parties, the HRC monitors the effective implementation of these recommendations during its next session, which will take place from 4 to 28 March 2024.

In its follow-up report, Alkarama noted that Tunisia has not taken any steps to implement the important recommendations made by the Committee's experts, thus demonstrating the lack of the State party's political will to respect its international commitments.

Right to life, liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

In **Algeria**, Alkarama noted with deep concern the resurgence of enforced disappearances which resulted in the 1990s in the disappearance of ten to twenty thousand victims.

On [29 August 2023](#), Alkarama sent an urgent appeal to the UN Working Group on Enforced Disappearances ([WGEID](#)) concerning the former gendarme Adel ABDELMALEK, who has been enforcedly disappeared since his abduction on 19th August 2023 from the headquarters of the national gendarmerie in the wilaya of Tebessa by a group affiliated with the Algerian Intelligence. This disappearance is part of a series of several violations committed by the Algerian authorities since the repression of the Hirak.

For more than ten years, the WGEID has been calling on the Algerian government to allow its visit to the

country. Despite an initial approval, these visits keep being postponed or cancelled, demonstrating the regime's lack of willingness to cooperate with international mechanisms on this issue.

The absence of accountability mechanisms in **Libya** continues to provide a breeding ground for human rights and humanitarian violations. Alkarama continued to submit cases and complaints to the UN experts to promote accountability and protect victims of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance from all sides of the conflict.

On [20 July 2023](#) and [14 August 2023](#), Alkarama sent two urgent appeal to the WGEID regarding the enforced disappearance of, respectively, Faraj Abdullah AL DAGUEL and the two brothers Aboubakr and Embarek AL KHAZMI, Libyan citizens who have all been missing since their arrest by different militias in the country. This year, Alkarama obtained [Opinion No. 48/2023](#) in which the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) recognized the arbitrary detention of Ali Sulaiman Masoud ABDEL SAYED who had been enforcedly disappeared in 2016. In their Opinion, UN experts reminded to Libya its " obligation to respect international human rights standards is incumbent on all organs, officials and agents of the State, as well as on all other natural and legal persons."

Alkarama also obtained [Opinion No 41/2023](#) related to the situation of Colonel Osama Muhammad Saleh Al Ghafir AL OBEIDI, whose case was [submitted](#) to the UN WGAD following his abduction on 21 March 2022 by militiamen of the "Tariq bin Ziyad" brigade controlled by the son of General Khalifa Haftar. The Working Group considered that "Although the Libyan National Army and its affiliated militias, including the Tariq bin Ziyad brigade, maintain their own command structure and operate autonomously from the Government of National Accord, the only Government recognized by the Security Council (...) the payment of salaries and equipment to personnel of the Libyan National Army is ensured by the Government of National Accord."

Alkarama's actions led this year to the [release](#) of Mustafa Taleb Younes Abdelkhalek AL DARSI after eight years of arbitrary detention. Following Alkarama's [request](#), the UN WGAD called on Libya, in its [Opinion No. 13/2020](#), to immediately release him. On 30 April 2023, following several years of indefinite detention AL DARSI was finally released. While sharing the family's joy, Alkarama recalled that his release does not absolve Libya of its responsibilities ensuing from the violations of his rights during the eight years of arbitrary detention.

Throughout the year, United Nations

Support Mission in Libya ([UNSMIL](#)) [expressed](#) its deep concerns, aligned with those of Alkarama, about the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, and concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the State, security forces and armed militias have committed a wide range of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

On [12 December 2023](#), Alkarama first submitted to the UN WGEID, the situation of Al Mahdi AL BARGHATHI, former Minister of Defence of the Government of National Accord (GNA) and that of his companions. All disappeared on 6 October 2023 after being abducted by members of the "Tariq bin Ziyad Brigade", a militia led by Khalifa Haftar's son, Saddam Haftar, in the Al-Salmani Al-Sharqi neighborhood of Benghazi (eastern Libya). After the news about AL BARGHATHI's death, Alkarama urgently referred his case and that of his companions to the [UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions](#) on [27 December 2023](#).

FOCUS ON ALGERIA

VISIT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION AND SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON THE SITUATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Mr Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#) carried out a [visit](#) to Algeria from 16 to 26 September 2023.

Prior to his visit, Alkarama submitted a report highlighting the use of counter terrorism laws to suppress peaceful political and human rights activism. Under the pretext of fighting terrorism, Algeria regularly invokes article 87 bis of its Penal code which vaguely defines the concept of "terrorism", thus extending its scope to include various types of activities that are in fact non-violent acts of political nature.

