Abstract

Title of Thesis: Bahrain Beyond the Pearl: Political Prisoners and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Gulf's Forgotten Uprising

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In February and March 2011, thousands of Bahrainis flooded into the streets and the Pearl Roundabout to protest political, economic, and social inequality. After approximately two weeks of protest, the Bahraini government, with the assistance of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s Peninsular Shield Force, crushed the actions, killing at least a dozen people and imposing martial law. Throughout the two weeks of protest and afterwards, many Bahrainis were arrested for their role in or connection to political organizing and action in the country. Once detained, many of these individuals were tortured at the hand of the state, including, for some, sexual torture. This thesis explores two key questions—*who, and which groups* are tortured by the state using sexual violence, and *why* are these groups subjected to this form of violence more than others? The thesis then argues that women, older men, and individuals who occupy advocacy roles or are charged criminally are at greatest risk, due to a combination of factors including gender and the law, social mobility and standing, and state perceptions of power and control.

Bahrain Beyond the Pearl:
Political Prisoners and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the Gulf's Forgotten Uprising

By

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Dedication

To the people of Bahrain in their struggle for a better, more just, and more equitable life.

شكرا لقصصك شجاع

Thank you for your brave stories

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Finally, to my parents, you made this all possible. Thank you.

Clarifications on Language

Placing the "Arab Spring" in the "Western" Context

In a post 9/11 United States, the popular narratives that surround the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) revolve around a handful of topics: terrorism, oil, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iran, or a combination of these. Despite the United States having spent the better half of three decades at war with various states and actors in the region, in 2006 only 30% of Americans could identify Iraq on a map (CBS News, 2006). Nearly 20 years later, still less than half of Americans could identify Afghanistan (National Geographic, 2019). American (and broadly "Western") geopolitics, coupled with forces of Islamophobia and xenophobia, have painted the region with a large, homogenizing brush.

Few history-making instances in the region during the last two decades have demonstrated this attitude to the extent of the events of the "Arab Spring." When Mohamed Buazizi, a street vendor in Tunisia, self-immolated in an individual act of protest on December 17, 2010, his death literally sparked movements against corruption, autocracy, violence, and economic woes across the entire region. The impact of this so-called "Arab Spring" cannot be overstated in regional and global politics. Some of the conflicts and unrest that in many states rose out of the uprisings are still occurring today, and influence policies, regional and "Western", around the world.

However, the etymology of the "Arab Spring" is rooted in Western histories. In what is now known as the "Springtime of Peoples" or the "Springtime of Nations", Europeans across the continent protested monarchical regimes in 1848, hoping to usher in a new "season" for the citizenry—a "spring", after the long "winter" of monarchism and inequality. Another European "spring", The "Prague Spring", took place in 1968 in what was at the time Czechoslovakia. Strongly supported by the United States, the Prague Spring hoped to institute economic liberalization via capitalism after experiencing another "winter" of communism. Joseph Massad, professor at Columbia University, asserted in 2012 that the United States' media and government labeling of the "Arab Spring" as such (allegedly first coined by Mark Lynch in the *Foreign Policy* journal) is a direct attempt to label the protests and uprisings as unequivocally advocating for liberalization and democratization. This serves a twofold purpose—first, to allow the United States to maintain its economic and diplomatic power position in the region (like in Prague in 1968) and to allow the United States to distance itself from the support that it has provided to many of the dictators being protested (Massad, 2012). While "spring" represents the ultimate goal of many of the protestors—reform or even regime change—its rootedness in a Western context fails to address the plethora of ways in which the individuals who participated in these protests visualized these goals succeeding.

I turn now to exploring the "Arab" part of the "Arab Spring", crucially its homogenizing effect. In a non-exhaustive list, protests during the period known as the "Arab Spring" occurred in at least the following countries: Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Oman, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq. While all considered Arab states (the orientalist assumption that all Arab people are homogenous notwithstanding), to equivocate protests for reform in Oman with active calls for regime change *twice* in Egypt is at best, an oversight of the ideological and human diversity of the movements, and at worst, a perpetuation of bigoted narratives about Arab states and their people.

As a white researcher of people of color who have been frequently subjected to violence at the hands of the country in which I hold citizenship, I am conscious of the ways in which to present the narratives of Bahrainis who experienced state repression during the uprising and

beyond firsthand. For that reason, when referring to movements that took place during the "Arab Spring," I will not be using the term, to capture the diversity of movements but also to use the intended labels of the people to whom the stories belong. Instead, terms like "Bahraini Uprising" and other locally originating terms will be used.

A Note on Political Prisoners and Carceral Spaces

Everyone considered in my project can be broadly categorized as a "political prisoner". The breakdown of categories of survivors is further elucidated in my methods section, however, all survivors of violence included in my data were detained related to anti-regime actions (or being a close family member or friend of one detained related to anti-regime actions). These individuals were held in a variety of different detention facilities—in American English vernacular, jails, prisons, and police station holding cells. Despite the variety of detention facilities, experiences across each facility were relatively uniform, and similar forms of violence happened across all locations. For this reason, I will refer to these facilities interchangeably as "prisons", "jails", and "detention centers." Similarly, despite the variety of affiliations survivors identified with, I will be referring broadly to all individuals in my data set as "political prisoners" or "[political] detainees."

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

This thesis explores the aftermath of the popular uprisings that swept across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) in 2011, specifically in the small Persian Gulf country of Bahrain. These mass social movements, beginning with the December 2010 self-immolation of Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Buazizi, created a variety of macro-level outcomes across the MENA region, with some countries ousting political leaders, others falling into conflict, and some enacting reforms.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, however, did not experience any of these outcomes. Contrary even to its Gulf monarchy peers, the Bahraini state elected a methodology of repression without question, utilizing the military arm of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Peninsular Shield Force, to repress protestors and restore the status quo.

Thousands of Bahrainis were detained as a result of their political organizing as a part of this crackdown and repression. Dozens of them were subjected to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), across various backgrounds, gender and sexual identifiers, and ages. This thesis explores the variety of factors that impact one's risk and experiences of SGBV.

Bahrain

Geography and Politics

Bahrain (Arabic: "البحرين" "*al-bahrayn"*, meaning "two seas") is a tiny archipelagic country located in the Persian Gulf, about 15.5 miles (via the King Fahd causeway) east of the Saudi Arabian coast. The nation's capital, Manama, is located on the largest of the islands, Bahrain Island, and most of the nation's approximately 1.5-million-person population is centered around the city. Although Bahrain is one of the least frequently studied states in the MENA region, the state of Bahrain both past and present plays an important role in the Persian Gulf, the Middle East and North Africa, and the world as a whole.

Fig 1.1 GISGeography, *Map of Bahrain: Cities and Roads, 6 November 2022*

Fig 1.2 Nations Online Project, *A Map of Arabia*

The Bahraini government is a nominally constitutional monarchy, and the royal family is the Al Khalifa dynasty, which has ruled since conquering the country from Persian rulers (Global Edge, Michigan State). The generational collective memory of the 1783 Al Khalifa arrival amongst the majority of Bahrain's native Shi'a population is one of an "invasion" with the Al Khalifa house as an occupying force. This conception serves as both a rallying point amongst Bahraini Shi'a and a point of concern for the monarchy.

In the modern-day, Bahrain maintains crucial relationships with its former colonizer, the United Kingdom, as well as with the United States through the military and neighboring Gulf States through the Gulf Cooperation Council. The United States Fifth Fleet (part of Naval Central Command and the US's naval force in the Persian Gulf) is headquartered in Bahrain.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is also crucial to both the dynamics of society in Bahrain and the strategies through which Bahrain operates its domestic repression and

international policy. The GCC, founded in 1981, includes all states included in the geographic region of the Arabian Peninsula except for Yemen. Five of the six GCC member states, including the Kingdom of Bahrain, have royal families that practice Sunni Islam.

Economy

Bahrain, historically known as the "pearl of the Gulf", is a place of great wealth, but also a place of great suffering, due to significant wealth inequality. Bahrain is the first Gulf state to transition into a burgeoning post-oil economy, where large amounts of economic revenue now come from tourism, and significantly, the financial sector of the oil industry (Peterson, 153). The Bahrain Economic Development Board boasts of the country's prowess in the financial technology and Islamic finance sectors, as well as highlighting the variety of companies (BNP Paribas, Standard Chartered, Citi, and American Express, to name a few) that maintain a presence in the country ("Bahrain, An Established Financial Services Sector").

Sectarianism

Crucial to social organization in Bahrain is Islamic sectarian identity. To maintain power and control over the population, the Al Khalifa house has played into sectarian Sunni-Shi'a divisions in times of peace and in times of conflict. The majority of the native population of Bahrain is ethnically *baharnah* and religiously Shi'a. As the royal family is Sunni and a minority, designed sectarian stratification has been a primary method of state control. This artificial segregation ensures that the Shi'a population typically occupies the lower socioeconomic roles in society, as well as limiting employment options for Shi'a Bahrainis. These inequities are further exacerbated by the immigration of Sunni Muslims from around the world, but especially from Pakistan and other parts of South Asia. Often, Sunni immigrants perceive Shi'a members of society as their competition for receiving jobs and, occasionally, citizenship (Matthisen, 35).

As a result, Shi'a disenfranchisement in society crosses different aspects of daily life and effectively limits all but a select few Shi'a individuals and families from achieving the wealth and power enjoyed by the Al Khalifa family and their majority-Sunni allies. Prior to the beginning of the Bahraini Uprising in 2011, the United States Department of State's religious freedom report found Shi'a members of the Bahraini population were subject to systematic discrimination in fields as diverse as mosque construction funding, employment, education and education training, and socio-economic status overall (US Department of State, 3-5). It is in many ways this continued practice of economic, social, and political disenfranchisement that drove the actions of the 2011 uprising, with Bahraini Shia and their Sunni allies pushing for increased plurality and agency for all people within the Bahraini state and its political system.

Demography and Gender

Bahrain's demography demonstrates the diversity of individuals involved in the anti-government uprisings in 2011. As shown in the population pyramid on the next page, Bahrain's 2012 population skewed heavily male and towards younger adults in their late twenties and early thirties. Significant portions of this male surplus are a result of immigration to the country from around the world, but primarily from southeast Asia (India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan) (United Nations, 5). These migrants, largely Sunni, play a large role in pro-government versus anti-government tensions (Matthiesen, 35).

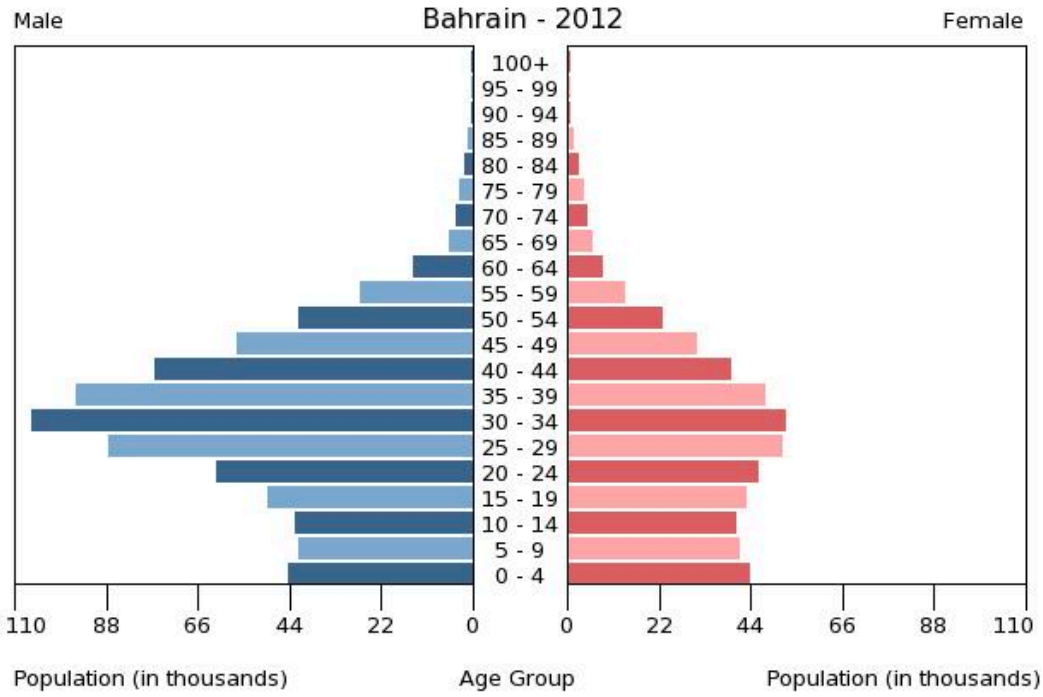

Fig 1.3 PopulationPyramid.net

On the female side of the population pyramid, the population skews similarly youthful. Both the male and female sides of the population experience systemic inequalities, especially for those who are Shi'a or *baharna*, as well as for migrant workers. Bahrain is ostensibly committed to a variety of international initiatives including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, women in Bahrain are subject to inequity under the legal system, health systems, and employment. On the legal side, Bahraini women are limited in their ability to independently accumulate wealth and initiate divorce proceedings. Laws against domestic violence and sexual violence also enable male perpetrators significant leniency provided they marry their victim (Gharaibeh). Bahraini women's access to female-specific healthcare is often also limited, including pap smears and mammograms. However, women in Bahrain are very active in the workforce, with 34.3% employed (the highest percentage amongst the Gulf States) (Gharibeh).

The 2011 Uprising in Bahrain

Following inspiration from similar uprisings that began in January in Egypt and Tunisia, Bahraini political organizations called for a mass protest, the "Day of Rage" ("*yawm al-ghadab")* on February 14, 2011 to push for pro-democracy policies and an expansion of rights. Beginning on the 14th, individuals began camping out at the Pearl roundabout, a now-demolished public square in Manama, to pressure the government.

Fig 1.4, The Pearl Roundabout, Source: Caren Firouz, Reuters

Fig 1.5, The Pearl Roundabout After Destruction, Source: Hamad I Mohammed, Reuters

On the 17th of February, the Pearl roundabout was stormed by governmental security forces, and seven protestors were killed. Clashes continued through March, when the Bahraini government brought in 1,000 troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to crack down. A state of martial law was also imposed. Protests continued at various scales through the summer of 2011, and mild periods of unrest continue until today (Reuters 2011).

Throughout the periods of protest, many individuals were arrested in a variety of ways. Some individuals were arrested at protests themselves through crowd control and kettling. Others were detained at hospitals—this included both injured protestors and medical workers who treated those who were harmed. A number were also arrested outside of the context of protests but on suspicion of having been involved in the past—at home, at places of work, or otherwise. These individuals, many of whom were subjected to SGBV as a method of torture, make up the dataset of consideration within this project.

