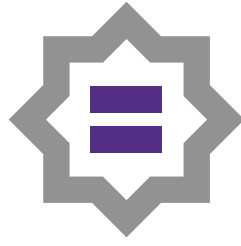


منا  
لحقوق  
الإنسان



**MENA**  
Rights  
Group



**ANNUAL  
REPORT** 2024

MENA Rights Group (MRG) is a Geneva-based legal advocacy NGO defending and promoting fundamental rights and freedoms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Adopting a holistic approach, we work at both the individual and structural level. We represent victims of human rights violations before international law mechanisms. In order to ensure the non-repetition of these violations, we identify patterns and root causes of violations on the ground and bring key issues to the attention of relevant stakeholders to call for legal and policy reform.

We achieve our mission through an evolving range of six advocacy strategies using the most effective means of leverage: documentation and monitoring, litigation, analysis and reporting, awareness raising, capacity building and assessing national human rights institutions. We adopt a collaborative approach to our work, by engaging closely with national and international civil society actors, to ensure complementarity.

Our geographic mandate covers the 22 Member States of the Arab League. Among those, we focus on countries where we believe our work has the most added value, considering our capacities and strategic impact.

We focus primarily on violations of civil and political rights, such as the right to life, liberty and security of person, due process and fair trial rights, freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly and association. We believe that these must be protected above all, as a sine qua non condition for people to be able to claim all their other rights without fear of reprisals.

Our thematic priorities include, but are not limited to:

- Accountability and the right to truth
- Arbitrary detention
- Business and human rights
- Counter-terrorism and human rights
- Enforced disappearances
- Extrajudicial executions
- Freedom of opinion and expression (online and offline)
- Freedom of peaceful assembly and association
- Practice of torture

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# Foreword

*“Our sector remains in dire need of transformation, including when it comes to addressing mental health issues. They should be destigmatised, and human rights organisations and activists supported.”*

Dear friends and supporters,

As I write these words, the Gaza ceasefire has just begun. While we are relieved that the 14-month long genocidal attack against the Palestinian people is ending, we can not unsee nor forget the horror we have witnessed. Our thoughts go to Palestinians who will have to, once more, rebuild while mourning the loss of so many loved ones. We will continue to denounce the decades of apartheid and systemic oppression of Palestinians, as the last months have continued to show the devastating consequences of impunity.

2024 was an eventful year for the region. We were overjoyed by the sudden collapse of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, marking the end of a 54-year long brutal dictatorship. Our thoughts go to those who are still searching for their missing loved ones and trying to rebuild their lives. Though many have shared concerns about the uncertainty of the future, for the first time in decades, Syrians are tasting freedom, regaining hope, and have a unique opportunity to own and shape their future.

With all this, mourning an injustice while celebrating the end of another can make one feel uneasy. This duality should however invite us to reflect on the interconnectedness of the fight against oppression across our region.

2024 was another busy and transformative year at MENA Rights Group (MRG). We were pleased to see, as shown in this report, the impact we were able to have. To ensure we continue to be as strategic and impactful as possible, we finalised our 2024-2026 Strategic Framework, which outlines our organisational, systemic and thematic priorities, along with clearly defined objectives for each of our priority countries. In April, we also had our first-ever team retreat, during which we got to connect, strengthen our trust, learn about self-leadership and how to function autonomously, but also strategise for the future and share our dreams for MRG.

On a personal level, 2024 was also a challenging year as I experienced burnout. Ultimately, the mental and physical loads of running a small non-profit and raising a toddler, among others, caught up with me. I am forever grateful to everyone on my team who stepped up so that I could focus on getting better. Several of my team members also dealt with mental health issues, helping us recognise the importance of fostering a caring workspace.

While we thrive to maintain a healthy and supportive work environment (we also celebrated our 4-day week first anniversary!), this work is never easy. We are passionate, we want to make a difference, uphold the

highest standards of professionalism and be empathetic to those we serve, all the while having limited funding and capacity, and dealing with humanly difficult situations.

I believe our sector remains in dire need of transformation, including when it comes to addressing mental health issues. They should be destigmatised, and human rights organisations and activists supported.

Last but not least, I want to honour survivors, victims and their families for placing their trust in us. I also want to thank our partners from this incredible human rights community we are a part of, our funders and supporters, who continue to believe in us and in the importance of what we do. Finally, I want to give a big bow of appreciation to my outstanding team and board members, without whose passion and dedication MRG would not stand as is today.

In solidarity,

Inès Osman,  
Co-founder and executive director

# 2024 at a glance

We supported **173 victims** of human rights violations across **11 countries** of the MENA region.