Alkarama previously addressed several UN Special Procedures mandate holders about the abusive use of this legislation to repress political movements, activists and peaceful demonstrators.



Clément Nyaletsossi VOULE, Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

The attention of the human rights protection mechanisms was drawn to the human rights situation in Algeria and the pressing challenges facing civil society in the peaceful exercise of its fundamental freedoms to express itself and demonstrate in the context of the "Hirak", a widespread peaceful popular protest movement.

Following Alkarama's submission, [UN experts called](#) on the Algerian government to reform its antiterrorism legislation stating that it "is in conflict with the principle of legal certainty, undermining the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, and also imposing disproportionate sanctions on acts that should not be dealt with under anti-terrorism legislation."

In its contribution to the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, Alkarama reiterated that any call for political reform or change of government such as the Hirak popular protest is treated by the Algerian authorities as acts of terrorism under article 87 bis.

Following his visit, the expert said he could not see any "evidence for the fear that opening up civic space could lead to chaos. Rather, the peaceful and civic spirit of Hirak protests was evidence to the contrary."

The Special Rapporteur noted that "the large number of civil society actors facing terrorism-related charges under article 87 bis of the Penal code is evidence of the current climate of suspicion towards civil society actors, as are the criminal charges brought against individuals, associations, trade unions and political parties for having held meetings with partners from other countries or receiving funding from foreign sources, prohibited under the highly restrictive law 12-06 and other legislation."

In September 2022, Alkarama had [raised](#) the issue of the illegal listing of individuals and entities as "terrorists" by the Algerian government after the latter proceeded to the unlawful listing of 16 people, in spite of [calls](#) by independent UN experts to refrain from doing so. While reprisals against political opponents and other peaceful activists in Algeria continued, authorities even began to target relatives of political opponents abroad as illustrated by the arrest of Abderrahmane ZITOUT.

On 30 September 2022, Alkarama [submitted](#) his case to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ([WGAD](#)) indicating that Abderrahmane ZITOUT had been arrested for the sole reason that he was the brother of an exiled prominent political opponent in London, Mohamed Larbi ZITOUT.

Mohamed Larbi ZITOUT had been recently listed as a “terrorist” by the Algerian government because of his involvement in the [Rachad Movement](#), a peaceful political opposition movement, of which he is a co-founder.

It is in this context that his brother, Abderrahmane ZITOUT was arrested on 30 March 2022 by a dozen armed police officers in plain clothes who took him to an unknown location. He disappeared following his arrest until 4 April 2022, when his family learned that he was in the prison of El Harrach (Algiers). He later reported having spent the first five days of his detention at the central police station in Algiers, where he was questioned at length about his ties with his brother, his political beliefs and whether his brother provided financially for his parents.

While he had no political activities, he was still charged with carrying out “subversive activities”, being a member of a “terrorist group” and “publishing false news”, in reprisal for his brother’s activism.

On October 2023, following Alkarama’s submission, the WGAD issued [Opinion No. 53/2023](#) in which it qualified his detention as arbitrary and requested his immediate release. The Working Group considered that he is being detained on a discriminatory basis, in particular because of his family ties and in retaliation for the activism and political

opinions of his exiled brother. The UN independent experts described his case as one of “guilt by association”. The Working Group reaffirmed that “in a free and democratic society, no one may be deprived of his liberty for crimes, real or otherwise, committed by a member of his family by birth or marriage”.

The targeting of human rights defenders’ family members was also pointed out by Ms Mary Lawlor, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#), who also carried an official visit to Algeria [between 25 November and 5th December 2023](#).

“Human rights defenders who choose to operate outside of the government designed civil society framework face serious difficulties, which also impact on their families.”, said the Special Rapporteur in her [statement](#) adding that “some human rights defenders I intended to meet, refused or cancelled at the last minute, for fear of reprisals.”

The Special Rapporteur also shared that her visit was “overshadowed by a number of human rights defenders, members of civil society organisations and victims of human rights violations being prevented from reaching Tizi Ouzou while I was there. As they travelled to the city, they were either stopped at checkpoints, or detained in a police station for over ten hours.” Therefore, she reminded that the work

of a human rights defender “is legitimate, even if it is critical of the government’s approach to, or protection of, human rights.”