Research Question and Following Chapters

Given the complex dynamics at play in Bahraini society, several reasons influence whether individuals are subjected to SGBV at the hands of the Bahraini state. This thesis will explore which political detainee groups experience increased sexual and gender-based violence in Bahraini Prisons, and what social and situational factors and roles influence these rates. The following four substantive chapters of this thesis will address this question.

Chapter 2 of the thesis includes the literature review and the methodology section. The literature review explores the history of carceral development and the relevant research that exists on SGBV as a method of torture across different contexts and periods. The methodology section will highlight the sources of the data utilized in the project and how the data was analyzed, coded, and organized. This chapter provides the theoretical grounding that will shape the remaining analysis of the thesis and therefore is presented first.

Chapter 3 begins the data analysis, focusing on the female section of the dataset and exploring the legal factors and social perceptions and status that influence higher rates of SGBV for female detainees. Female detainees experience higher rates of SGBV than male detainees. Therefore, analysis within this chapter has the largest amount of data to consider (within the respective group) and can therefore provide strong initial analysis of the motivations behind state SGBV torture.

Chapter 4 will then look to male detainees, focusing on men's social role as well as historical instances of homosexual SGBV in the Arab-Islamic world. Continuing analysis of male detainees through a gendered lens in Chapter 4 following the Chapter 3 analysis of female detainees allows for consistency in analysis as well as comparison between the two groups.

Chapter 5 moves beyond gender as the *central* lens of analysis, focusing instead on social role as perceived by the Bahraini state rather than demographic identity. This chapter will focus

especially on individuals who are arrested by the Bahraini state and charged with criminal, "felonious" charges, and on individuals who serve as human rights advocates or medical professionals. Concluding with this chapter allows exploration of other units of analysis and presents a space where future inquiry is possible in an expanded version of the project.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the background knowledge crucial for exploring the analysis in remaining portion of the thesis. This includes background on the history, economy, politics, and social structure of Bahrain, as well as the background of the 2011 movement in the country. Finally, the chapter introduced the upcoming research and analysis that will be introduced in the following chapters of the thesis, and the reasoning behind the organization of the chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Methods

Introduction

This chapter introduces the key academic literature produced on issues of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in carceral spaces around the world, spanning Europe, South Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the "reasoning" behind the use of sexual and gender-based violence as a method of torture. Throughout this thesis, I will utilize this literature as an additional analysis tool, comparing the Bahraini case to existing evidence and cases of SGBV in political prisons and against political prisoners. Finally, this chapter introduces the methodological process behind the data collection for this project, as well as highlighting initial conclusions and potential limitations.

Literature Review

The following literature review explores four key aspects of the scholarly work that surrounds sexual torture and gender-based violence in the carceral space: systematized inequality through intersectional identity, the development of the modern carceral state and how modern methods of torture interact within it, research on the roots of sexual violence in carceral spaces, and case studies. This literature stems from a variety of academic disciplines, from philosophy to sociology to gender and sexuality studies, and covers a broad range of world regions. However, this literature review also demonstrates a gap in studies of SGBV in carceral spaces in the Arab world, one that this project will fill.

Systematic Inequality and Intersectional Identity

To understand the root causes of SGBV in prisons during the Bahraini uprising, one must identify the multifaceted social roles that political prisoner survivors of SGBV inhabited and understand the *intersectional* identity of each political prisoner who suffered this form of torture. Kimberlé Crenshaw's work provides the conceptual framework of intersectionality that I utilize in this thesis. Crenshaw discusses how experiences of battered women of color in the United

States often fall at the figurative roadway intersection of race and gender, where social inclinations and structures of racism and sexism both work together to oppress these women in their struggle for justice (1243). Rather than race and gender as key identity factors as is the focus in Crenshaw's study, intersectional oppression in Bahrain results from gender and a combination of sectarianism and economic disenfranchisement. These identities and the oppression associated with them are rooted in a governmental and policy belief in the inferiority of the native *baharna,* the indigenous Arab inhabitants of Bahrain (Shehabi and Jones, 23). Crenshaw's work is the first to conceptualize intersectionality, and it is still the predominant academic research on the topic. Therefore, based on Crenshaw's work highlighting how marginalized Black and female identity in the United States can contribute to multifaceted oppression, I argue that because Bahraini political prisoners often inhabit similar marginalized identities, they are subject to similar intersectional oppressions. SGBV is just one form of this oppression, along with the economic and political disenfranchisement previously introduced. However, due to the lack of institutional power these marginalized identities have in Bahrain, SGBV is perpetrated by prison and security forces largely without fear of recourse. This thesis thus allows for an expansion of the ideas of intersectionality to an international context and explores how intersectionality theory can operate functionally in spaces where United States conceptions of racialization and gender are not present as the dominant identity narrative.

Foucault and the Modern Carceral State

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *History of Sexuality* (1977) provide the logical beginning point for understanding torture and incarceration, as the work details the development of the modern carceral system. Foucault argues that the brutality of torture has removed itself from the public eye, and in its place is a new, more formulaic carceral state, one based around control, rather than "spectacle" (*Discipline and Punish*, 4-5). This removal from

the public eye corresponds to the shift from "sovereign power" to "disciplinary power", where physical state power and the repression or reward system shifts to a system of knowledge and surveillance (*History of Sexuality,* 177). Thus, while Foucault notes that torture still exists, it has shifted away from being fully within the bounds of the "spectacular" into a new space, the hallmark of the modern carceral state: the *certainty* of punishment (*Discipline and Punish,* 8) due to the prevalence of repressive knowledge production through disciplinary power.

Foucault's description of the modern carceral state explains the efficiency with which the Bahraini government processed protestors, advocates, and their affiliates into various facilities. However, it fails to explicate the way in which torture in the 21st century has returned to the spectacular, or the realm of sovereign power. While Foucault finds that the modern state exerts control over its population, especially those who are incarcerated, via timetables, labor, and disciplinary power, I argue that violence and torture, specifically the renewed 21st century publicization of torture as a tactic, serve to expand belief in the total control of the state and its jurisdiction of the physical bodies of its people. The Bahraini state imprisoned people without torturing them in 2011 and continues to do so today. However, the spectacular and frequently implemented violence perpetrated against political prisoners serves the interest of the Bahraini government to portray themselves as all-controlling and all-powerful. Foucauldian reasoning would assert that torture would be converted in the modern carceral system to timetables and other methods of control. However, in the case of Bahrain, torture has not been transformed to timetables as would be expected. Instead, torture remains a key facet of the broader project of the carceral state of Bahrain against subsets of its population it deems to be threats to the socio-political order.

Sexual Torture – Global Examples

Torture of political prisoners has occurred across most regions of the world and many periods. Sexual torture is perpetrated by state actors and political groups to achieve many key objectives, including intimidation, a divorcing of individuals from their ideology, and an attempt to socially ostracize political actors who pose a threat. I highlight three cases here that provide a survey of the existing studies of sexual torture praxis and its goals.

The first is the case of the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency in India, which began in 1967. The Naxalites, as Marxists, had a stake in and posed a legitimate threat to disrupting the existing class relations of India (Purkayastha, 114), and thus the government had an interest in limiting their impact through any means necessary. Therefore, the SGBV torture of Naxalite operatives was characterized as a politically advantageous action for the state. Purkayastha's work on the Naxalite insurgency can contextualize some of the reasoning behind SGBV in Bahrain. The desire of the Indian security forces to both quash a political threat and gather information in the torture space (Purkayastha, 114) reflects the goals of the Bahraini government in 2011 and beyond. The perception amongst the Bahraini government was that Shi'a political agitation posed a direct threat not only to the power of the Sunni ruling family, but the entire, tenuous balance of the state. Both the Bahraini Shi'a and the Naxalites threaten the social order the state wants to protect to improve their political and economic status.

Specific patterns and strategies utilized by the Indian state—auxiliary detentions and systematic praxis—appear in the Bahraini case as well. The torture perpetrated against the Naxalites followed a careful method of who was detained and what torture methods were used (Purkaystha, 123). Purkaystha's study indicated that frequently, political agitators who were known to the state experienced the traumatic moment of their family members being sexually

threatened in front of them to extract information from the primary detainee. This practice is also frequently utilized in Bahrain.

Additionally, for nearly all Naxalite prisoners, a similar pattern of violence once detained was also perpetrated. Detention began with an initial beating upon arrest and transport to a holding location. Once the detainee was processed to their holding location, more intense torture, including sexual violence, was perpetrated (Purkaystha, 124-25), a practice repeated in Bahrain.

Another frequently cited case is The Troubles, or the lengthy conflict between the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) (McConville, 3-6). The actions of the RUC that have been investigated by scholars including Seán McConnville, amongst others, since the formal conclusion of the Troubles over two decades ago. These explorations demonstrate another example of the careful and methodological strategy behind actions of torture like SGBV against political prisoners. The actions of the RUC followed the case of the Naxalites as well as Bahrain, where the PIRA was regarded as a threat to the Northern Irish social order and therefore had to be quelled by any means. McConville acknowledges that torture and interrogation over longer periods often includes an eventual deviation from "standard" torture methodology (something also seen in Bahrain), however at a base level, consistent methodological practices of torture against political prisoners were present in Northern Ireland, India, and Bahrain to stem their political activity.

Like the Naxalites and the Bahraini political prisoners, the RUC's initial torture involved hooding, verbal abuse, and beating (McConville, 235). Following this initial round of torture, RUC officers then tortured detainees sexually: full body-searches on both female and male detainees, which include the removal of clothes, and a close inspection of sensitive areas such as the area underneath a woman's breasts or man's scrotum, or within the buttocks area, in addition

to a thorough search of the detainee's hair and mouth (McConville, 902). Other male prisoners were also subjected to beating on their testicles, in addition to physical violence on other parts of the body (McConville, 235). The carceral *modus operandi* of the RUC, like that of the Indian government and the Bahraini government, was a class of torture that explicitly included sexual and gender-based violence against detainees to quash their political organizing and activity.

Finally, and most recently, is the case of Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, run by the United States during its invasion and occupation of the country. One of the most well-publicized examples of modern sexual torture, the actions of the United States military again demonstrated the calculated methodology of SGBV and reflected on the Foucauldian logic of the total institution of the disciplinary state (*Discipline and Punish*, 1977). Problematized in writings on Abu Ghraib is the idea that sexual torture was not divergent from the broader American project of occupation and violence in Iraq. Rather, it was just another modality of force (Puar, 79). At Abu Ghraib, torture was only one part of the state-led violence (legal, physical, and psychological) against the population of the country. It was not separate or an anomaly but was rooted in and benefited the larger suppressive project of the US occupation of Iraq (Puar, 81-82). An important caveat in the case of Abu Ghraib is that detainees at the prison were not specifically political prisoners— instead, they were prisoners of war, detained as part of the American occupation. However, I argue that the mass detention of Iraqi men as a process of de-Baathification served as a form of political imprisonment, and thus Abu Ghraib can be placed in a similar context to Bahraini detainees.

SGBV as a method of state control is also present in Bahrain, where discrimination against significant subsets of its population (Shi'a Muslims, women, and others) occurs across a wide subsection of political, legal, and social settings. Puar's logic, applied to the Bahraini

government's actions, indicates that while SGBV torture was just one part of the state-led violence (legal, physical, and psychological) against the vulnerable populations of the country, it was not separate or an anomaly, and in fact advances the suppression of marginalized groups (Puar, 81-82). SGBV torture is just another portion of the social project that serves to limit the "threat" of political coordination of minority groups in Bahrain, just like India and Northern Ireland.

Theoretical Literature on Sexual Torture

Literature on sexual torture also delves into the "why" questions, which I will be in conversation with alongside the presentation of data in this thesis. In Bahrain, women, the elderly, individuals charged criminally, and advocates (medics and human rights advocates) are most likely to experience SGBV in prison, and the some of the reasons behind this can be found in the following literature.

Sexual torture of political prisoners differentiates itself from non-SGBV forms of torture in two ways, as argued by Agger. First, while physical torture usually is conducted within its own sphere, separate from psychological torture, SGBV as a torture method bridges these gaps—one can experience the physical violence of SGBV and experience psychological harm. Additionally, unlike standard physical torture, in most cases, sexual torture may leave no trace on the body of the detained (Agger, 306). Second, sexual torture serves to separate the detained from their humanity and agency, which perpetrators often view as separating the political prisoner from their "problematic" beliefs (Agger, 308). Agger's arguments apply to Bahrain, because security forces in the country melded physical and psychological brutality with SGBV as a response to the "regime-threatening" beliefs of many of their detainees.

The idea of women's bodies as sites of national identity has also become more prevalent in the literature, often through research on SGBV as a method of torture in genocidal conflicts

like the wars in the former Yugoslavia or in South America (Mostov, 518). While this idea fails to completely explicate the prevalence of SGBV against female detainees in Bahrain, I argue that part of the reason for high rates of SGBV against women is because they are the "mothers", literally and figuratively, (Mostov, 518) of the Shi'a majority population seen as a threat by the Bahraini government. However in the Bahraini case, since the violence is being perpetrated by the state internally on its own citizens and not by an outside enemy, there is no "foreign invasion" of women's bodies as in the Yugoslavian case, and thus this is not a perfect comparison.

Similarly, cited in work on the Guatemalan genocide, Meyer argues that women are characterized in society as reproductive bodies—both in the physical sense (children), but also in the socioeconomic sense (creating the next generation of workers and producers) (Meyer, 123, Álvarez-Arenas & Sanford et. al, 36). While the characterization of women as physical mothers clarifies the Bahraini case, the literature on socioeconomic impact is less relevant, as Shi'a individuals are already economically devalued and disadvantaged in Bahrain. While Bahrain has one of the highest rates of female employment in the MENA, with more than 50% of workers in the government women (Bahrain News Agency, 2021), this does not reflect female Shi'a participation, as employment in public sector Bahraini positions is forbidden or extremely difficult to obtain as a Shi'a Muslim (US Department of State, 3-5). Therefore, while Shi'a women's fecundity is a concern to the Bahraini state, the socioeconomic contributions of Shia mothers outside of the home weigh less heavily on its economic structure.

A second insight can be found in the Álvarez-Arenas & Sanford piece (Álvarez-Arenas & Sanford et. al, 36), arguing that in Guatemala, patriarchal *and* racist ideology creates misogynistic actions against women. These interlocking systems of oppression (Crenshaw 1243,

Combahee River Collective, 1977) lead to insurmountable pressure on both the perpetrators to follow this ideology, and on the women who cannot overcome these dual pressures (Álvarez-Arenas & Sanford et. al, 40). Laws and structures that limit women's access to legal recourse are abundant in Bahrain despite relative gender equality in other categories ("Profiles of Women in STE in Bahrain"). Additionally, sectarian discrimination perpetrated by the Sunni guard population against Shi'a detainees acts similarly to systematized racial discrimination in Guatemala. These dual forces of sectarian prejudice and legal misogyny further limit female detainees' access to legal recourse, generating additional license for abuse.