We monitored compliance with human rights standards of **5 countries** during and ahead of their reviews by international mechanisms.

We highlighted victims' stories by publicising and sharing **15 new profiles** on our website and social media platforms.

We led and supported **74** joint advocacy actions.

# Litigation

In 2024, we represented 26 individuals before international protection mechanisms while we followed up on 147 previous cases of individuals we continue to assist.

Relying on thorough documentation and monitoring, we provide legal assistance to victims of severe human rights abuses primarily by using international law mechanisms to put an end to violations, or obtain redress for past violations. We also build on documented casework to advocate for human rights-based policy reforms, and raise awareness of victims' plight with relevant stakeholders.

In 2024, we were pleased that a number of people we defended regained their freedom:



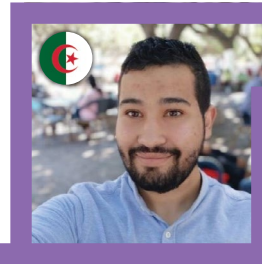
**January 29**

Raad al-Hares is released after 1 213 days of arbitrary detention.



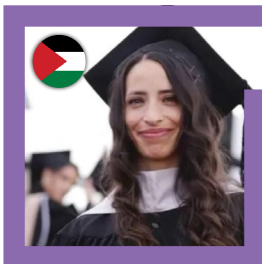
**March 9**

Rida Benotmane is released after 547 days of arbitrary detention.



**April 18**

Mustapha Bendjama is released after 435 days of arbitrary detention.



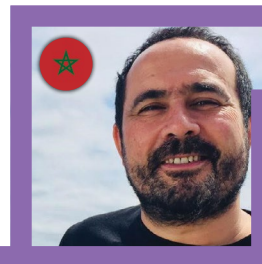
**June 4**

Baraa Odeh is released after 91 days of administrative detention.



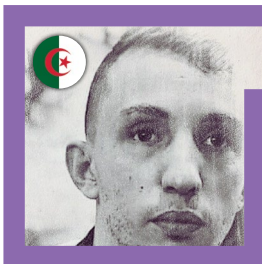
**June 5**

Sumoud Mtair is released after 89 days of administrative detention.



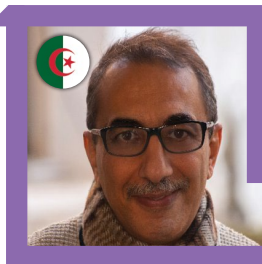
**July 29**

Soulaimane Raissouni is released after 1 498 days of arbitrary detention.



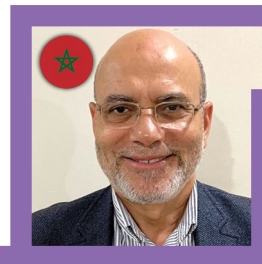
**November 1**

Mohamed Tadjadit is temporarily released after 251 days of arbitrary detention.



**November 1**

Ihsane El Kadi is released after 676 days of arbitrary detention.



**December 17**

Abdelbaset Elemam is released after 35 days of arbitrary detention.

## The rising trend of counter-terrorism abuse

Like in 2023, a large number of cases documented by MRG this year were those of individuals facing unfounded ‘terrorism’ charges. In 2024, we continued to observe an alarming pattern of state authorities abusing counter-terrorism laws and policies to crack down on human rights defenders (HRDs), dissidents, activists, lawyers and journalists.

These counter-terrorism legal frameworks do not comply with international human rights standards. Their provisions typically rely on vague definitions of terrorism, enabling state authorities to conflate any type of dissent or criticism with terrorism and extend the application of counter-terrorism laws onto acts relating to the exercise of fundamental rights.

In the Gulf, **Saudi Arabia** continued to use its 2017 Law on Combating Crimes of Terrorism and its Financing to target HRDs and women’s rights defenders. Authorities routinely resort to this law to impose harsh prison sentences and arbitrary travel bans onto peaceful activists and their families, who are prohibited from leaving the country to this day. The **United Arab Emirates** (UAE) also weaponised its counter-terrorism law in the country’s second largest mass trial, unjustly sentencing at least 44 HRDs and political activists to decades in prison.

In North Africa, **Algeria** amended its Penal Code in 2024 and broadened its already vague definition of terrorism. The authorities continued to invoke the Penal Code’s anti-terrorism provisions to charge peaceful dissidents and HRDs. According to exiled activist Zakaria Hannache, 220 people are currently imprisoned in Algeria for expressing

Anti terrorism squad with military equipment with special tactical force counter terrorism assault technology.  
© MAD.vertise, licensed under Shutterstock.





their opinion and exercising their fundamental rights, many of whom are falsely accused of terrorism.