She has shared the same concerns as her colleague, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and assembly, following his visit in Algeria in September, over article 87bis of the Penal code to suppress the human rights defenders.

The Special Rapporteur explicitly stated in nearly all of her meetings with government ministries that “the definition of terrorism in this article is so broad and vaguely worded that it allows huge scope for the security services to arrest human rights defenders.”

As recommended by Alkarama on many occasions, she has called on the Minister of Justice to consider amending this article to ensure that the definition of terrorism and related crimes are “accessible, precisely formulated, non-discriminatory and non-retroactive, in line with international best practice.”

THE MASHREQ

This year, Alkarama used both individual case documentation and reporting to UN experts and treaty bodies to draw attention to the human rights situation in **Iraq**. Alkarama specifically focused on the practice of enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention and torture in all detention facilities.

Furthermore, Alkarama monitored other critical issues such as the situation of detainees in **Lebanon** and **Syria**. In **Palestine**, the ongoing conflict in Gaza has resulted in what Alkarama and other organisations have characterised as genocide and crimes against humanity. Simultaneously, the settlers' violence against Palestinians in the West Bank continues without any accountability nor punishment.

New restrictions on public freedoms in **Jordan** have prompted the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to denounce the country's new cybercrime legislation as actively furthering the shrinking of Jordanian civic space.

public freedoms: right of association, peaceful assembly, expression and media, human rights defenders

On **8 November 2023**, following its visit to Rafah border crossing with Gaza, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr Volker Türk, expressed that “in the context of a 56-year-old occupation, the current situation is the most dangerous in decades” for Palestine and for the region. Since its beginning on 7th October 2023, the conflict has taken a severe toll on journalists and media workers in Gaza who are facing significant risks in their attempt to report the events amid communication being curtailed by Israel.

Restrictions and criminalisation of online activities by individuals and organisations in Jordan were also on the agenda this year. The Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Liz Throssell, **voiced** serious

concerns about the new cybercrime law that fails “to comply with international human rights law requirements of legality, legitimate aim, necessity and proportionality for restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.”

In the past years, Alkarama documented many severe acts of reprisals against peaceful activists in Iraq for having used their right to freedom of expression.

On 9 August 2023, following its official visit to Iraq, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr Volker Türk, expressed his concerns over “a series of actions taken by people in positions of power – for example, bringing criminal defamation suits against journalists and civil society actors – have created a chilling effect on freedom of expression.”

Right to life, liberty and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

The situation of detainees in **Lebanon** remains of particular concern. On 21 April 2023, Alkarama submitted its **contribution** to the draft general comment of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) on Article 4 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

In its contribution to the SPT, Alkarama

highlighted Lebanon’s **failure to operationalise its National Preventive Mechanism** (NPM) established by a 2016 Law. In the meantime, detainees are forced to bring their complaints about acts of torture or ill-treatment to the very authorities responsible for carrying out or condoning such acts in the first place. This leaves them with no hope of finding real relief for their suffering.

In these circumstances, Alkarama continued to document death in detention and **raised** its concerns regarding Roumieh prison, in the east of the Beirut, following the death of two prisoners in less than 48 hours due to very poor detention conditions.

While the human rights situation in **Syria** remains dire, Alkarama highlighted the issue of Syrian refugees being forcefully expelled by Lebanon as a clear violation of the Convention against Torture which forbids the removal of individuals to places where they may be at risk of torture. Since 19 April 2023, Lebanese authorities have forcibly deported about 150 Syrian refugees to their country via the “Masnaa” crossing point. These deportations occurred on the premise that the Syrians lacked residency documentation in Lebanon, while a proposal to deport 15,000 Syrian refugees every month was revealed.

In a similar vein, the unlawful

extraditions of detainees to Syria has raised concerns in Iraq, as highlighted by the case of Azmi Derri Mohamed AL HADDAR. On 11th May 2023, Alkarama sent an urgent appeal to the [UN Special Rapporteur on torture](#) requesting that Iraq refrain from returning AL HADDAR, a Syrian national who has been arbitrarily detained in Al Rusafa prison in Baghdad, to his country where he would be at risk of torture. While Alkarama is continuing to monitor his case, AL HADDAR remains in detention in Iraq.