Scholarly literature also discusses the role of the family, especially in SGBV against male detainees. Research on the Greek Civil War also found that male detainees were often threatened with SGBV against their female family members. Greek officers often described female members of detainee's families as whores (Stefatos, 26). This study also indicates how family plays a key role in the masculinization of individual men, which will be explored further in Chapter 4. However, it does not delineate how insults to the family function to emasculate male detainees whose family members are being brought into the torture space. My research will further explore this connection by demonstrating the prevalence of verbal SGBV against elderly detainees, who are more likely to have families.

Literature Review Conclusion

This literature review focused on four key concepts—(1) intersectionality, (2) the carceral state, (3) sexual and gender-based torture in practice around the world, and (4) some of the dominant intellectual literature on the reasoning behind using sexual and gender-based torture in carceral spaces. Each of these concepts elucidates some of the reasoning behind what many political prisoners experienced in Bahrain. The works of Puar, Foucault, and Sanford present many of these numerous but often overlapping "reasons" for torture that utilizes sexual and

gender-based violence. However, the literature presented in this review also highlights the lack of existing academic contributions regarding SGBV in Arab prisons, except for Jasbir Puar's work on an American-run prison in the Arab state of Iraq. This thesis will be a step towards addressing this gap in the literature. It will demonstrate how international concepts like intersectionality and the theoretical reasoning behind sexual and gender-based torture presented in this literature can, in many ways, be utilized to explore instances in Bahraini prisons, while simultaneously addressing the unique nature of the Bahraini case in its geopolitical context as a small, wealthy Persian Gulf nation. This thesis will also serve as a resource for scholars interested in doing comparative research on prison SGBV in other states in the MENA region that experienced uprisings in the 2010s.

Methodology

Data

The following chapters of the thesis rely on data coded from a decade's worth (2011-2021) of reports written primarily by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), sometimes with co-authorship or independent publishing by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), Human Rights Watch (HRW) or Amnesty International (Amnesty). BCHR is a Bahraini non-governmental organization founded by Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in 2002. Since 2004 after being banned by the Bahraini government, the BCHR has operated in exile out of Denmark and France, staffed by a small team of diasporic Bahrainis ("About Us", Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Wayback Machine). The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) also operates out of exile, from London, England ("About BIRD", Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy). Each of these organizations focuses on a variety of rights violations in the Bahraini state, including a variety of unlawful detentions, various instances of torture, and other cases. To write their reports, utilized most heavily in the data analysis of this project, the

BCHR specifically contacted individuals or families of individuals who were detained after taking part in political actions (or were somehow connected to individuals who had taken part).

The reports written by these four organizations that contributed to the dataset consist of interviews about and with political detainees and their experiences in prisons in Bahrain. In most cases, the reports begin by introducing the individual's biographical information, and if known, the prison where they were detained and where they experienced torture. First-hand accounts from family members or friends of the detainees then follow, in some cases including direct accounts from the detainee once they are released. These two-to-three-page reports are typically published originally in Arabic and English, and sometimes in French.

Analysis Introduction

The analysis and coding of this data was a three-step process. First, I read each of the 105 total reports, and recorded the key qualitative facts. Each qualitative fact was then organized into respective categories, as introduced below. Within each case, each form of violence a political detainee experienced was marked with an "occurred" or "did not occur" binary marker.

Regarding categorization, I created four demographically identifying markers for each of the political detainees who are a part of my dataset. These categories are age, religious affiliation, sex, and "affiliation" (similar to "role"). The definitions and numbers for each category can be seen in Table 2.1 below.

Category	Definition	Sub-groups
Age	Age of subject at time of detention	Minor (18<), 18-29, 30-40, 40+
Religious Sect	Sect of Islam	Sunni, Shia
Sex	Sex presented in report	Male, Female

"Affiliation"	How one is connected to the political movement	**Protestor:** Those arrested at a protest and charged with assembly-related charges **Advocate:** Human rights advocate or medic **Affiliate:** Family member or loved one of someone detained **"Criminal":** Someone charged criminally as a result of political activities

Table 2.1

While I recognize that gender is not a binary distinction but a large and inclusive umbrella, I have utilized the binary gender identifiers with which the human rights organizations that authored reports labeled the individuals in each report. I am unable to know whether these individuals have identified differently since their experiences were reported upon, or whether their lived gender was accurately identified at the time of the report. Therefore, my project will describe each survivor of violence as either male or female, reflective of how they were introduced in the relevant reports.

The overarching definition of sexual and gender-based violence utilized in this project is that of the United Nations:

> "Acts of a sexual nature against one or more persons or that cause such person or persons to engage in an act of a sexual nature by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear of violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or such person's or persons' incapacity to give genuine consent. Forms of sexual violence include rape, attempted rape, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, child pornography, child prostitution, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, forced public nudity, forced virginity testing, etc" (United Nations).

Sexual and gendered violence exists in multiple forms and means different things to different individuals. However, the United Nations definition addresses the roots of power and control of the perpetrator(s), making it the most relevant definition for this project. Building from this definition, I identified five categories of violence perpetrated against political prisoners: Physical (non-sexual and gender-based [non-SGB]) violence, Verbal (non-SGB) violence,

Deprivation, Physical SGBV, and Verbal SGBV. Each detainee's experience fits into one or more of these categories. Some individuals experienced multiple forms of violence while detained, while others experienced only one type. The definitions and parameters of each of these five categories are in Table 2 below.

Category	Parameters and Definition
Physical (non-SGBV) violence	Physical attacks against detainee manually or with an object against all parts of the body *excluding the genital area*
Verbal (non-SGBV) violence	Insulting detainee or forcing detainee to insult or praise others. *Excludes sexual threats*
Deprivation	Restriction from food, medical care, or inhibiting a detainee's prayer/religious practices
Verbal Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	Threats of rape or other sexual violence against detainee or their family, friends, or loved ones (affiliates)
Physical Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	Unwanted physical sexual contact either manually or with an object, including a full-body cavity search or strip search

Table 2.2

My dataset numbers 93 cases, of which 78 individuals have their full background stated (age, sex, religious sect, and social role). The remaining 15 cases are individuals for whom one or more of these identity markers are missing from their report. For all 93 cases, the individual's date of arrest or detention is also recorded, allowing for exploration of whether similar practices of prison violence occurred over various periods of arrest between 2011 and 2021.

Overall Trends

Through analysis of this data, three main trends are present, with individual variance within each trend. These three trends are the focus of the following chapters of the thesis. First, throughout the dataset, despite underrepresentation, women are tortured by the state through SGBV at greater rates. This trend, the variance within it, and the reasoning as to why this may be the case is addressed are **Chapter 3.** Second, within the male section of the dataset, SGBV

increases consistently over age but reaches significantly high rates for detainees over the age of forty, which is explored in more depth in **Chapter 4**. Finally, individuals (regardless of gender) who serve as advocates or are charged criminally are significantly more likely to experience SGBV, a trend explored in **Chapter 5**.

Limitations and Methodological Conclusion

The scope of this dataset and the project is limited in a few ways. First, the majority of the dataset is made up of Shi'a Muslims. While Shi'a individuals make up the majority of the political prisoner population, Sunni individuals were also arrested for political organizing. Further exploration could thus include deeper cross-sect comparison. Functional data analysis in this project also required me to assign one social role to each individual whose case is a part of the set, based on which category they most closely matched. Individuals may fit within multiple categories. However, just the closest match was utilized in the analysis. Finally, Bahrain has a prison population that includes non-political prisoners (individuals arrested for crimes like robbery, drug crimes, etc.). These individuals also often fall victim to SGBV and torture in prison. While these stories are crucial and deserve to be told, they fall outside of the scope of this project, which is exclusively focused on the experiences of political prisoners.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the theoretical literature and background that will be considered when elucidating the reasons behind the variance in sexual and gender-based violence experience amongst political prisoners in Bahrain. I then detailed the methodology utilized throughout the project, including the data collection, analysis, and limitations. The following chapters will further explore the variance within the data set and link the data analysis presented with relevant literature and social conditions to explore SGBV praxis and policy.

Chapter 3: Gendered Violence against Female Detainees

"They beat me and shouted 'You are going to be sexually assaulted' and 'This is the last day of your life!'" -Ayat al-Gormezi, Student and Poet, Age 20

Introduction

This chapter focuses upon on the variance within the female dataset of sexual and gender-based violence in prison. While both men and women experience violence committed by Bahraini security forces, including SGBV, in prison, instances of SGBV occur at different rates for men and women. I argue that these differing rates reflect pre-existing inequalities in Bahraini society, global and local constructions of gender, and other instances of SGBV in prisons and carceral spaces around the world. First, I present my data, which indicates that while women are underrepresented in the political prisoner and overall population, they are overrepresented in cases of gender-based violence due to heteronormative social pressures, women's role as reproducers, and legal constraints. I then analyze the data, considering gender, law, family and other factors.

The Data

Of the 78 complete cases of political prisoner violence documented in my dataset, 50.63% of prisoners experienced sexual and gender-based violence, as demonstrated in Chart 3.1 below.

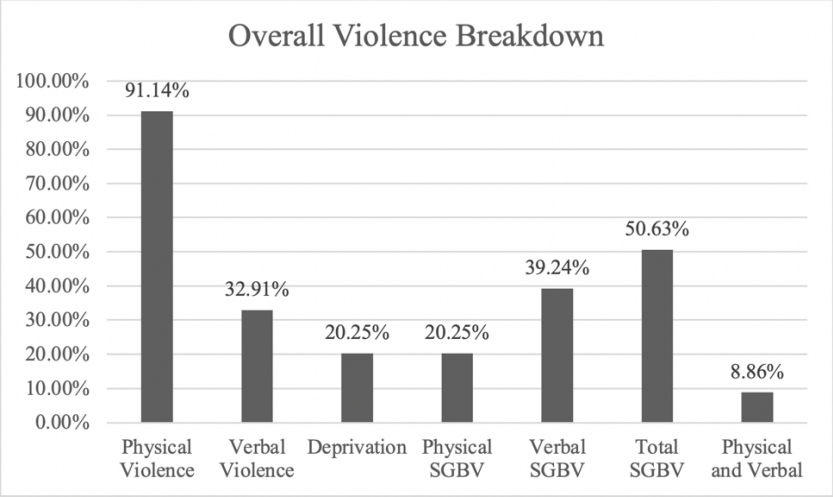

Chart 3.1

That means that over half of all political prisoners in Bahrain were tortured sexually, indicating that SGBV is regularly employed within Bahrain's prisons. Although this tool is used at an approximately 50% rate overall, there is variance between men's and women's experiences with SGBV in prison (see chart 3.2 and 3.3 below).

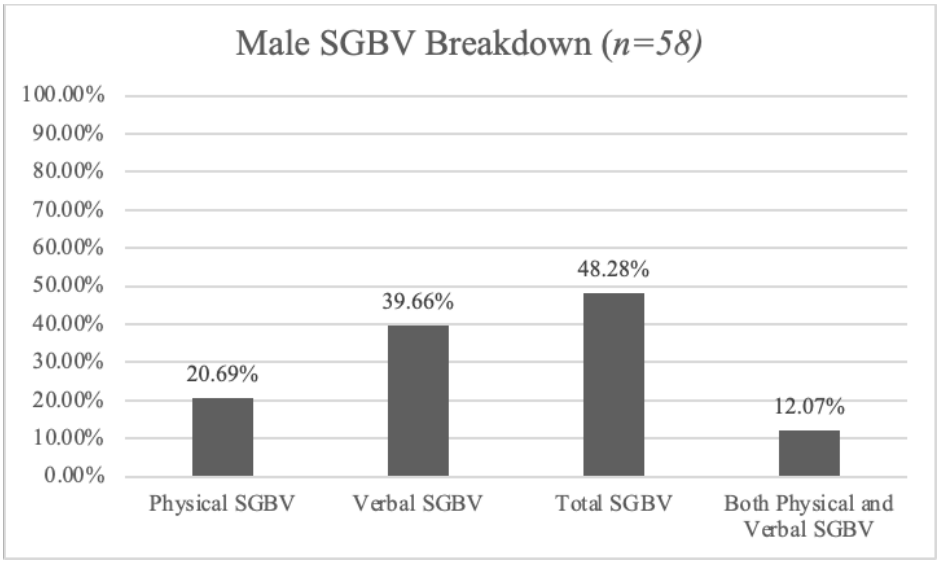

Chart 3.2

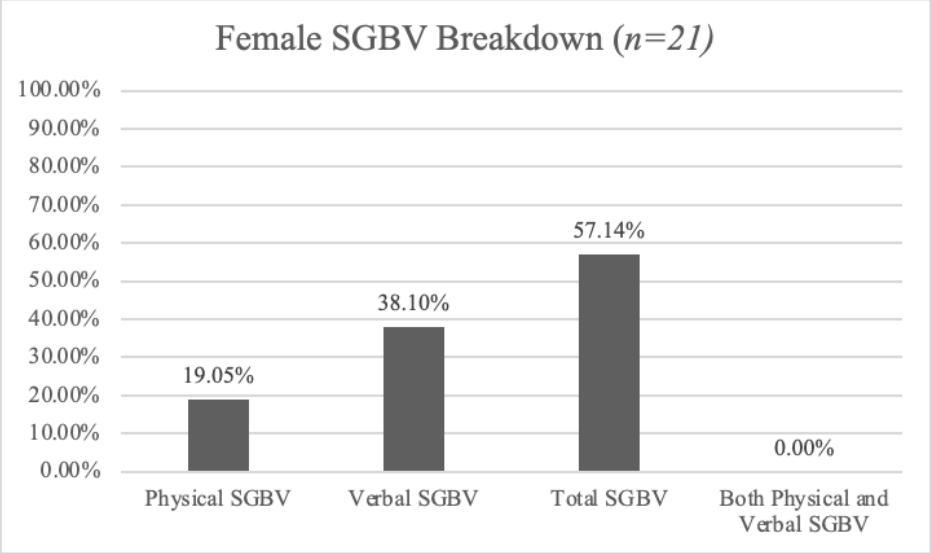

Chart 3.3

Even though women make up only about 27% of the dataset, they experience SGBV at an approximately 9% higher rate than male detainees. Additionally, women differ from men through their experience of exclusively one type of SGBV (physical *or* verbal, never both). The overrepresentation of women becomes especially clear when considering the Bahraini population. When considering solely citizens, women make up 49.4% of the population, but including the whole population, women make up just 38% of the total population, a number closer to their share of the data set than to their overrepresented share of SGBV (Kingdom of Bahrain, Population and Demographics)

Women and Gendered Violence

As introduced in the literature review, there are a variety of reasons why women are victimized by Bahraini security forces at increased rates of gendered violence in prisons and carceral zones. In this thesis, I argue that there are three primary causes of comparative increased rates of SGBV against female political prisoners in Bahrain's prisons: normative femininity through family, women's identities as reproducers of a "threatening" community, and fewer

avenues for justice. These three components create an environment where perpetrators of torture believe that the tactic of SGBV is effective against their female prisoners.