In the Levant, **Israel** continued to perpetrate its genocidal assault on Gaza under the guise of fighting terrorism. In **Iraq**, the authorities carried out mass executions of prisoners arbitrarily detained on fabricated accusations of terrorism, which UN experts warned could amount to crimes against humanity.

At the regional level, MRG has identified a worrisome trend of state authorities targeting exiled dissidents and HRDs through politically motivated extraditions, falsely accusing them of terrorism. These unlawful extraditions are often facilitated through the Arab Interior Ministers' Council (AIMC), a body of the Arab League that can circulate state-requested arrest warrants among Arab League countries while leaving impacted individuals unable to challenge the extradition request.

Hence, in 2024, counter-terrorism legal and institutional frameworks had a detrimental impact on fundamental rights and enabled a range of human rights violations across the MENA region, at both the national and transnational levels.

## Transnational repression

In 2024, MRG continued to witness an escalation of transnational repression across the MENA region, whereby state authorities use unlawful extradition proceedings to silence dissent beyond national borders. Through our continued documentation and litigation of these cases, we aim to shed light on the practice, and underline the complicity of both international organisations and governments in enabling this cross-border phenomenon

that violates the fundamental freedoms of dissidents and HRDs abroad.

In 2024, MRG documented multiple cases of peaceful activists facing extradition from one Arab League country to another despite the high risk of facing torture in the requesting state. Such extradition proceedings violate the principle of *non-refoulement*, which provides that states should not deport individuals to any country where they would face torture.

Moreover, Arab League states often request the extradition of individuals for criticising the authorities or for participating in peaceful protests, acts which fall under the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Equally concerning, these extradition requests are politically motivated and often facilitated by the AIMC, through its liaison or communication divisions present in Arab League member states. There is no mechanism to challenge such abusive extradition requests circulated by the AIMC, leaving impacted individuals at the mercy of state authorities' discretion and abuse.

One of the cases documented by MRG in this context is that of Salman al-Khaldy, a student who had been sentenced *in absentia* to five years in prison in **Kuwait** for sharing social media posts criticising the authorities. After moving to the UK, he continued to face repression despite receiving an official pardon in 2023, such as new prison sentences and being stripped of his Kuwaiti nationality. On January 1, 2025, he was extradited from **Iraq** to Kuwait on the basis of an AIMC arrest warrant, where he now faces long-term imprisonment.

MRG also documented the case of Abdelbaset Elemam, a Turkish national of Egyptian origin forced into exile because of the increasing



Macro Globe Map Detail 13 Saudi Arabia. © Kent Weakley, licensed under Shutterstock.

crackdown on dissidents in his country of origin. In 2013, Elemam participated in protests in Egypt, during which his son was shot dead by security forces. In 2017, he was sentenced *in absentia* to life imprisonment on fabricated terrorism charges. On November 3, 2024, he was arrested in **Morocco** on the basis of an extradition request issued by Egypt. MRG then filed an urgent appeal with the Special Rapporteur on torture calling for his release and for the extradition proceedings to be dropped. On December 17, 2024, Morocco finally rejected Egypt's extradition request and Abdelbaset was freed, allowing him to be reunited with his family in Turkey.

Similarly, MRG assisted Ahmed Fathi Kamal Kamel, an Egyptian national who was arrested by **Saudi** authorities on November 13, 2024, on the basis of an extradition request issued by Egypt. In 2021, Kamel was sentenced *in absentia* to 25 years in prison in his home

country on charges related to his involvement in the Arab Spring protests. MRG sent an urgent appeal to several UN Special Procedures mandate holders, requesting them to intervene in Kamel's case. Currently detained in Jeddah, he risks imminent extradition to Egypt, where he will likely face torture, arbitrary detention and other human rights abuses.

Beyond cases involving the AIMC, MRG continued to follow up on the extradition case of Yiderisi Aishan, an ethnic Uyghur who continued to be detained since he was arrested in **Morocco** in 2021, based on a red notice issued by INTERPOL at China's request. Prompted by a prior submission from MRG and Safeguard Defenders, in July 2024, the UN Committee against Torture issued a decision on Aishan's case, calling on Morocco not to extradite him and to release him in the absence of charges. He was finally released on February 12, 2025.