Extraditions in violation of the prohibition to expel individuals to countries where they may face the risk of torture have also been carried out in **Jordan**. On 19th May 2023, Alkarama [expressed its concerns](#) over Jordan's extradition of Emirati businessman Khalaf Abdulrahman AL RUMAITHI – sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison by the Abu Dhabi authorities in connection with the so-called "UAE 94" case – despite the risk of torture and ill-treatment and in flagrant violation of the Convention against Torture to which Jordan is a party.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has expressed concern over Jordan's extradition of Khalaf AL RUMAITHI to the UAE. The OHCHR has called upon Emirati authorities to fully ensure his rights are respected, and to release

immediately all those imprisoned for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association.

In [November 2023](#), more than 30 independent UN human rights experts warned that the “Grave violations committed by Israel against Palestinians in the aftermath of 7 October 2023, particularly in Gaza, point to a genocide in the making.” The attitude of Western countries towards the genocidal crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza, resulting in tens of thousands of casualties mostly women and children, is beyond comprehension.

With the exception of a few countries, like Belgium, Ireland and Spain, many European countries appear to be blatantly complicit in the excessive use of force against Palestinian civilians, genocide and war crimes. Their approach puts them in the position of sharing the responsibility to humanity for these appalling crimes.

There is a growing conviction that most Western governments supporting Israel have become a threat to the international human rights system, whereas tyranny in the Arab world was previously the main problem in this respect.

FOCUS ON IRAQ

ADVOCATING AND LITIGATING AGAINST ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND IMPUNITY

This year, Alkarama pursued its efforts to clarify fates and whereabouts of victims of enforced disappearances in **Iraq**.

While official figures estimate that between 250,000 and 1,000,000 individuals have disappeared since 1968 due to conflict and political violence, Alkarama has submitted over 200 cases of enforced disappearance to the UN Committee against Enforced Disappearances (CED) so far.

On **19th April 2023**, the UN CED published its report following its visit to Iraq from 12th-25th November 2022. The Committee raised serious concerns about the recurring practice of enforced disappearances in most of the regions of Iraq during different periods coupled with the prevailing impunity.



A woman who lost her husband and son in Iraq in 2016.

In its findings, the Committee signaled Iraq's absence of compliance with its duties under [Article 30](#) of the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and stated that the "majority of the registered requests for urgent action remain unanswered".

As noted in previous [reports](#) submitted to various UN Committees by Alkarama, Iraq consistently fails to fulfil its conventional obligations. Despite Alkarama raising 150 urgent actions concerning disappeared individuals, these actions remain unresolved. As a result of this noncompliance, the CED frequently urges the State party to engage in good-faith collaboration with the procedure. Within one year, the State party was reminded multiple times to cooperate with the UN.

In [February 2023](#), the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances has urged the Iraqi government to provide details on the whereabouts of Yahya AL JABOURI, Dawood Salman Hasan Haboush Hassan AL ISSAWI and Hasan Mohamed Hasan AL ESSA who all went missing after being arbitrarily detained in 2014 and 2015.

Dawood Salman Hasan Haboush Hassan AL ISSAWI's case was [submitted](#) to the CED by Alkarama and Al Wissam Humanitarian Assembly after his abduction from his home on 8 June 2014 by a patrol that consisted of armed

police officers and the Imam Sadiq regiment of the Badr Organization (Shia militia in Iraq).

Palestinian refugee Hasan Mohamed Hasan AL ESSA was apprehended on 8th July 2015 by several operatives of the Special Weapons and Tactics Unit (SWAT) who arrived at his workplace and took him into custody before his brother and other employees.

On 14th July 2015, Alkarama and Al Wissam Humanitarian Assembly [submitted](#) an urgent action to the UN CED concerning Yahya AL JABOURI, who was arrested with his brother, Moussa AL JABOURI, at their home on 8th July 2014 by a dozen heavily armed men dressed in military trousers and plain T-shirts. They were transported to an unknown location in vans without any license plates.

In [July 2023](#), the UN CED renewed its appeals regarding the cases of Ali Alwan Khalaf AL JANABI, Ibrahim Sobhi Moussa Alwan AL JABOURI and Amer Abdul Majeed AL TIKRITI, who have been missing for many years.

Ali Alwan Khalaf AL JANABI's disappearance was reported to the CED by Alkarama and Al Wissam Humanitarian Assembly in an urgent appeal dated [31 March 2017](#) following his abduction by a group of soldiers of the Iraqi Army in his house in Latifiya.

As for Ibrahim Sobhi Moussa Alwan AL JABOURI and Amer Abdul Majeed AL TIKRITI, their cases were submitted by Alkarama and Al Wissam Humanitarian Assembly on [30 July 2015](#). They were among a dozen other Iraqi citizens who were abducted from their homes in Baghdad in April 2014 during a wave of arrests by SWAT forces. Since then, they remain disappeared.