First, increased rates of SGBV for females result from the way SGBV undermines women's place in heteronormative Bahraini society. Security force's victimization of women often leads to increased social isolation and emotional and potential physical harm for female survivors. The possibility of this extreme harm makes SGBV an enticing method for security forces, who are interested in curbing political action via any means possible.

The heteronormative pressure present upon women in Bahraini society, like others, is deeply rooted in the cultural values of the nation, its peoples, religions, or any other combinations of macro-level organization that determine an individual's identity. In the case of female political prisoners in Bahrain, feminine normativity defines the role of women in the family and therefore heavily influences the choice to victimize women through SGBV. Bahraini women are part of a *heterosexual matrix* which imposes two main pressure points on women's sexuality (Hertz and Johansson, 1010). First, Bahraini society maintains a strong belief in the role of women as monogamous sexual partners to men within the structure of a family (Gharibeh, 102). If women experience sexual or gendered violence in prison, they are failing to maintain monogamy, regardless of consent. Second, Bahraini women who are perceived as sexually promiscuous (regardless of their choice in the matter) are exposed to the possibility of something called "honor crimes" (Gharibeh, 101). This is a comparatively rare occurrence. However, there is still a risk of this fatal violence for women. When women experience SGBV in prison, they are now subject to the possibility that their family, or society more broadly, will perceive them not as survivors but as a trespasser of the rigid heterosexual matrix. Thus, the use

of SGBV as a torture practice against women serves to alienate them from their family and from society, and in some cases, subject them to further physical risk.

As discussed in Chapter 2, sexual violence serves to dehumanize the survivor (Agger 308, Einolf 419). In the case of SGBV torture against political prisoners, perpetrators of SGBV seek to use this particularly extreme technique to sever the survivor from their political stance, thus marking them as no longer a threat to the security and interests of the state. For female survivors, the combination of dehumanization and separation from family and society makes the consequences of SGBV especially devastating.

The role of Shi'a female detainees as potential progenitors of the Shi'a majority population also leads to an increased rate of violence. The idealized depiction of women as the physical and proverbial manifestations of the future of a nation has dangerous connotations in Bahrain. Physically, women carry the children of a group, and contribute to the growth of that group in society. Proverbially, women are also often rendered responsible for the teaching of the group, both morally and politically (Meyer, 123). In the modern era, the role of women as ideological and intellectual teachers of the future of the community has been utilized as justification for sexual and gender-based violence. In the cases of the former Yugoslavia (Mostov), Guatemala (Alvarez-Arenas & Duyos), India (Purkayastha), and Greece (Stefatos), violation of women is used to assert dominance over an opposing group, be it a political organization, a different ethnic group, or a separate state. During the 2011 uprising and beyond the Bahraini government viewed the country's Shia majority populace as an oppositional force and a direct threat to its Sunni governmental hegemony (Matthisen, 19), the Shi'a population, especially its female population, falls into a similar category as those victimized populations in places like the former Yugoslavia and India.

Most critically, because female survivors also have fewer legal avenues to access justice after experiencing SGBV, torturers can operate with greater impunity. Bahrain's constitution includes provisions that are meant to provide gender equality on issues like healthcare, welfare, education, employment, and voting (Profiles of Women in STE in Bahrain, AAAS), and Bahrain is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (Gharaibeh,105). Despite these positive developments towards gender equity in multiple aspects of Bahraini society, legal protections for women in practice do not always correspond with the verbiage of the existing laws. The legal system continues to systematically disadvantages women who come forward with claims of sexual violence and sexual assault. Bahraini law prohibits women from testifying on their own behalf even if they are the sole witnesses to the crime, and their family members are not permitted to provide the sole testimony on their behalf (Gharaibeh, 102). Female survivors of SGBV in prison are often the sole witness to the crime (other security officers in the room notwithstanding, since they most likely would not testify on behalf of the survivor), and thus are not able to legally testify about their experiences. Even if they share these experiences and evidence of them with their families, their families are likewise forbidden from testifying on behalf of the survivor. These stringent requirements enable prison guards to commit SGBV with impunity, reliant upon the assumption that the high reporting and testimony standards will dissuade female survivors from coming forward and filing a legal complaint.

These three reasons account for the primary factors behind increased rates of SGBV against female detainees when compared to their male counterparts. Gender-based legal inequality, hegemonic heteronormativity, and physical and psychological motherhood are

symptoms of a broader inequality in society that affect Bahraini women at a greater rate than their counterparts of the male sex.

Variance within the Female Dataset

As introduced in Chapter 2, my dataset contains four identifying traits for each survivor of SGBV in prison—sex, age, affiliation, and religious sect. In this section, I will explore how women's ages and affiliations increase their rates of gendered violence compared to their male counterparts.

Age

Within the female dataset, gendered violence generally increases as the age of the prisoner increases. Of the 21-member female set of the database, 11 are minors (under 18), 1 is between the ages of 18-29, 5 are between the ages of 30-40, and 3 are greater than 40 years old (See charts 3.4-3.7 below). However, because there is only one female individual aged 18-29, their case will not be considered in the following analysis.

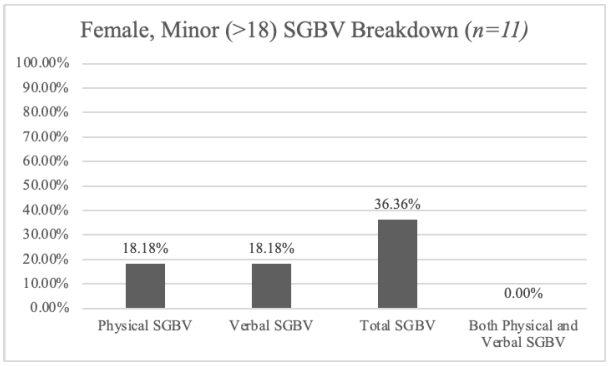

Chart 3.4

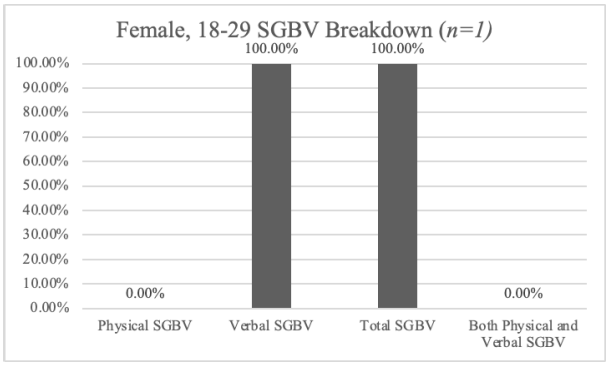

Chart 3.5

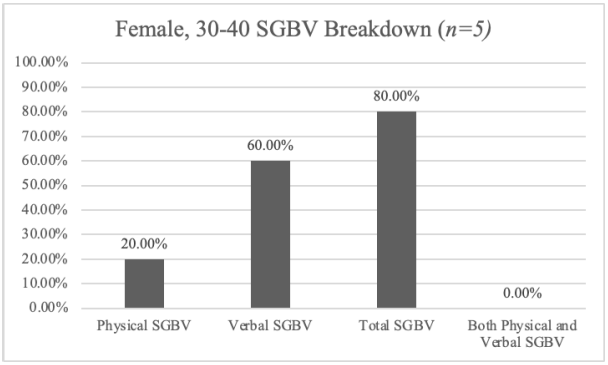

Chart 3.6

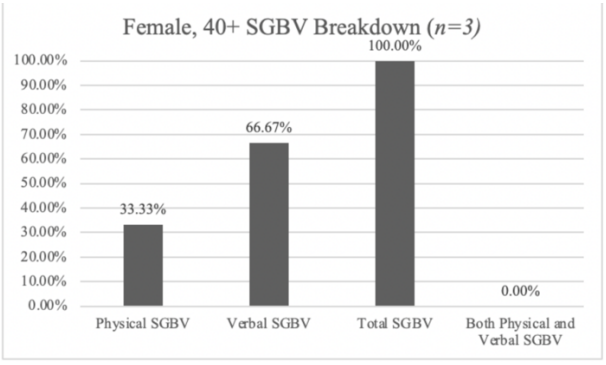

Chart 3.6

SGBV rates increase steadily for female prisoners, especially between imprisoned minors and the 30-40 age group, with a 43.64% increase. There is another significant increase of 20% between women aged 30-40 years old and women aged more than 40. The analysis of this section will begin by exploring the reasoning behind the extremely high rate against women over 30, and then address the comparatively low rate of sexual violence against women under 18.

When considering the high rates of sexual and gender-based violence experienced by women over 30, social pressures and their demographic context are key explanatory factors. Through the heteronormative matrix, as introduced previously, there is significant pressure placed on women in Bahrain to maintain heteronormative feminine behaviors, including marriage, familial reproduction, and sexual monogamy. For women, especially married women, there are significant familial and social impacts, including physical, for those who fail to meet these social expectations. These risks are especially prevalent for women who are married (Gharibeh,101). Thus, the aforementioned impacts from violations of heteronormativity (especially heterosexual marriage and child-bearing) resonate increasingly with women as they grow older in Bahrain, as their deviance from the social norm of marriage and children becomes more obvious.

The first key demographic indicator that influences SGBV rates is the population of women over the age of 30 who are married. According to the World Bank, the average age of a woman's first marriage in Bahrain is 26.9 years of age, nearly four years younger than individuals detained who are over 30 years of age (World Bank 2010). Additionally, the average age at which a woman births her first child in Bahrain is 29.9 years old (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs). These statistics indicate that female detainees over the age of 30 are likely to be at least married, and also likely to have children. This prevalence increases the risk of the state utilizing SGBV torture, because of the social pressures of marriage and child-bearing, and the social impacts of failure to adhere to these norms.

Bahrain's legal code criminalizes practices of adultery and sexual relations of any kind outside of marriage (Human Rights Watch 2021). In many cases, this law was implemented by the Bahraini government without consideration of the consent of any actors involved (Human Rights Watch 2021). While the lack of legal adjudication options for women who are survivors of SGBV creates a significant barrier for all women, specific regulations against sex outside of marriage further limit women's abilities to speak up against their perpetrators. If women are married, the Bahraini state can criminally prosecute them for being sexually assaulted. Since female detainees over forty are likely to be married and therefore have an additional legal hurdle to achieve justice, security forces may feel even more emboldened to commit acts of SGBV. Ultimately, married Bahraini women who experience SGBV at the hands of the Bahraini state are caught between a punitive state-designed legal system that punishes survivors and interpersonal and relational ostracization.

For the subset of women who are not married and are over the age of 30, experiencing SGBV can have significant consequences on their ability to find a spouse, due to religious and

cultural emphasis on virginity (Dhami and Sheikh, 2000). Unmarried women in Bahrain are not permitted to independently accumulate wealth, limiting their stability and social prospects within society (Gharibeh, 100). Therefore, if unmarried women experience SGBV and are therefore unable to marry in the future, they are legally and socially excluded from society in numerous ways. This exclusion again serves to increase the dehumanization and separation of the detainee from their social placement, and thus in the eyes of security officials, making them more likely to relinquish their political views to regain social standing.

Gendered, social and religious pressure to bear children also escalates the impact of SGBV against women of childbearing age, specifically those above the average age of having one's first child (29.9 years) (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs). Within Islamic cultural and religious practice, children are important to bear into the world—many traditions of the Prophet Muhammed emphasize the importance of fecundity and procreation within the Muslim faith (Dhami and Sheikh, 2000). However, for many survivors of SGBV, sex required for procreation can be nearly impossible, for both psychological and physical reasons. Numerous studies have demonstrated both decreased sexual satisfaction after experiencing sexual violence (Norris and Feldman-Summers, 1981, Orlando and Koss, 1983, and Feldman-Summers et. al., 1979) and an increase in sexual dysfunction (Kilpatrick et. al, 1988). Therefore, for female detainees of peak childbearing age (29+), the use of SGBV by security forces can limit a woman's physical ability or mental ability to have children. This in turn limits women's ability to be pious in their faith, achieve their own desires of childbearing, and increase social and familial pressure, all of which serve to alienate and dehumanize the survivor.

The use of SGBV by prison officers and officials against women over the age of 30 impacts women in many aspects—legally, physically, and psychologically. However, the

increased prevalence of SGBV for this age group revolves around the deep impunity for perpetrators who violate married women and how SGBV can harm women's ability to bear children, in turn harming women's ability to fulfill social roles and religious obligations.

Minor girls, under the age of eighteen, experience gendered violence at much lower rates than the rest of their female counterparts. Numerous arguments that could provide the reasoning behind this statistic, such as Islamic interpretations of virginity (Dhami and Sheikh, 2000), a possible increase in accountability due to these detainees' status as minors, or the moral qualms of prison guards and officials. While each of these reasons is compelling, when considered in the broader context of female detainees, each line of reason is called into question. The importance of virginity in Islam is crucial, but for unmarried women over the age of 30, this consideration is frequently disregarded, as are other religious foci such as the sanctity of marriage and childbirth. It makes sense, then, that Islamic conceptions of virginity are not the deciding factor in this case. While a female detainee's status as a minor may have an individual impact due to their young age, were they to legally plead their case, minor women are subject to the same laws that prohibit sole testimony and family testimony, and the same risks of honor crimes, ultimately making age a non-factor in one's access to legal recourse. One may also consider the idea of individual moral qualms against the violation of minors. While this is a compelling reason that could certainly account for variance in this case, it is also a nigh-impossible belief to quantify. In the following section, the interesting inroad linked to affiliation is explored, yet it does not fully elucidate the comparatively lower rate.

Age and Affiliation

As introduced in Chapter 2, individuals within my dataset are sorted into four groups – advocate, affiliate, protestor, or "criminal". The variance within the female dataset can also be elucidated through consideration of these affiliation differences.