Finally, MRG continued to monitor the case of Abdulrahman al-Bakr al-Khalidi, a Saudi HRD and political activist held in administrative detention in **Bulgaria** since 2021 in particularly harsh conditions. Despite multiple court rulings in favor of granting him asylum and ordering his release, the Bulgarian State Refugee Agency consistently upheld its denial of both his release and asylum throughout the year. Al-Khalidi remains at significant risk of deportation to **Saudi Arabia**, where he could face torture or even the death penalty for his political activism. MRG also engaged with UN and EU stakeholders to push Bulgarian authorities to release him from prison and grant him asylum.

## Death penalty and executions

Since the accession of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman in 2017, the number of death penalty sentences and executions has skyrocketed in **Saudi Arabia**, with more

than 200 executions carried out in 2024 alone. MRG continued to defend several individuals facing the death penalty, in the hope of compelling Saudi authorities to, at the very least, comply with international legal standards regarding its application.

There are currently several individuals on death row for crimes they allegedly committed as minors, even though this is expressly prohibited by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Kingdom ratified. In particular, five young men were tortured and sentenced to death for protesting in 2011 while they were still minors. In 2023, MRG submitted the cases of Jawad Qureiris, Jalal al-Labbad, Yusuf al-Manasif, Hassan al-Faraj and Abdullah al-Derazi to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UN WGAD). Prompted by our request, in 2024, the UN WGAD qualified their detentions and death sentences as arbitrary and urged Saudi authorities to immediately release them.

From left to right: Jawad Qureiris, Jalal al-Labbad, Yusuf al-Manasif, Hassan al-Faraj, Abdullah al-Derazi, and Saud al-Faraj.



Similarly, MRG sustained its efforts for the release of Saud al-Faraj, a Saudi businessman who was arrested in 2019 and sentenced to death in 2022 for participating in the 2011 al-Qatif protests and allegedly ‘running a terrorist cell’. The UN WGAD also issued an Opinion finding his detention to be arbitrary. According to the UN experts, al-Faraj’s detention lacks any legal basis, stems from the exercise of his rights and freedoms, severely violates his due process rights, and is discriminatory as he belongs to the Shi’a community.

MRG also monitored the ongoing campaign of mass executions in **Iraq**, which UN experts warned could amount to crimes against humanity, mainly against individuals detained in Nasiriyah prison on accusations of terrorism.



Abdullah al-Taei.

In 2024, we continued to assist Abdullah al-Taei, an Iraqi national facing the death penalty. Arbitrarily detained since 2017, the UN WGAD previously called for his release based on a MRG submission. Following our appeal, in 2024, three UN Special Procedures expressed concern over al-Taei’s imminent execution, and urged the Iraqi authorities to immediately halt all executions.

## Enforced disappearances

This year, MRG continued to follow-up on a number of pending cases of enforced disappearance while filing eight new cases in Algeria, Iraq, Mauritania, and the UAE before UN human rights mechanism, prompting them



Photos of forcibly disappeared persons hang in the Marjeh Square of Damascus, Syria. © Courtesy of Falah Sayed.

to urge state authorities to clarify the fate and whereabouts of the disappeared persons.

In **Algeria**, where authorities frequently practiced enforced disappearance during the civil war in the 1990s, we submitted the case of Sofiane Ouali, an Algerian lawyer, to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (UN WGEID). In July 2024, Ouali was arrested and detained *incommunicado* for seven days in reprisal for organising a sit-in in front of the Bejaia court to protest the arrest of a human rights activist.

In **Iraq**, a country with one of the highest number of missing persons in the world, we continued to assist hundreds of victims of enforced disappearances. Specifically, we followed up on 102 cases still pending before UN human rights protection mechanisms, in particular the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances (UN CED). MRG provided comments on the Iraqi state’s replies to the UN CED, noting that the responses often contained incoherent or

incomplete information, and generally failed to provide information on effective and tangible action taken to investigate cases of enforced disappearance.

In **Mauritania**, where enforced disappearances were rampant during the “Passif humanitaire” (1986-1991), a period during which grave human rights violations were committed against Afro-Mauritanian communities, victims and their relatives continue to seek truth and justice. This year, MRG assisted the families of Wele Ousmane Abdallah and Abdoulaye Tambahou, two former members of the Mauritanian navy who were arrested, tortured, and killed in the Inal base. Their remains have never been returned to their relatives, and they have never been officially informed of the circumstances of their deaths. In April 2024, MRG requested the intervention of the UN WGEID, urging state authorities to investigate their cases.