This year, Alkarama's efforts have led to the [localisation](#) of Efané Hatem Dahham AL ABBASSI who was detained in Baghdad's women's prison. After more than three years of enforced disappearance, the Iraqi authorities finally acknowledged AL ABBASSI's detention and announced that she was sentenced to 15 years of prison for terrorism allegations.

Her situation was submitted to the UN CED on [20 November 2019](#) by Alkarama and Ikram Centre following her abduction on 24 September 2019 by an intelligence force at her house in Tikrit, Salah al-Din province.

THE NILE

While concerns persist about the arbitrary detention and mistreatment of political dissidents and other non-violent activists in detention facilities in **Djibouti**, the situation in **Sudan** has further deteriorated due to the outbreak of a war last April.

In **February 2023**, following his visit in Sudan, Mr Radhouane Nouicer, expert on the human rights situation in Sudan, **called** to urgently address the accountability of the security forces to the population within a framework of democratic civilian oversight, the rule of law and respect for human rights. He emphasised the need to establish the Transitional Justice Commission, as per the law adopted in 2021 and to restrict the use of the emergency legislation in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Sudan has ratified in 1986.

In Egypt, Alkarama has primarily focused on the widespread and systematic violations of rights and freedoms that are still rampant. In its October 2023 **report** submitted to the United Nations (UN) Committee against torture (CAT), Alkarama **stressed** that the human rights situation in Egypt, which had already been of concern since its last periodic review by the CAT in 2002, had seriously deteriorated over the years and, in particular, since the military takeover by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on 3 July 2013.

Alkarama has continued to document to the UN human rights mechanisms, numerous cases of violations of public freedoms, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary detention and other severe abuses that have occurred through the country.

Public freedoms: right of association, peaceful assembly, expression and media, human rights defenders

Alkarama has closely followed up the situation of public freedoms and human rights defenders which remains concerning in **Sudan**.

On **5th October 2023**, the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan published a **report** based on the Commission's independent investigations in 2023 to underline the "entrenched systematic repression in regard to the media, human rights defenders and civil society". The report highlighted the persistence of attacks on journalists and human rights defenders and detailed how the National Security Service "has instituted a pervasive and unlawful censorship regime to curtail independent media, and imposed widespread restrictions and surveillance on civil society".

In **Egypt**, Alkarama continued to monitor restrictions on civil liberties, particularly those aimed at repressing political dissent.

On **10 October 2023**, on the occasion of the International Day against the Death Penalty, Alkarama and other human rights NGOs issued a joint statement denouncing the death sentences

handed down following political trials in Egypt.

Alkarama drew attention to the repressive legal framework used by Egypt to stifle any form of dissent, especially since the "Muslim Brotherhood" political party was designated a "terrorist organisation" in 2013. In its alternative **report** to the CAT, Alkarama stressed that under the pretext to "fight terrorism", Egypt has enacted numerous laws, including the counterterrorism legislation that vaguely define the concept of "terrorism" and subsequently expands its scope to include different additional "terrorist acts" which are, in fact, non-violent forms of political opposition. Alkarama has continued to follow-up on cases demonstrating Egypt's misuse of terrorism trials to target human rights defenders, silence dissidents and detain activists.

Right to life, liberty, and security of persons: enforced disappearances, summary executions, torture, arbitrary detention

Throughout the year, Alkarama has monitored multiple cases of repression and violations of human rights in **Sudan** and has filed several complaints before the Special Procedures regarding victims of enforced disappearances.

In early **June 2023**, Alkarama submitted

an urgent appeal with the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearance (CED) concerning Mohamed Ali Abdullah AL JAZOULI, a political activist and head of the State of Law and Development Party, who was abducted on 17 May 2023 by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan. While being held in an unknown location, he was coerced to give a false confession under duress which was recorded and used to implicate him with the Islamic State. AL JAZOULI was previously arrested and released following a complaint filed by Alkarama before the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) regarding his arbitrary detention.

Violations to the right to life and security of persons prevailed in **Egypt** where inhumane prison conditions constitute a great source of preoccupation.