A significant portion of women over the age of 30 serve as advocates, another potential cause of their age group's increased experiences of SGBV at the hands of security officials. Women who serve as advocates for human rights or for survivors of violence are more likely to witness evidence of violations by the state in a medical setting or through human rights organizing. One individual who was tortured via sexual violence in prison was Maryam al-Khawaja, the daughter of a noted human rights activist killed in prison (Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, one of the founders of the BCHR), and human rights advocate herself (Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 2011). The crushing SGBV experienced by Al-Khawaja in prison is a direct result of her political organizing on the human rights front, providing one of many examples where outspoken individuals or individuals who "know too much" are treated with dehumanizing and alienating violence to limit their status as a threat to the state. By subjecting these individuals to SGBV, the state attempts to limit their credibility and social status, and therefore their ability to operate as advocates effectively.

The story of Ebitsam al-Saegh is similar. al-Saegh is a human rights advocate who was threatened with rape and other SGBV if she failed to put a halt to her human rights advocacy (Amnesty International, 2017). The stories of al-Khawaja and al-Saegh demonstrate the sense of urgency felt by the state when considering these female human rights advocates. Female advocates were seen as direct threats to the stability of the regime but were also subject to laws that limited their ability to access accountability when violated. The state's confidence in their impunity leads to increased SGBV even for unmarried women over 30, the majority of whom serve as advocates.

Affiliation also provides another direction of exploration to elucidate why women under 18 experience SGBV at comparatively lower rates. The majority of women arrested under the

age of 18 are arrested simply for attending protests, often in connection with their classmates (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2011). One may thus assume that participation in protests as a "class" or as a "school" may be perceived by security forces as insignificant actions that lack the political impact of political organizing by established advocates. However, contrary to this assumption, minor women who are arrested on protest charges are actually *more* likely to experience SGBV than their peers who are detained for different reasons like being related to political activists. Following the argument that SGBV is used against individuals to separate themselves from their "dangerous" political views, security forces seem to consider young, minor women arrested at political actions just as much of a threat as their older counterparts. Therefore, while affiliation and age provide interesting inroads into an exploration of SGBV against women under 18, further research is required to determine causality.

Conclusion

This chapter first addressed the relevant data for female political prisoners who are survivors of SGBV in prisons in Bahrain and highlighted two key findings. First, the increased rate of female victimization over that of their male political prisoner counterparts, and second, the stark increase at which SGBV cases occur for women over 30 compared to their younger counterparts under 18. I argued that the increased rate at which women are victimized through SGBV torture is due to lack of opportunities for legal recourse, the importance of women as "mothers" of the Shi'a people, and cultural heteronormativity. I then addressed how these factors increasingly harm women over the age of thirty, resulting from decreased paths to legal adjudication for married women, increased social and religious pressures related to childbearing, and increased economic risk for unmarried women. Ultimately, SGBV tactics used against women serve to weaponize socio-legal and cultural practices against survivors to dehumanize

and alienate them from their family and the social sphere. This is performed with the ultimate goal to separate the survivor from their political opinions.

Chapter 4: Male Detainees and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

"They threatened to rape my wife, sisters, and daughter, and every night I heard the screams of others being tortured" -Dr. Abdul-Jalil al-Singace

Introduction

This chapter will deepen my analysis of the dataset by focusing on the majority population of the set: male political prisoners. Male political prisoners experience significant levels of SGBV by the Bahraini state, depending on age. The impact of age, specifically of older age, on social respect and perceived maturity in Bahraini society makes older men more likely to be subjected to SGBV. Additionally, the role of the family for men presents another indicator of increased SGBV in relation to age, similar to female detainees. I also will explore historical connotations of male-on-male sexual violence and their potential links to modern SGBV in Bahrain.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Perpetrated Against Men

Prior to delving into analysis of the data, I will briefly address the various "reasonings" problematized for sexual violence perpetrated against men, compared to women. As introduced in the literature review and Chapter 3, SGBV against women tends to adhere closely to heterosexual norms and stereotypical femininity, and in Bahrain works in concert with inequitable laws to create a culture of impunity for perpetrators SGBV against women. For men, while the efforts to dehumanize and alienate survivors remain the same, the scholarly literature typically acknowledges different motivational factors. Agger argues male SGBV is utilized to induce an "abolition of political power/potency by the induction of sexual passivity" (313). It "seeks to reverse culturally defined gender roles" (Agger, 314) that typically privilege male bodies and male-presenting individuals. Ultimately, while heterosexuality and heterosexual violence are the dominant factors in SGBV against women and girls by men, inversion of masculinity through homosexual power dynamics is the dominant factor at play for male SGBV.

Introducing the Data

To introduce the cases of male SGBV, the following charts demonstrate the various rates of SGBV for male detainees, factoring in SGBV versus other forms of violence.

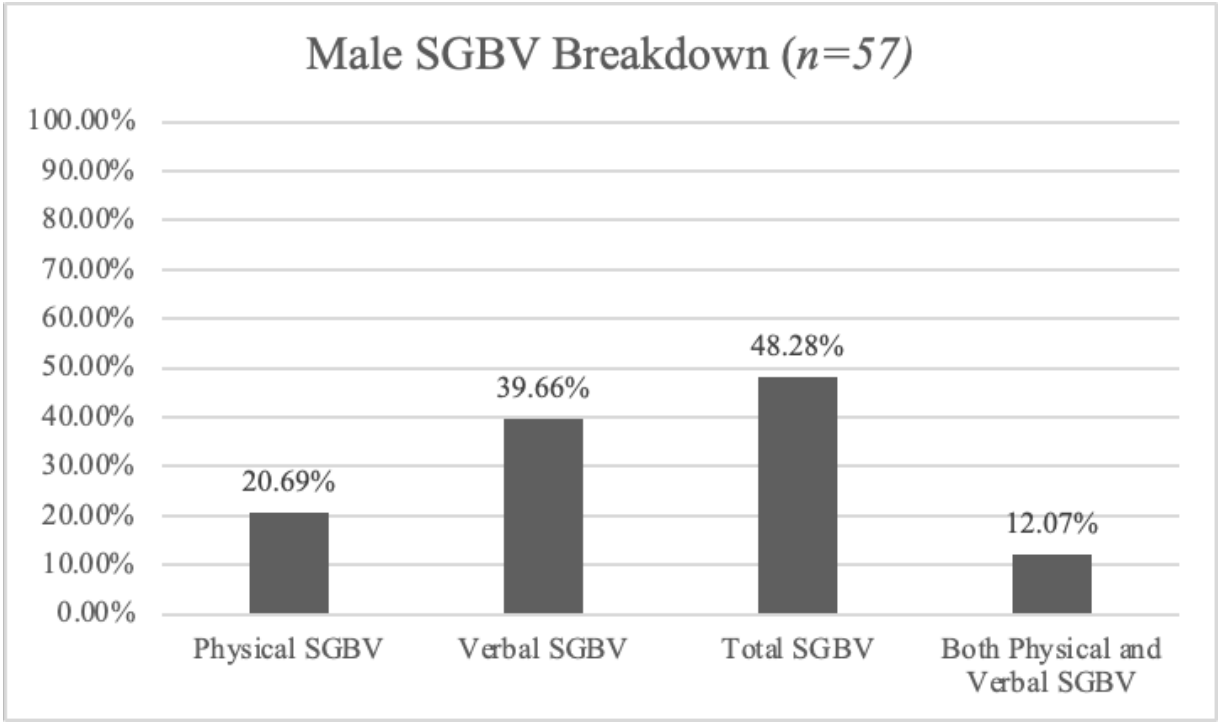

Chart 4.1

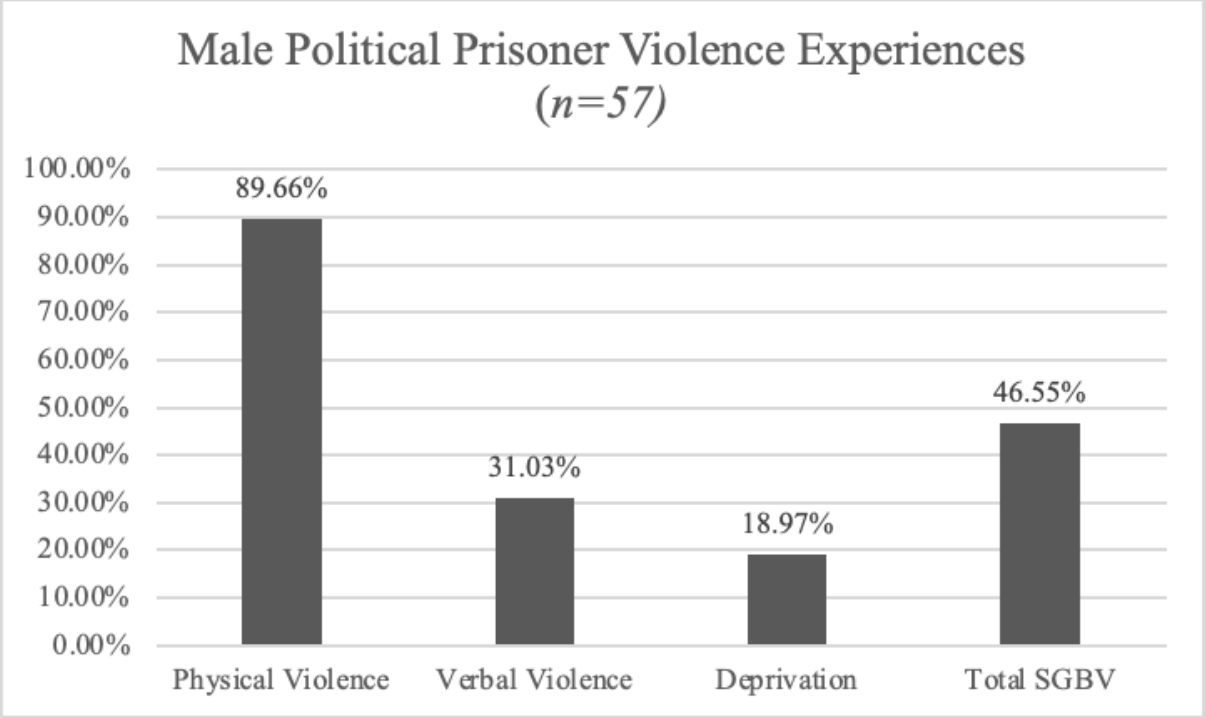

Chart 4.2

Chart 4.1 indicates the rates at which male detainees experience SGBV. While comparatively less than the female rate of 57.14%, nearly half of male detainees experience a form of sexual and gender-based violence, either physical or verbal. Chart 4.2 indicates how rates of SGBV compare to other violence perpetrated by Bahraini security forces in prisons. While physical violence (beating, hitting, etc [in a non-sexual manner]) is the most dominant form of violence and occurs to nearly all male detainees, SGBV is the second-most frequent type of violence perpetrated by security forces against male political prisoners. The frequent use of SGBV can be attributed to a variety of perceptions by the Bahraini government, which will be introduced and explored in the following sections.

The Impact of Age

I argue that one of the most crucial factors that indicates whether a male detainee is subjected to SGBV is their age group. In the aftermath of the 2011 uprisings, Bahraini security forces arrested individuals ranging from young children to the elderly, as seen in the

demographic of the 57 males in the dataset. The following chart indicates the age breakdown within the male dataset.

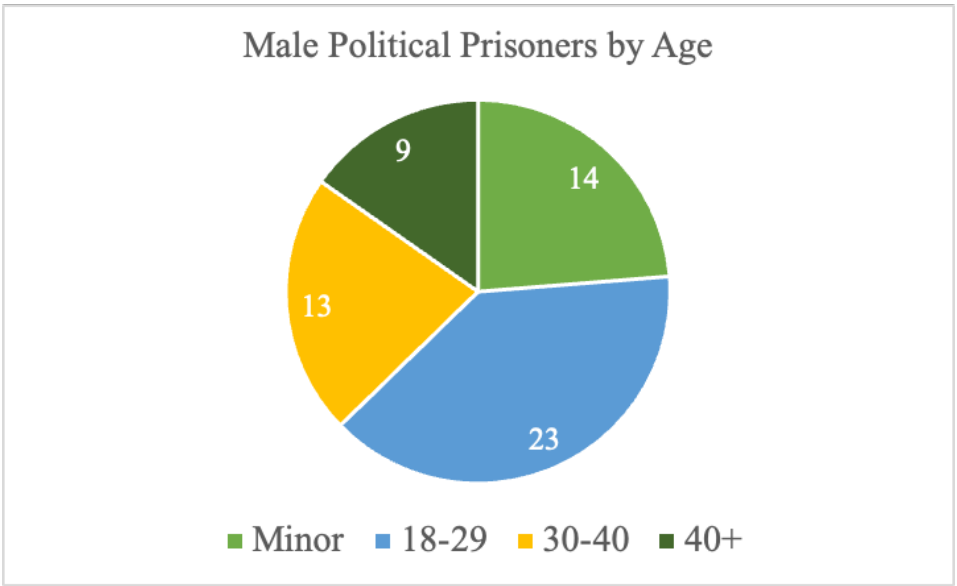

Chart 4.3

Individuals aged 18-29 make up the majority of the set. This reflects the demographics in Bahrain, which has a significantly higher male aged 18-29 population than any other age group, female or male (World Bank). What is most unique between the age groups is the rates of SGBV perpetrated. The following charts show the rates of SGBV amongst each age group of male political prisoners and a chart demonstrating the increased rate as age increases.