In the **UAE**, we assisted the family of Muaadh Hailan, a Yemeni student at the Dubai Police College who was arrested and taken to al-Wathba prison in Abu Dhabi, where he was tortured by investigators. The last time his family was in contact with him was on July 20, 2020, through a short phone call from al-Wathba prison. MRG submitted his case to the UN WGEID in January 2024 to call on the UAE for his immediate release and the disclosure of his fate and whereabouts. As long as his case remains unsolved, MRG will continue to monitor his situation.

## Reprisals against human rights defenders

The year 2024 was no exception to the widespread repression of rights advocates. MRG continued to support numerous HRDs,

who have long endured abuses in retaliation for their activism. As every year, in the context of the preparation of the annual report on intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the UN in the field of human rights, MRG submitted an informative report to the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), providing information about individuals subjected to continued acts of reprisals in **Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE**. The UNSG report, presented in September 2024, cited cases of reprisals in 32 countries worldwide, including several in the MENA region, namely Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.



From left to right: Kaddour Chouicha and Jamila Loukil.

In **Algeria**, MRG continued to monitor the case of Kaddour Chouicha, vice-president of the now dissolved *Ligue algérienne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme* (LADDH). Chouicha has been facing baseless charges of terrorism and subversion since 2021 related to his legitimate activities as a HRD. Two months after being acquitted by the Dar El Beida court with his wife, Jamila Loukil, Chouicha learned that he had been sentenced *in absentia* by the Court of Oran to one year in prison for “publishing information prejudicial to public order”. The new trial took place on February 18, 2024, without Chouicha nor his lawyer being informed. He was sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

In **Palestine**, MRG successfully advocated for the release of Palestinian HRDs unjustly



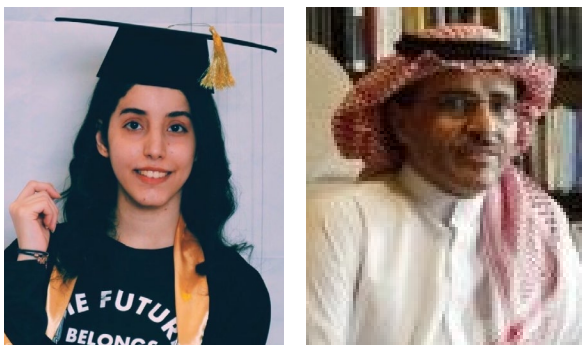
From left to right: [Baraa Odeh](#), [Sumoud Mtair](#) and [Omar al-Khatib](#).

detained by Israeli authorities. We assisted [Baraa Awad Ahmad Odeh](#), a Palestinian HRD who contributed to providing safe spaces for Palestinian youth. She was arrested by Israeli forces, tortured by a male guard, and held in administrative detention, in degrading conditions for over three months. In the same context, we litigated on behalf of [Sumoud Mtair](#) and [Omar al-Khatib](#), two Palestinian HRDs detained in similar conditions. On May 6, 2024, alongside Palestinian civil society organisations (CSOs), MRG submitted the cases of Odeh, Mtair and al-Khatib to the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs, requesting her urgent intervention. Following our appeal, UN Special Procedures addressed a communication to the Israeli government expressing great concern over the human

rights abuses committed against the three HRDs, and called for their immediate release. Whilst al-Khatib remains detained, Odeh and Mtair were both released in June 2024.

Furthermore, in **Saudi Arabia**, MRG supported several HRDs who continued to be subjected to reprisals. Among them is Saudi women's rights defender [Manahel al-Otaibi](#), who has been detained since 2022 for publishing social media posts on female empowerment. On January 9, 2024, she was sentenced in a secret trial to 11 years in prison for "having committed terrorist offences". In November 2024, her sentence was upheld on appeal, after which several UN Special Procedures issued a communication to Saudi authorities, expressing concern over her sentencing and inhumane detention conditions. As she continues to be unjustly detained, MRG will continue to advocate for her release.

Similarly, Saudi authorities continued to target HRD and co-founder of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) [Mohammad al-Qahtani](#). In 2024, he was charged for new criminal offences, while in detention after completing his 10-year prison sentence. Al-Qahtani was finally released in January 2025 after being held *incommunicado* for most of the year.



[Manahel al-Otaibi](#) and [Mohammad al-Qahtani](#).



# IN FOCUS

## Increased crackdown on civic space and freedom of expression in Algeria

Algeria, Algiers - October 25, 2019: Algerians maintain pressure for the 36th week of protests, against the current government, and against the presidential elections scheduled for December 12, 2019. © Saad Bakhouch, licensed under Shutterstock.