Alkarama received numerous testimonies from detainees' families about utterly deplorable conditions in Badr Rehabilitation and Correction Centre also known as the "Badr Prisons Complex 1, 2, 3". In a joint statement, Alkarama and multiple NGOs decried the Egyptian authorities' severe infringements of human rights inside all Badr complexes noting that the inhumane detention conditions constitute a clear violation of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) established by

the UN. Fearing that the detention facilities conditions constitute a gateway to slow death, Alkarama specifically addressed several UN human rights Special Procedures requesting their intervention with the Egyptian authorities to ensure the detainees their basic rights as per International human rights Law.

During Egypt's review by the CAT, Alkarama aimed to increase awareness regarding the persistent impunity in the country. In its report to the CAT, Alkarama has emphasised the absolute necessity to put an end to this entrenched impunity. Alkarama asserted that the Egyptian authorities' failure to implement and enforce international law as well as their unwillingness to fulfil their conventional obligation are contributing factors to the prevalence of violations in the country.

Impunity is also perpetuated by national institutions that were originally set up to deal with human rights violations such as the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights (NCHR).

On the 1st of June 2023, Alkarama presented its report on the NCHR to the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the body responsible for evaluating National Human Rights Institutions' compliance with the Paris Principles.

In its report Alkarama highlighted the lack of independence of the NCHR from the government stating that it is being effectively used as a public relations tool by Egypt to cover up its dismal human rights record.

FOCUS ON EGYPT

ENDEMIC IMPUNITY AND EROSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS



Mural of torture in Egypt: “Torture is a crime against humanity”. (revsoc).

A [decade](#) after the large-scale Rabaa Square massacre, the human rights situation in Egypt was [reviewed](#) for the fifth time by the Committee against Torture (CAT) which is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) by State parties. Egypt submitted its fifth periodic report, which was 19 years overdue, during the 78th CAT [session](#) held in Geneva between 30th October and 24th November 2023.

In October 2023, Alkarama [submitted](#) its alternative [report](#) prior to the examination raising concerns about the country’s human rights situation, including, the conditions of detention in Egyptian facilities, the widespread practice of arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and the misuse of the antiterrorism law by authorities.

In this context, Alkarama specifically drew the UN independent experts' attention to Egypt's refusal to recognise the systematic torture in the country. Alkarama's report highlighted the State party's non-compliance with the procedure provided by Article 20 of the UNCAT which allows CAT's experts to trigger an inquiry if they receive "reliable information which appears to it to contain well-founded indications that torture is being systematically practiced in the territory of a State party".

Concerned about the pervasive use of torture, Alkarama initiated this procedure in March 2012 through an initial report, corroborated with numerous accounts of torture, which was regularly [updated](#) until 2016. These reports, along with other UN bodies and officials concurring reports, led the CAT to state that it had received enough evidence to conclude that torture had remained systematic in Egypt despite various changes in government. In light of the information received from Alkarama and other sources, the CAT, has [concluded](#) that torture is "habitual, widespread and deliberate" in Egypt.

Following the inquiry, the CAT recommended Egypt to end the practice of torture in detention facilities, ensure a zero-tolerance policy to end impunity for perpetrators and make sure officials publicly condemn torture and ill-treatment. However, the

Egyptian government did not comply and failed to implement the Committee's recommendations even rejecting crucial ones including the immediate "end the use of incommunicado detention", or the creation of "an independent authority to investigate allegations of torture, enforced disappearance and ill-treatment."

During this year's review, Alkarama recalled Egypt's failure to address human rights violations [emphasising](#) the significant deterioration of the situation since General Al Sisi's military coup in 2013. Alkarama stressed the urgent necessity to prompt Egypt to definitely halt these violations and to ensure a proper follow-up to oversee the implementation of all recommendations.

Even though the Egyptian delegation repeatedly denied that authorities commit human rights violations during the [public meeting](#), the Committee noted a prevalent use of arbitrary detention and allegations of enforced disappearances, torture or ill-treatment. Following the periodic review, UN experts issued several [recommendations](#) in line with those suggested by Alkarama to cease these practices.