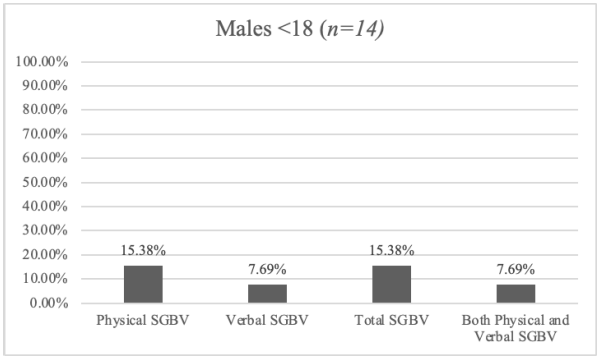

Chart 4.4

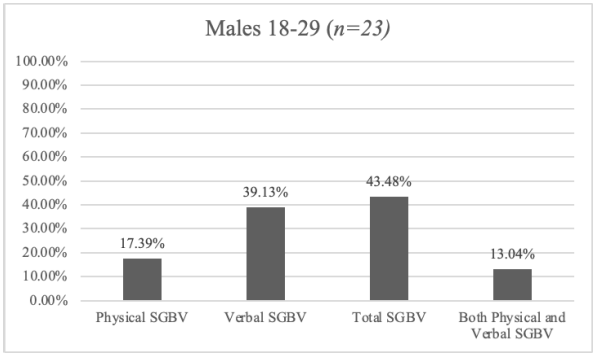

Chart 4.5

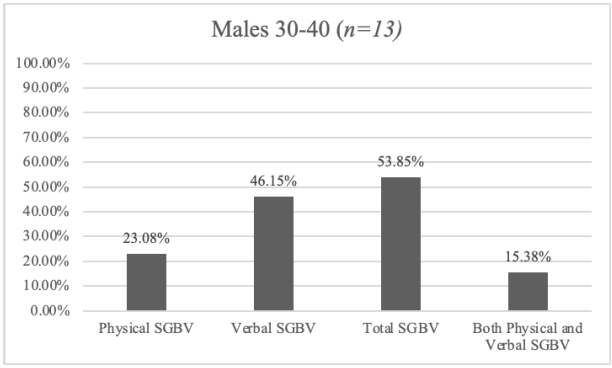

Chart 4.6

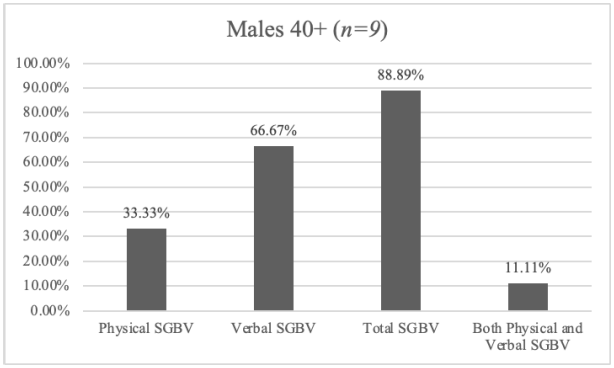

Chart 4.7

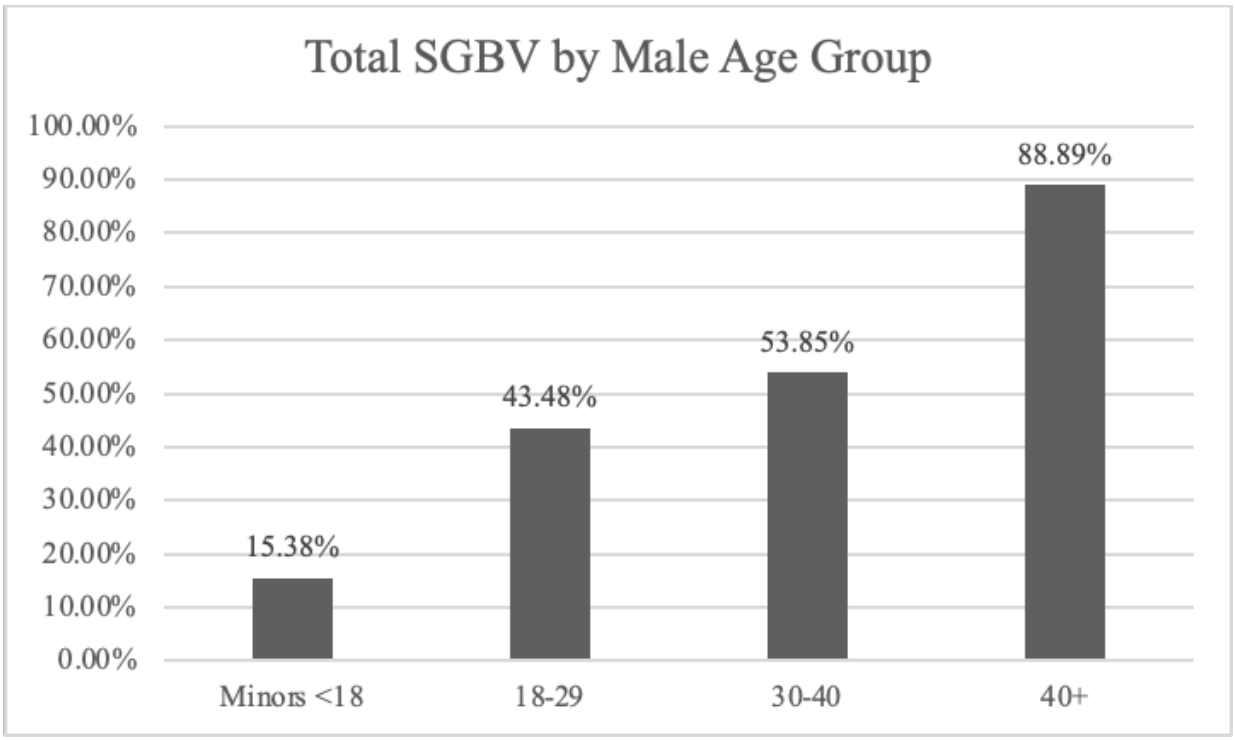

Chart 4.8

Chart 4.8 demonstrates that there is a continuous upward trajectory in rates of SGBV perpetrated against male detainees by Bahraini forces across the age groups. To begin to elucidate the "reasoning" behind this trend, I will begin by addressing the age group that experiences the highest rate—over 40—and my arguments as to why, and then will address the

30-40 and 40+ age group rates and the impact that family has on the rates of SGBV for these groups.

The "Maturity" Argument

I argue that one reason men over forty are likely to be victimized by SGBV at greater rates is due to a perception that is present amongst Bahraini security forces that these individuals are older, more "mature", more highly regarded and influenced in their communities, and therefore are assumed to have more social impact. Additionally, a lesser but still crucial reason for why men over forty are likely to be victimized by SGBV is that because of their age, they should "know better" than to push against the state.

First, it is important to consider both Islamic and secular norms that suggest respect and deference for older individuals. It is likely that the Bahraini state is concerned that due to social respect and impact, older individuals have more success in spreading views deemed threatening or harmful by the government. Second, for the Bahraini government, SGBV torture is an opportunity to "make an example of" individuals who, because of their age and perceived maturity, should "know better" than to espouse views or participate in activities that the regime deems harmful. For the state, torturing individuals in this way is part of a broader goal of limiting dissent amongst a potentially influential group.

On a secular and religious level, the Bahraini state frequently speaks about the importance of older individuals and the recognition and knowledge of their life experiences and guidance. Governmentally, the Ministry of Social Development highlights the importance of older individuals in society and the wisdom of their experience through public statements and significant financial support for the elderly (Bahrain Government Services). Islam, the religion of state, also emphasizes the experience and wisdom of older people. The existing cultural norms that emphasize learning from older individuals mean that information and opinions provided by

the elderly are more likely to be validated and heard by many of their peers, classifying them in the eyes of the state as a greater threat. This is especially true of older men, due to heteronormative and masculine norms in Bahraini society. In accordance with the "reasonings" behind SGBV presented in the literature review, the Bahraini state believes that SGBV is an effective method to divorce individuals from their political motives or actions. Additionally, the state believes that SGBV will lead to emasculation, and thus decrease respect for and acknowledgement of these individuals who are respected in part due to their masculinity. Individuals with influence (men over forty) are therefore some of the most important individuals to target with this method due to their significant social role.

Bahraini officials can also use the perceived maturity and knowledge of men over 40 to set an example and prove that the populace should know better than to challenge the authority of the state. While this argument is compelling, I believe that the combination of the state's fear of the spread of politically oppositional ideologies and the impact of family, as introduced in the following section, form a more compelling argument for why men over forty experience the highest rates of SGBV amongst their peers.

The Role of the Family

To return to demographics, similarly to the case of women, men over 30 are more likely to have families, thus allowing for both threats towards these families and threats against the men themselves to serve as spaces of emasculation and dehumanization. For men with families, the Bahraini state sees potential emasculation through threats against a man's female loved ones or children. According to the World Bank, the median age of marriage for Bahraini men is 30 years old (World Bank). Therefore, individuals over the age of forty are likely to be married. Men aged 40 in Bahrain are also likely to have a child (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). Like their female counterparts, family structures in Bahrain play an important

social role for men and masculinity, while also being a space of immense emotional vulnerability.

First, the affective and care roles men take towards their families create a potential space of heightened emasculation when men's ability to protect their loved ones physically or emotionally is removed through pointed threats of sexual violence against the very people with whom they have affective ties. Anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiment have long attempted to decry the idea of the Muslim father as caring or affective, and casts relationships between Muslim men and their significant others or families as "characterized by emotional distance or negative emotionality" (Britton, 39). However, affective ties in the Muslim family are deep and long developed, in some ways because various scriptural points highlight the importance of care and protection of family.

For Bahraini fathers and husbands, a category into which most Shi'a men over forty fall, affective, protective, and kin relationships between themselves and their family members are a key source of masculinity and pride. Because the role of affective caregiver, protector, and kin plays such a large role in the construction and security of masculinity and self for Bahraini men over forty, Bahraini security forces making threats against one's family is likely to have significant emotional and dehumanizing impact.

Verbal SGBV also increases for men over the age of thirty, whereas for men under thirty, typically there are similar rates of physical and verbal SGBV. This can be seen in the table below.

Male Age Group	Physical SGBV Percentage	Verbal SGBV Percentage
Minors (<18)	14.29%	14.29%
18-29	17.39%	39.13%

30-40	23.08%	46.15%
40+	33.33%	66.67%

Table 4.1

The data shows that as the likelihood that an individual has a wife or children increases (when they are over age 30), the likelihood that they will experience verbal SGBV is significantly higher than physical SGBV (for the younger two age groups, and especially for minors, are significantly closer in likelihood). This further advances the idea that SGBV for men in Bahrain is heavily linked to their assumed possession of affective ties and relationships.

For men who do not have spouses or children of their own, often younger than thirty, there are cases of threats against one's mother or sisters, as in the case of Dr. Abdul-Jalil al-Singace (Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 2011), and Faisal Mansour (Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 2013). However, since these cases are relatively less frequent and are typically accompanied by threats against one's children or wife, age, and therefore the likelihood of marriage and children, is the strongest indicator for suffering SGBV in this fashion.

Interestingly, one's family (specifically if one has a spouse or child) seems to indicate significantly higher SGBV rates for both men *and* women. While the reasoning behind this is different, for women involving an alienation from feminine gender presentations and responsibilities and for men an emasculation via the breakdown of affective and protection roles, the role of the family mirrors impacts across both demographic groups. I believe the exploration of this connection between family identity and SGBV rate could allow for deeper study.

Historical Context: Luti and Liwāt versus Ubnah and Ma'Bun

In the Bahraini case, there are limited instances of male-on-male penetrative rape against political prisoners. However, other penetrative methods and abuse were prevalent. This section seeks to explore the impacts, if any, of pre-colonial sexual and behavioral norms on SGBV

practices against men by Bahraini forces. This section draws heavily from Dr. Khaled El-Rouayheb's *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800*.

El-Rouayheb explores how within the pre-colonial Arab-Islamic world, public opinion and interpersonal opinion on homosexuality were viewed differently, largely within the lens of pederasty or within times of war or conflict. I argue that El-Rouayheb's second chapter, concerning "phallic aggression," details practices present in modern SGBV against men in Bahrain and represents a continuation of actions from the cusp of the modern Arab-Islamic world. I utilize El-Rouayheb's citation of Iraqi scholar Mahmud al-Alusi (1802-1854), who highlighted the practice of utilizing sodomy as a way of "getting revenge in vendettas" (El-Rouayheb, 14). El-Rouayheb builds upon this historical evidence by citing the practice of *luti*, the practice of the man who is the penetrating party in homosexual sexual intercourse, in direct opposition to *ma'bun*, those who suffer from *ubnah*, or being the receiving party of anal penetration. In the pre-modern Arab-Islamic world, El-Rouayheb argues, *luti* was a practice that would advance one's masculinity, while experiencing *ma'bun* was a position of emasculation and shame, especially in periods of conflict or war (El-Rouayheb, 15).

The advent of European colonialism in Bahrain occurred in the early 14th century, bringing European travelers who possessed different views of homosexuality and its place as a practice of any sort in society (El-Rouayheb, 3). This affected the way homosexuality is perceived in Arab-Islamic society, where the modern practice of *luti* and the emasculating nature of playing the role of *ma'bun* can be represented in the modern day through SGBV against Bahraini political prisoners. The practices of *luti* and *ma'bun* represent a single, interlinked thread of masculinity. Male security officers who sexually abuse male political prisoners can buttress their own masculinity through the emasculation of the survivor. In this way, pre-colonial

legacies of sexual power balance and manifest in the modern period. As Mamayat Al-Rumi is cited as saying, “the art of *liwāt* is the way of masculinity” (El-Rouayheb, 15), which manifests in the modern day through sexual torture practices by security forces against male detainees.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the male subsection of the dataset. First, I addressed the variance behind strategies of SGBV as a torture method for male prisoners as opposed to their female counterparts. I then explored the data itself, first noting the comparatively (but not majorly) lower SGBV rate perpetrated against male prisoners versus female prisoners. I then explored the role of age, first in the context of “maturity” and social capital. Men over the age of 40 are more likely, I argue, to be perceived as knowledgeable, and therefore their subversive political ideals are of more danger to the state. I also considered age in its connection to family, arguing that men who have wives or children are more likely to be subjected to verbal sexual threats, thus increasing the rates of SGBV. Finally, I explored the historical context of SGBV through *liwāt* and *ubnah*, and its impacts on modern practices of SGBV in Bahrain.

Chapter 5: Non-Gendered Indicators of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

"They shouted and screamed horrible insults at me about my mother, sisters and wife. They started beating me before they even asked questions. They hit me with a big rubber cable – all over my back, buttocks, and thigh. I told them that I was ready to sign anything they wanted me to confess to. But they said, "'You have to confess. We don't want lies.'"
-Anonymous Doctor, Detained at al-Qal'a (The Fort), Ministry of Interior Building

Introduction

Moving beyond considerations of gender and related identifiers such as age, marriage status, and children, this chapter will explore social role, looking specifically into two main groups: first, individuals charged criminally, and second, human rights advocates and medical workers. Human rights advocates and medical workers often have similar access to sensitive information and are tortured with SGBV at similarly high rates, allowing for consideration of these groups in conjunction. While SGBV is perpetrated against many different identities in Bahraini society, according to the dataset, these two groups experience this type of violence at significantly higher rates than other occupations.

The analysis will first explore individuals charged criminally. The Bahraini security forces arrested or detained individuals and charged with higher level, "felonious" charges, and then are often subjected to SGBV in prison. This is in contrast with other individuals arrested and detained by the state who were arrested on charges related to organizing, disturbing the peace, or similar charges that do not rise to the level of felonies. The complete group, making up individuals both male and female, experiences significantly higher rates of SGBV than any other individual group in the dataset. I argue that most individuals charged criminally are "repeat offenders", and therefore the state considers them to be of greater risk as political actors.

The second group analyzed include medical workers and human rights advocates, the two groups who are categorized as "advocates" within my dataset. I argue that their increased rate of SGBV is due to government perception that these individuals have increased access to

incriminating information on state actions because of their roles, and are, like criminally charged political actors, perceived as a greater threat to state stability. This chapter, in addition to utilizing quantitative analysis of reported data, will include voices of survivors in reports to elucidate the "reasoning" behind these increased rates of SGBV.