As witnessed in previous years, 2024 was marked by continued attacks on freedom of expression and civic space in **Algeria**. State authorities notably continued to target human rights lawyers in retaliation for practising their profession or exercising their fundamental rights.

On February 26, 2024, Omar Boussag, a lawyer and member of the collective defending prisoners of conscience, was sentenced *in absentia* to six months' imprisonment on charges of "insulting an official body" and "inciting an unarmed gathering". The charges were based on Boussag's Facebook posts in May 2021 about a social movement led by the Algerian civil defence. As Boussag did not attend the initial trial, he objected to the first instance judgment and his application was accepted. He was retried on July 8, 2024 and sentenced to a fine of 50,000 DZD. As the proceedings contravene Boussag's right to freedom of expression, MRG then raised his case with several UN Special Procedures mandate holders.

Similarly, MRG defended Sofiane Ouali, an Algerian lawyer who represents prisoners of conscience. Ouali was detained *incommunicado* after organising a sit-in to protest the detention of a human rights activist. He was then charged with unfounded

crimes of "terrorism", "money laundering" and "receiving illegal funds". Though he was provisionally released, he is currently under criminal investigation. MRG will continue to monitor his case and advocate for his freedom.

We were pleased that UN Special Procedures took action on both Boussag and Ouali's cases, reiterating that UN human rights standards provide that lawyers can undertake their work without threats, intimidation or harassment.

Moreover, MRG documented the latest detention of Algerian poet Mohamed Tadjadit. A leading figure of the Hirak protest movement, Tadjadit has been subjected to judicial harassment and imprisoned multiple times since 2019. On January 29, 2024, authorities arrested him and charged him with 'terrorism' under article 87 *bis* of the Penal Code. The prosecutor accused him of having had private conversations on Facebook Messenger with members of Rachad, a political opposition movement. However, these conversations took place in 2021, prior to Rachad's listing in the register of terrorist persons and entities. Tadjadit's trial was scheduled for July 18, 2024, but was postponed to a later date. On October 30, 2024, Tadjadit was temporarily released after a presidential pardon. We will continue to closely monitor his case and the restrictions on his fundamental rights.



Nasser Zefzafi. © Abdeaitali, CC BY 3.0.

# IN FOCUS

## UN experts call for the release of Moroccan political activist Nasser Zefzafi

In 2024, MRG continued to advocate for the release of Nasser Zefzafi, a leading **Moroccan** political activist detained since 2017. Our efforts have led to the UN WGAD recognising the arbitrary nature of his detention and the Moroccan authorities' violation of Zefzafi's rights. The Working Group also echoed our repeated calls for his immediate release from prison.

Zefzafi became the leader of the Hirak El-Rif, a movement calling for greater social and economic rights in the marginalised Rif region, during the peaceful protests that followed the death of Mouhcine Fikri in October 2016.

He was arrested on May 29, 2017, and later testified that he was tortured during his arrest. On June 5, 2017, Zefzafi appeared before the Prosecutor of the Casablanca Court of Appeal, who charged him with two felonies and seven misdemeanours, including "undermining the internal security of the state", "contempt of law enforcement officers" and "participation in an armed rebellion". All these accusations are based on acts related to his peaceful activism as part of the Hirak El-Rif Movement.

In June 2018, the Casablanca Court of Appeal sentenced Zefzafi and 53 other co-defendants to prison terms. Zefzafi was handed a 20-year prison sentence, which was upheld on appeal. MRG sent a request for Opinion to the UN WGAD on November 23, 2023, arguing that his deprivation of liberty is arbitrary because it results from the exercise of his fundamental rights, in particular his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

Prompted by our request, in 2024, the UN WGAD issued an Opinion qualifying his detention as arbitrary and calling on the Moroccan government to release Zefzafi without delay. This decision marks a significant milestone in the recognition of Zefzafi's rights.

In its Opinion, the UN WGAD found that Zefzafi was detained solely because of his peaceful protest and expression. The UN WGAD further assessed that the violations of Zefzafi's right to a fair trial were so serious that they rendered his detention arbitrary. The UN experts further noted that the Moroccan government had not demonstrated which measures were taken to investigate Zefzafi's torture allegations, nor did it ensure that information obtained through ill-treatment or torture was not used in the prosecution.

The UN WGAD called on the Moroccan authorities to take the necessary measures to remedy Zefzafi's situation without delay, by immediately releasing him and granting him reparation in accordance with international law. Additionally, the Opinion determined that Zefzafi's detention is not an isolated act but rather part of a pattern targeting him due to his ethnic identity and political activism, amounting to discrimination.