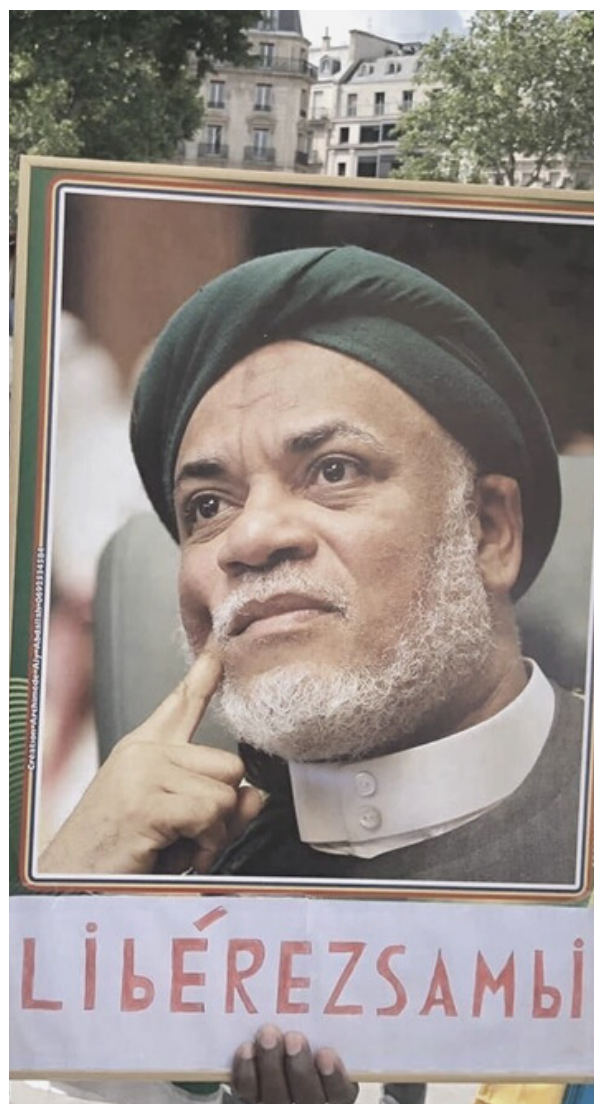
FOCUS ON COMOROS

DENOUNCING POLITICAL TRIALS THROUGH THE CASE OF FORMER PRESIDENT SAMBI

Alkarama continued to closely follow-up the human rights violations in **Comoros** through the illustrative example of the former President Ahmed Abdallah Mohamed SAMBI.

On **17 January 2023**, concerned by his definitive life sentence following a procedure that was clearly marred by numerous irregularities and in flagrant violation of international norms and domestic law, Alkarama once again referred his case to the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (**WGAD**).

Alkarama first submitted his case on **29 May 2018** following his arrest in May 2018 in Moroni after he had publicly criticized the decision of his successor, President Azali ASSOUMANI, to suspend the Constitutional Court and consider a referendum to revise the Constitution and thus allow the extension of his mandate.



A banner at a protest in Paris calling for the release of President Mohamed Sambi, who has been arbitrarily detained since 18 May 2018.

Following Alkarama's request, the UN WGAD issued [Opinion No. 65/2018](#) and urged the Comorian authorities to release him considering that his deprivation of liberty is arbitrary and recalled "that the right to hold opinions, including opinions critical of official government policy, and to express them, is protected by international human rights law."

Despite the Working Group's Opinion, the Comorian authorities refrained to release him and even imagined giving a legal character to his detention by referring him on 20 August 2018, before an investigating judge, the nephew of President Azali ASSOUMANI, who charged him with corruption and ordered his placement in a four year "provisional detention".

After four years of imprisonment in difficult conditions, the former President was referred to the Court of State Security, an emergency court reinstated in violation of the Constitution by President Azali ASSOUMANI to try his opponents.

From the "threat to public order" to justify his arrest to the accusation of corruption without evidence to allow his continued detention for 4 years, SAMBI was finally sentenced to life imprisonment by the State Security Court under the pretext of "high treason", an unfounded accusation imagined by the Comorian authorities