Criminal Charges

To address the links between criminal charges and the eventual experience of perpetrated SGBV by the state, I will first describe how these individuals are charged. The Bahraini state often arrests individuals on charges loosely related to past political organizing, then tortures them until they confess to participating in serious criminal acts, such as the cases of Saeed Al Hirz, Ahmed Abdullah, Ebrahim Al-Sharqi, Hassan Al-Moalim, and Talib Ali. These five men were arrested within their village of Mahazza, and after being tortured, confessed to partaking in a bombing (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2012). Similarly, Mirza Ahmed Mushaima and Ahmed Mohammed Al Samea, both arrested on suspicion of being involved in a bombing, were subjected to torture (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2014). Other individuals are arrested directly following or at a political action, like Nafeesa al-Asfoor and Rayhana al-Mosawi, who were arrested at a protest near the Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), where Formula 1 races are held. The two were accused of "practicing" for a terrorist act (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2013).

Once these individuals are arrested, they are charged with a variety of crimes, but most are charged with violations of Bahrain's 2006 Anti-Terrorism laws, specifically Article 6. This article provides for penalties including death for "creating, establishing, organizing, or managing a group with the purpose of obstructing the country's laws or constitution" (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2013). Similarly illegal is any act that has the potential to "[harm] national unity" (Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain). The United Nations Office of the

High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as Bahraini activist organizations like the BCHR argue that the law is little more than a tool to punish dissidents due to its broad nature and politicization (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2013). Ultimately, despite its criticisms, the Bahraini state employs this law to detain political actors, many of whom they then subject to sexual and gender-based violence in prisons.

Data and Analysis: Criminally Charged Detainees

Criminally charged detainees make up a small portion of the dataset. However, they represent overwhelmingly high rates of SGBV when compared to other demographic identifiers or perceived social roles in the eyes of the state. The following charts compare the rate of SGBV amongst all detainees to the rate of SGBV amongst detainees charged criminally.

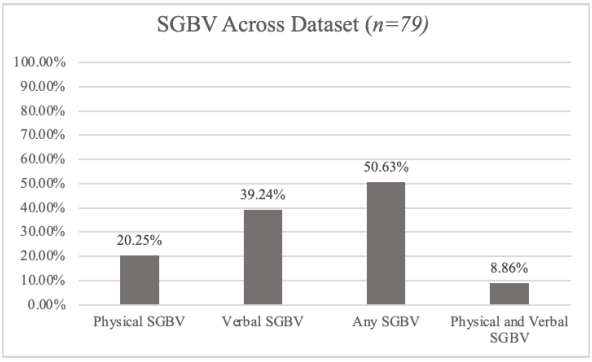

Chart 5.1

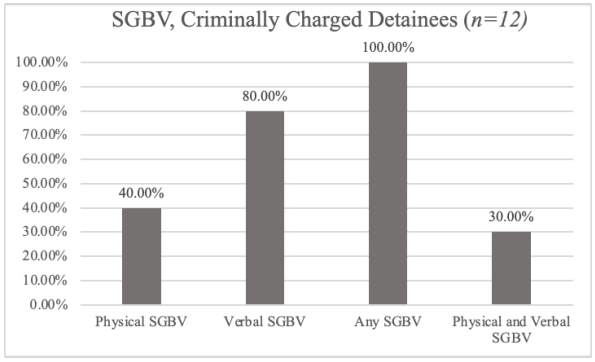

Chart 5.2

All criminally charged detainees were subject to SGBV, either verbally or physically. Considering that the rate of SGBV for all detainees hovers at approximately 50%, the rate at which detainees charged criminally are subjected by the state to SGBV is especially high.

There are numerous potential reasons behind the significantly higher rate of SGBV against criminally charged detainees. One potential reason is that because news of these individuals' charges and arrests are often published publicly in news outlets like the BBC Arabic Language paper (BBC Arabic, 2014), there is a state-level assumption that these individuals will be accepted as dangerous by society due to the publicization of their crimes. Essentially, the

Bahraini state expects increased public immunity for their torture of these prisoners due to how these specific prisoners are portrayed in the broadly consumable media. In some ways, this reasoning is compelling. Evidence from Egypt, a similarly authoritarian MENA state, demonstrates the way in which state and media labeling of terrorist acts and counter-terrorist activities create division within society (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism). For the Bahraini government, which emphasizes division as a strategy of power and control, Egypt could provide a case study. Alternatively, the Egyptian case also demonstrates how labels of terrorism and counter-terrorism increase government distrust amongst a wide variety of groups (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism). Due to governmental concerns about stability in Bahrain, this reasoning is not the primary logic behind increased SGBV against political prisoners. It is unlikely that the government would risk increasing distrust for itself amongst the populace for a small benefit of slightly heightened immunity for its crimes.

A second potential theory for why criminally charged detainees experience significantly higher rates of SGBV is the concern of an outside actor—the Islamic Republic of Iran. A longtime fear of the Al-Khalifa house, the Iranian regime is implicated by Gulf monarchies as working in conjunction with would-be "terrorists" amongst the criminally charged political detainees. Due to Bahrain's large Shi'a population and the concern amongst the Bahrain government and its neighboring monarchies about the "Shi'a Crescent," the Iranian regime's perceived influences could lead to increased SGBV. It is possible that the Bahraini state elected to utilize SGBV as a tool to dissuade would-be conspirators with the Iranian regime from taking this action in the future. SGBV would ideally, in the eyes of the government, deter the Shi'a population from politically organizing more broadly, regardless of Iranian influence. Regardless

of whether these individuals were actually conspiring with the Iranian government, the Bahraini state perceives SGBV as a way to limit this potential action amongst the Shi'a population.

Both previous reasons are compelling narratives as to why the Bahraini state elected to perpetrate significantly more SGBV against criminally charged prisoners as opposed to their counterparts. However, as the data stands, and when considering Bahraini laws, ultimately, one additional reason accounts for this significant increase in SGBV rate. This reasoning is rooted in the anti-terrorism laws of 2006. As demonstrated by numerous human rights advocacy bodies, the 2006 law criminalizes voices of dissent within the Bahraini state (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2014). Significant numbers of individuals were detained as a part of the 2011 movement and aftermath (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2011). However, I argue that individuals detained under the 2006 law were perceived as bigger threats to state order. While many individuals were arrested, only a handful were charged under Article 6 of the 2006 law, suggesting that the detention of these individuals was of the highest priority to maintain state order (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2014). Combined with previously addressed literature and evidence about how SGBV is utilized to attempt to alienate individuals from their political connections or ideals (Agger, Einolf), individuals perceived as the greatest risk due to their associations and ideals are tortured by security forces at the highest rates. The extremely high rates of SGBV against criminally charged detainees, however, demonstrate other unique characteristics not reflected in other portions of the dataset.

Returning to Gender

While the rates of SGBV against criminally charged political prisoners are higher than any other group, this group follows an inversion of the previous pattern, in which female political prisoners experience higher rates of SGBV than their male counterparts. SGBV rates for criminally charged political detainees are higher for male detainees than for females. This

finding is statistically limited, as only two women were charged criminally and tortured via SGBV within my dataset. Therefore, in this section I focus on the eight male criminally charged detainees who all experienced SGBV, rather than exploring the smaller number of criminally charged females who were subjected to this form of violence. Additionally, the criminally charged detainee portion of the dataset numbers only ten, so conclusive reasoning as to this imbalance can likely not be drawn at this point.

The initial reasoning behind this inversion could be that the Bahraini government, assumes that male criminally charged detainees are more likely to be of higher risk to state security and stability. Returning to discussions of gender, Bahraini men are often socially afforded increased respect, especially if they are older. A further explanation concerning gendered risk to state stability can be found in the dominant constructions of gender in relation to terrorism. It is also possible that there is significant impact of mainstream academic writing and public opinion that advances the idea that female terrorist actors are not independent political agents but are operating under the purview of a male-dominated culture, nationalism, or ideology (See Victor, *Army of Roses*, 2003, or Dworkin, *Feminista* Magazine, 2002) (Amireh 2011). Therefore, it could follow that the Bahraini state assumes that men are a greater terroristic threat to state stability rather than women. Further research on the influences of these narratives is necessary to clarify the impact of these factors.

SGBV as the Dominant Method

Another gendered aspect of this subsection of the dataset is seen in the rates of SGBV compared to other types of violence. While this project focuses mostly on SGBV against political prisoners, torture methods of all varieties performed by the Bahraini state were logged. Criminally charged male prisoners are the only group to be tortured with higher rates of SGBV than non-SGBV-related physical violence. This can be demonstrated in the chart below.

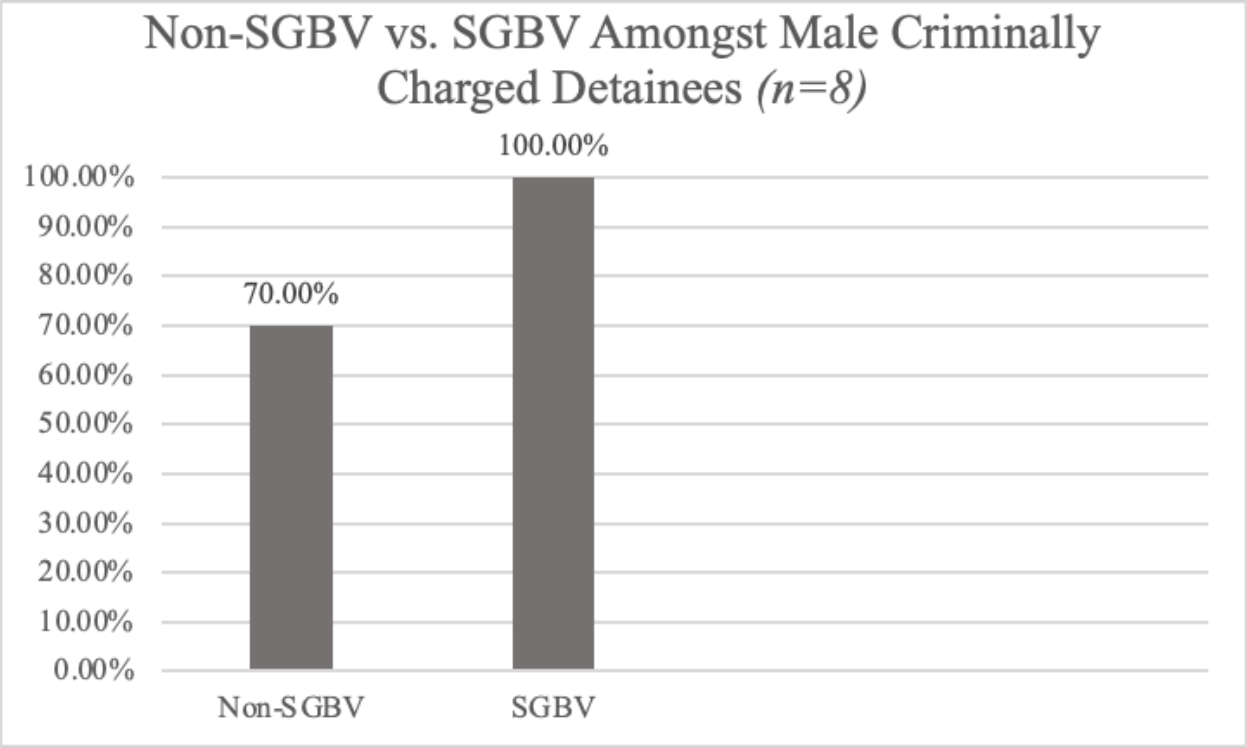

Chart 5.3

To address this instance, I again return to the existing literature that emphasizes the dehumanizing and alienating effects of SGBV torture, resulting from the combination of physical and mental violence (Agger, Einolf, Puar). Because the Bahraini state believes criminally charged detainees are the greatest threat to state stability, it makes sense that the highest rates of SGBV are perpetrated by the state against this specific group.

Data and Analysis: Advocate Roles

Individuals who serve as human rights professionals or as medical workers in a variety of clinics and hospitals are labeled in this dataset as "advocates" *(n=13)* when they are arrested and tortured in Bahraini prisons. Behind criminally charged detainees, this social group is tortured with the second-highest rates of SGBV during their time in detention. This section will focus on the various reasons why the Bahraini state views these individuals as a threat and will introduce

data and testimonies from survivors. The following chart demonstrates the rates of SGBV amongst the advocate group.

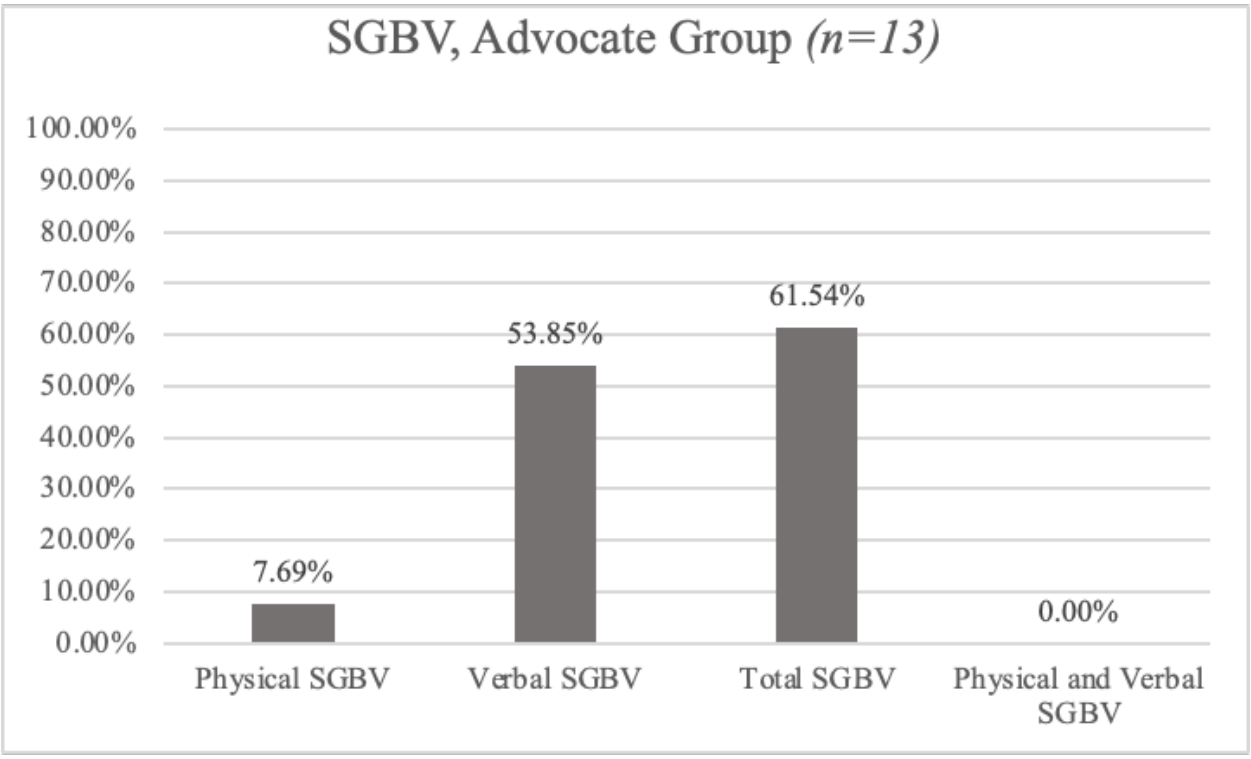

Chart 5.4

I argue that this group experiences higher rates of SGBV because these individuals were privy to information on human rights violations perpetrated by the Bahraini state. Many human rights advocates, due to their role as trusted reporters of information, received firsthand or reported information on mistreatment and violence at the hands of the Bahraini state. An example of this is the Bahrain Center for Human Rights itself, whose two founders, Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2011, Frontline Defenders 2020) were arrested and tortured. Further, activists known to the state as human rights defenders and proponents are again likely to be subjected to the dehumanizing and alienating aspects of

SGBV to separate these individuals from their political viewpoints and associations. I argue that the Bahraini state therefore views human rights advocates as another priority group likely to be subjected to SGBV, because of their personal (and organizational) reach and knowledge of rights violations the state assumes they are privy to.