In a statement signed by partner organisations, MENA Rights Group called on the Moroccan authorities to implement the recommendations contained in the Working Group's decision.



## Attacks on journalists

Across the MENA, authorities targeted independent journalists in reprisal for exercising their rights and profession. In 2024, two journalists unlawfully detained in Algeria, were released following MRG’s advocacy efforts. We also secured the release of a journalist who was forcibly disappeared and detained in Iraq.

In 2024, MRG welcomed the release of Ihsane El Kadi, an **Algerian** journalist and the Director of the media division of *Interfaces Médias*, which oversees *Radio M* and news website *Maghreb Émergent*. These two platforms, which were among the last independent media outlets in the country, were shut down by the authorities in early 2023. In June of that year, El Kadi was sentenced on appeal to seven years of imprisonment in reprisal for his journalistic work. In early 2024, MRG referred his case to the UN Human Rights Committee (HRCT). On October 30, 2024, El Kadi benefited from a pardon before his release the following day. Nevertheless, his journalistic activities continue to be hindered by the authorities and MRG will continue to monitor his situation.



From left to right: Ihsane El Kadi, Mustapha Bendjama and Sulaiman Ahmad.

In addition, MRG continued to support Algerian journalist Mustapha Bendjama, whose rights and freedoms continued to be restricted. MRG started working on his case after he was arrested in 2023 and sentenced to two years in prison, before the sentence was reduced on appeal to eight months' imprisonment. In March 2024, following our request, the UN WGAD issued an Opinion qualifying his as well as the detention of Canadian-Algerian researcher Raouf Farrah's detention as arbitrary, shortly after which Bendjama was released. However, he continued to be subjected to a travel ban and was prevented from travelling twice, although the travel ban issued against him in 2019 was lifted by a court ruling in 2022. Bendjama was arrested again on December 30, 2024 and charged with “exposing to public view publications likely to harm the national interest” and “[undermining] public security and public order”. The charges related to his social media posts on denouncing the human rights situation in Algeria and the arbitrary nature of his travel ban. He was then provisionally released pending a possible trial in 2025.

Lastly, in 2024, MRG located the whereabouts of Sulaiman Ahmad, a Syrian Kurdish journalist who was forcibly disappeared for 211 days after being arrested by **Iraqi** Kurdish authorities upon return from a family visit in Syria. We submitted an Urgent Action to the UN CED as well as to the UN Special Procedures, urging the Iraqi government to clarify his fate and whereabouts. In May 2024, Ahmad’s lawyers were finally able to locate and visit him in prison. Following our urgent action, the UN WGAD, UN WGEID and the Special Rapporteur urged the Iraqi authorities to prevent any irreparable damage to his life and personal integrity. We were then pleased to learn that Ahmad’s charges were dropped, and he was released and reunited with his family in Syria in January 2025.



Amman, Jordan - 22 October 2023 : Demonstrations of the Jordanian people in solidarity with Gaza and the Palestinian people. © Omar AlHyari, licensed under Shutterstock.

# IN FOCUS

## The region-wide repression of pro-Palestine voices

Across the world, movements supporting the Palestinian cause or opposing normalisation with Israel face increasing restrictions. Authorities frequently ban peaceful protests, boycott campaigns and solidarity initiatives, while subjecting participants to arbitrary arrest and prosecution. In the words of the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, “the ongoing crisis in Gaza is evolving into a real global crisis of freedom of expression”. The MENA is no exception to this trend, as governments have intensified their repression of pro-Palestine voices.

Our team documented multiple cases of **Jordanian** nationals being arrested, arbitrarily detained, or unfairly prosecuted for peacefully expressing their solidarity with Gaza. State authorities arrested Sameer Nemrawi in 2023 and in 2024 for his social media posts calling for demonstrations in solidarity with Gaza. He remains detained to date. Similarly, in April, authorities detained pro-Palestine activist Fatima Shubeilat for participating in a sit-in near the Israeli embassy in Amman. Shubeilat was released pending her trial. In May, Palestinian-Jordanian journalist Hiba Abu Taha was detained in reprisal for publishing an article condemning Jordan’s relations with Israel. Political activist Kamil al-Zoubi was sentenced in May to 3 months in prison under the Cybercrime Law and later was sentenced to a fine of 5,000 JOD, for a number of social media posts criticising the economic situation and corruption in Jordan, shedding light on the detention of peaceful activists, and expressing his support for Gaza.