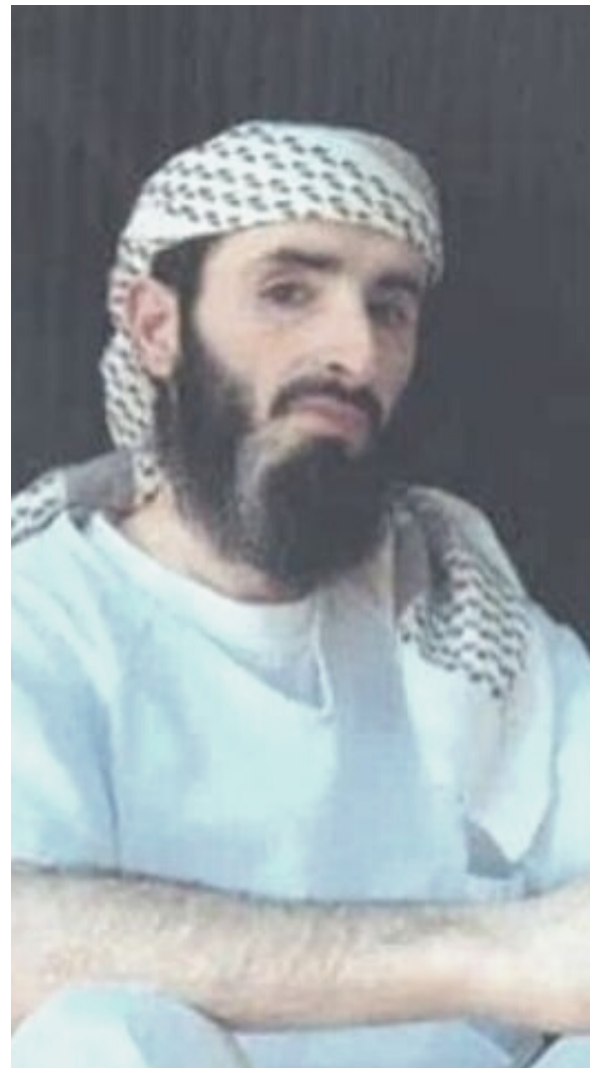
only to give a semblance of legality to his detention and thus exclude him permanently from the political life of the country.

FOCUS ON THE USA

UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS CALL FOR THE SAFE RELEASE OF MUSTAFA AL JADID AL UZAYBI, ONE OF THE LAST REMAINING “FOREVER PRISONERS” IN GUANTÁNAMO

On 2 June 2023, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ([WGAD](#)) published its decision concerning the indefinite detention of Mustafa Faraj Mohammad Masud AL JADID AL UZAYBI (also known as “Abu Faraj AL LIBI”). Alkarama had [submitted a complaint](#) on his behalf to the WGAD on 29 November 2022.

This Libyan national has been arbitrarily detained in Guantánamo Bay detention centre since his transfer from a CIA “black site” on 4 September 2006. While detained in these black sites, AL JADID AL UZAYBI was subjected to torture inflicted by CIA agents in the form of “enhanced interrogation techniques”. The United States government officially [recognised](#) having subjected AL JADID AL UZAYBI to at least the following acts: “(1) dietary manipulation, (2) nudity, (3) attention grasp, (4) walling, (5) facial hold,



Mustafa Faraj Mohammad Masud AL JADID AL UZAYBI (also known as “Abu Faraj AL LIBI”).

(6) facial slap or insult slap, (7) abdominal slap, (8) cramped confinement, (9) wall standing (10) stress positions (11) water dousing, and (12) sleep deprivation (more than 48 hours).

As a result of this torture, AL JADID AL UZAYBI is today, according to US military medical personnel itself, “the most severely impaired and incapacitated detainee at Guantánamo Naval Base”, because of the torture and mistreatment inflicted on him by US forces for the past nearly two decades.

Today, AL JADID AL UZAYBI’s detention has no end in sight. Almost 20 years after his arrest, the US authorities have never produced a single witness or incriminating material evidence to support AL JADID AL UZAYBI’s continued detention.

In their [Opinion](#), the UN experts found the United States of America responsible for his arbitrary detention, whereas Pakistan and Romania were also found responsible for his early secret detention in CIA bases in which AL UZAYBI was subjected to severe forms of torture.

The WGAD experts concluded with concern that although AL JADID AL UZAYBI is the most disabled and incapacitated detainee at Guantánamo Bay, he is not receiving the medical care he needs because the US government

refuses to provide detainees with the same level of medical care it provides to its own personnel. As a result, his health has seriously deteriorated and, with no release date in sight, he is effectively being held in inhumane indefinite detention, which itself amounts to a form of torture and cruel treatment.

Moreover, the experts noted that the various denials of and restrictions on the rights of AL JADID AL UZAYBI were also due to discrimination on the basis of his religion as Muslim man. While the Working Group specifically addressed AL JADID AL UZAYBI’s case in this decision, the experts stated that the conclusions reached in his case also apply to other detainees in similar situations at Guantánamo Bay.

The experts concluded that “over the past 15 years, the Working Group has addressed several cases of detention at Guantánamo Bay” highlighting “the pattern that all these cases follow and recalls that under certain circumstances, widespread or systematic imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty are a violation of fundamental rules of international law and may constitute crimes against humanity”.