The other portion of individuals who are labeled as advocates are medical professionals. This group includes doctors, nurses, ambulance drivers, EMTs, and others. These individuals were typically not direct participants in political actions but rather treated patients who were injured as a result of political organizing. The first reason these individuals are more likely to experience SGBV is similar to their advocate counterparts—they have firsthand knowledge of the brutality of the state. However, while human rights advocates receive accounts (firsthand and otherwise) and evidence, medical professionals are escorting and treating patients from protests with injuries or ailments caused directly by the state. The result is the same, and the Bahraini state elects to utilize SGBV in an attempt to stymie the flow of incriminating information about state actions.

Additionally, as examined by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in 2011, there is a significant pattern of violence against medical professionals and patients exhibiting signs of injury from protests. This violence is characterized by HRW as an effort to intimidate protestors from seeking medical assistance after being injured at protests (Human Rights Watch 2011). This information is corroborated by numerous first-hand accounts from various medical professionals and human rights actors in Bahrain. In one instance, HRW personnel witnessed multiple patients, against the wishes of medical staff, being transferred to security forces regardless of their need for care (Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 2011). These tactics of intimidation were effective. One individual, Hussain al-Sahlawi, was not involved in a protest but was shot after exiting his

grandfather's house near the action. Despite his wounds, he was not brought to a hospital, for fear that security officials would assume he was involved in the political action (Amnesty International 2011). Other cases involve individuals arrested from hospitals, regardless of injury status (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2011). Especially in the second case, I believe it is likely that medical professionals working in these hospitals would be likely to witness these rights-violating events. Medical professionals, witnessing this pattern of illegal intimidation and restriction from accessing medical services are thus likely to possess knowledge of these issues that the state considers dangerous. Therefore, they are a threat to the state, making them more likely to be subjected to torture, just like human rights advocates.

Finally, one can consider the role that *state-employed* medical professionals play in the eyes of the state. The hospital where most protestors were treated was the Salmaniya Hospital, a state-owned facility in the Salmaniya neighborhood of Manama (Bahrain Center for Human Rights 2011). Significant oppression and arrests of patients also occurred at this facility (Human Rights Watch 2011). The Bahraini government viewed advocacy likely on behalf of patients in the state-owned hospital as a threat to its direct control, and therefore tortured medical practitioners affiliated with this hospital at greater rates. While not all hospitals in Bahrain are state-owned, and not all medical professionals are state employees, the Bahraini state could have sensed a growing trend of discontent regarding state treatment of political activists amongst medical professionals, even at a state-owned facility, and could have cracked down on individuals in this employment class as a result. The fact that Salmaniya is a state-owned facility simply provides easier access for the state to repress both its patients and employees.

Verbal versus Physical Violence

Notably, advocates also are subjected to significantly more verbal SGBV than physical. While this is a trend consistent across most groups, the disparity between physical SGBV (7.7%)

and verbal SGBV (53.9%) is heightened within the advocate group. There are a few reasons for the disparate rate between physical and verbal SGBV. First, individuals who serve as advocates (either in the medical profession or on the human rights front) are likely to be front-facing figures. Therefore, there may be a concern about using physical force against these individuals due to the more visible results of its practice. However, this argument makes less sense when considering that physical non-SGBV is just as prevalent against advocates as any other group.

I argue that the more likely possibility for this increased rate of verbal versus physical SGBV is because individuals in the "advocate" dataset are more likely to be known to the state This can come through a public-facing role as a human rights advocate due to government surveillance or awareness through news media, or through employment in government-overseen or owned medical facilities and professions. As demonstrated in earlier chapters, verbal SGBV (especially against men, who are the majority of the "advocates" set, *n=9*) often involves threats of sexual or gender-based violence against one's loved ones. Given that individuals in the "advocate" dataset are more likely to have public figure status, information about one's family and therefore an ability to utilize family as a method of SGBV is more accessible. The Bahraini government's fear of incriminating information that can be spread by human rights advocates, combined with government concerns of opposition within certain sectors like the medical field, created a higher risk of SGBV for the advocate group.

Conclusion

This chapter moved beyond considerations of gender and sex and into considerations of other social roles and characterizations by the government. First addressed were individuals who were charged criminally in response to their political organizing, often under Bahrain's criticized 2006 anti-terrorism laws. These individuals experienced significantly higher rates of SGBV than

any other demographic or social groups. In this chapter, I argued that this is due to the assumption and concern of the Bahraini government that these individuals at the greatest risk to state stability, security, and prosperity, and therefore are a top priority for separation from their ideologies and support networks. Gender as a factor may also influence torture for criminally charged detainees, with a state assumption (influenced by mainstream and scholarly writing) that specifically male detainees are most likely to align with "terroristic" actions, organizations, and ideologies. An explanation of why SGBV rates are so much higher than regular physical violence rates for criminally charged political prisoners was also introduced.

The next group analyzed were "advocates", both medical workers and human rights advocates. Behind criminally charged individuals, this group was the second-most subjected to SGBV in Bahraini prisons. Several reasons account for this high rate, including potential public awareness of the individual detainees, a concern from the state about pushback from the medical field, and concerns about the information on human rights violations individuals in these positions may be privy to.

These two groups, advocates and criminally charged protestors, were subjected to similarly high rates of SGBV and provided another lens with which to examine the reasoning behind the Bahraini state's usage of this specific method of torture. The next chapter of the thesis will synthesize this chapter and chapters 2, 3, and 4, drawing conclusions that incorporate the findings from the data and existing literature.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Summary of Thesis

The 2011 Bahraini Uprising was a national movement that pushed for further political rights, lessened corruption, and a decrease in state violence, physical and psychological, against much of the population. However, the focus of the thesis is largely on the aftermath of the events of 2011—specifically on the population of Bahrainis who were arrested and brought to prison or detention facilities in a state effort to crack down on political organizing. I sought to understand who made up the political prisoner population, and which social roles these individuals inhabited that influenced their risk of the state committing sexual and gender-based violence against them during their period of detention or incarceration. Throughout the thesis, I considered four groups who experienced heightened SGBV—women, men over age 40, individuals charged criminally, and individuals serving in advocacy roles as human rights advocates or medical professionals. When considering and evaluating these groups and the torture perpetrated against them by the state, I considered numerous factors including gender, age, the information economy, and state norms and laws that influenced rates of SGBV.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the prevalent scholarly literature surrounding issues of incarceration, gender, gendered and sexual violence, and political prisoners. Some of this literature is overlapping, and other theories, such as Foucault's work on the development of gender and sexuality, and the development of the carceral state, are considered more independently. After placing this literature in the context of Bahrain, I then addressed the methodological style of the thesis. Overall, the methodology consisted of qualitative report analysis from a variety of human rights organizations, and a conversion of these qualitative reports to quantitative data highlighting the demographic position of each political prisoner as well as the types of violence the state inflicted upon them in prison.

Chapter 3 then delved into the first group I planned to analyze: female political prisoners. This group, with the exception of criminally charged prisoners, were tortured through SGBV at the highest rates of analysis groups. I first introduced data demonstrating this increased rate, as well as the fact that SGBV was perpetrated at an increased rate across age. I then analyzed various factors that could potentially influence the rates of torture for female prisoners. These include the role of marriage and children in Bahraini society, the comparative challenges associated with successfully petitioning the legal system for women versus men in Bahrain, and the pressures of the heterosexual matrix as it manifests itself in Bahraini society.

Chapter 4 explored male political prisoners, who demonstrate some similar violence patterns as female prisoners, but with certain distinctions. Similarly to Chapter 2, I introduced data through charts and other visualizations, showing especially the increased rates of SGBV for men over age forty. I then explored potential "reasons" behind the state's SGBV torture of men, focusing upon the construction of masculinity (and eventual deconstruction and emasculation through SGBV), the impact of family and affective care relationships, and the potential presence of historical connotations of homosexuality and homosexual violence.

Chapter 5 then moved beyond considerations exclusively of gender, focusing instead on two different groups: criminally charged detainees and medical professionals, and human rights advocates. When considering criminally charged detainees, who received the highest rates of torture, I evaluated the way the state conducted risk assessment of these detainees and how the perception of the increased risk to state stability of these detainees led the state to perform more torture.

Ultimately, these chapters demonstrate that the Bahraini state views threats to itself from a variety of dimensions and evaluates whether to victimize individuals by considering the

potential harm to state stability and power each individual can cause. Additionally, even if not significantly, it considers both its own impunity. More importantly, these chapters highlight that like the participants in the Bahraini Uprising itself, the victims of state violence that resulted from the two weeks of protest were diverse across numerous lines—gender, age, employment, and social role.

Revisiting Limitations

After completing the analysis throughout the thesis, one key limitation presented itself with the dataset and the project. First mentioned initially in Chapter 2—the overwhelming presence of the dataset of Shi'a Muslims. While this sect makes up a significant portion of the Bahraini population, especially the population that are citizens, other non-Shi'a Bahrainis were involved in political action in 2011, some of them were likely subjected to SGBV as a consequence of their political involvement. They are a missing part of the story, and I believe it is the most significant limitation of this project. Exploration to locate the specific stories of non-Shi'a Bahrainis in prisons will require further research, but will allow for a more complete picture of the 2011 uprising and its aftermath.

Implications and Opportunities for Future Research

I believe that this thesis conducted research that draws awareness to an oft-neglected story, that of Bahrain's largely unsuccessful 2011 uprising, and specifically the aftermath of this story. The 2011 uprisings and revolutions of the Gulf States are relatively understudied, especially the political repression and crack down that occurred following the conclusion of these movements and after the outside political eyes and focus had moved beyond the region. Because the Bahraini Uprising did not result in regime change, nor significant conflict, it also is not often placed in context and consideration with the 2011 movements that did.

I believe that this research allows for an understanding of Bahrain in the context of the 2011 movements overall, versus as an independent and unique case. Although it presents a unique story, it is part of a broader pattern of advocacy across the region and can be considered alongside its political counterparts in some ways.

Therefore, I believe that there are two directions further research could expand upon the existing project. One option is to delve deeper into the Bahraini case specifically: conducting further data collection with an emphasis on expanding beyond Shi'a prisoners and exploring the potential violence that Sunnis (both native and immigrant) and non-Muslim Bahrainis experienced at the hands of the Bahraini state. An alternative option is to take a comparative lens. I believe that this could be done in two ways, either a cross-gulf comparison, considering other similarly sized Gulf monarchies and their response to the 2011 uprisings as it comes to state torture. Or, one could conduct a cross-scale analysis, comparing the comparatively small nation of Bahrain with a significantly larger MENA country with significant 2011 political action, such as Egypt or Tunisia. Overall, this project lends itself well to being a jumping-off point for further exploration of the aftermath of the 2011 movements across the Middle East and North Africa, in the Gulf and beyond.

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Appendix

To access a complete list of all reports that make up the data of this project, please visit the following site: https://tinyurl.com/ninanaffbahrainthesis

Navigate to “Links” page to view a spreadsheet of the sources.

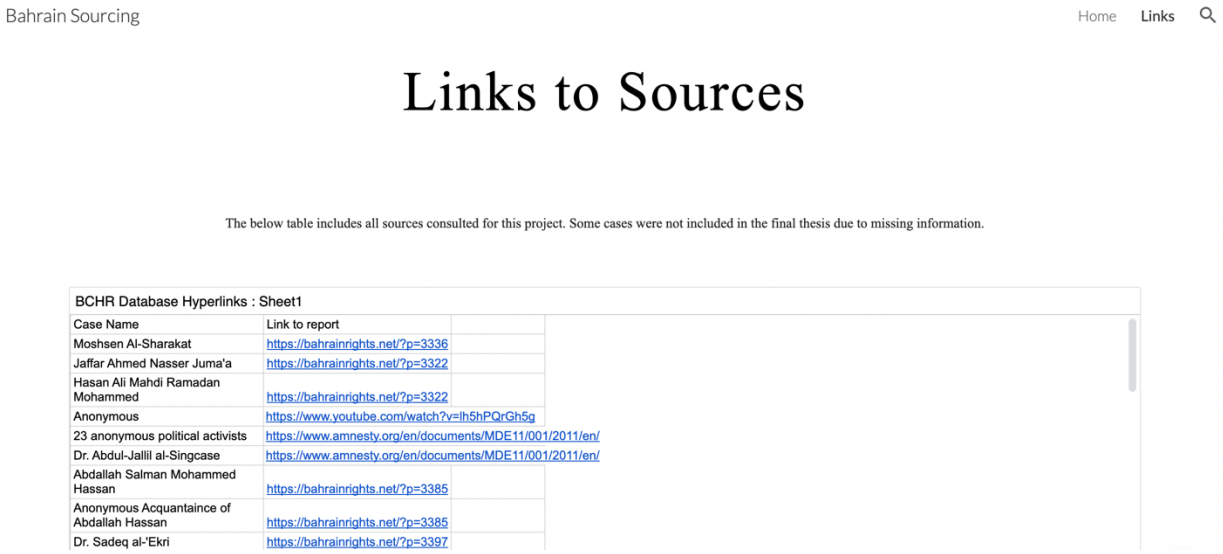

Figure A.1