In December, MRG submitted a general allegation to UN Special Procedures providing a legal analysis of the restrictions imposed by Jordanian authorities on activists expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people, particularly under the repressive Crime Prevention Law, Cybercrime Law and Penal Code. Our analysis also reveals the role of the General Intelligence Department (GID) and the Preventative Security branch of the Public Security Directorate (PSD) — Jordan’s primary intelligence and security agencies — in the arrests of pro-Palestine activists.

Meanwhile, in **Morocco**, MRG supported six activists from the Moroccan Front for the Support of Palestine and Opposition to Normalisation, who were prosecuted for organising a peaceful sit-in at the parking lot of a Carrefour store in Salé. The sit-in was aimed at delivering a letter condemning the company’s complicity in the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and urging it to cease its support for the Israeli army and settlement-linked businesses. The sit-in was immediately dispersed by law enforcement officials using excessive force, leading to the arrest of 13 activists, including our six complainants, who were later released. In December they were all sentenced to a six-month suspended prison term and a 2,000 MAD fine for participating in an unregistered demonstration. MRG submitted a letter of allegation to several UN Special Procedures mandate holders. In addition, we published a comprehensive legal analysis highlighting the serious human rights violations committed by the Moroccan authorities in their crackdown of critical voices of the Kingdom’s normalisation with Israel.

We assessed the compliance of **5 countries** with their international obligations.

We also engaged with **5 UN Treaty Bodies** in the review of states' human rights records.

We assessed the work, independence and efficiency of **4 national human rights institutions**.

We engaged in a variety of contemporary international law issues, including human rights and counter-terrorism and transnational repression.

# Legal advocacy

We conducted in-depth thematic and country-specific research on key legal and policy issues.

## Aligning domestic legal frameworks with international standards

This year, we identified legal developments pertaining to Algeria that would enable human rights violations. We therefore conducted in-depth research and analysis and advocated for legal and policy reform in line with international standards.

In 2024, as part of our efforts to effectively address the root causes of human rights violations, we drafted a comprehensive legal analysis on the human rights impact of the amended **Algerian** Penal Code. Our research shows that the new and amended provisions are detrimental to the exercise

of fundamental freedoms in the country and disregard numerous concerns voiced by civil society actors as well as several UN bodies.

Among the most problematic amendments is the expansion of the definition of terrorism under article 87 *bis*, which fails to align

Algerian parliament Boulevard Zighout Youcef. © Hakim licensed under Shutterstock.



with international standards and lacks the necessary level of legal certainty. Of particular concern is the fact that individuals may be listed on a national list of terrorist persons and entities based only on “serious corroborating evidence”, in the absence of a final judgment.

MRG has identified a set of amendments that will further restrict the exercise of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. These include provisions related to undermining the morale of the military, defaming public institutions, damaging the reputation of security services, distributing content for “propaganda purposes”, and enabling the repression of “unarmed gatherings”.

This revised version of the Penal Code is particularly concerning because many of these provisions were already present in previous versions and were widely used to target individuals exercising their fundamental rights. These amendments increase penalties and broaden the scope of the most problematic provisions, heightening the risk of further repression of dissenting voices.

Furthermore, this year, we continued to partner with the International Center for Not-For-Profit Law (ICNL) and monitored legal and policy developments in Algeria affecting civic space. Our research was used to update ICNL’s [Civic Freedom Monitor](#) on Algeria.

## Assessing states’ compliance with human rights standards

**Based on thorough research and monitoring, we produced country reports and brought a civil society perspective in the assessment of the compliance of states – specifically Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia – with their human rights obligations within UN mechanisms.**

### Universal Periodic Review

In 2024, MRG continued to engage with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a peer review mechanism by which UN Member States provide recommendations to improve the human rights record of the countries under review.

The year started with the fourth UPR **Saudi Arabia** in January 2024, during which the authorities received 377 recommendations from 136 states on various issues including the right to freedom of expression, the prohibition of torture, and the death penalty. Following our repeated advocacy efforts, Member States introduced a new recommendation for the Saudi Human Rights Commission to fully comply with the Paris Principles. Prior to the

UPR, we had provided UN Member States with information on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia.

In July, during the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC), the outcome of Saudi Arabia’s UPR was adopted. Saudi authorities informed the UN HRC of its intention to accept around 83% of the recommendations made, which is considered a high acceptance rate.

Our analysis has shown that many recommendations that were “noted” or “rejected” in the third cycle, were “accepted” in the fourth. These include recommendations to release detained HRDs, repeal the travel bans imposed on them, and refrain from reprisals.



Ms. Hala al-Tuwaijri, President of the Saudi Human Rights Commission, speaks on behalf of the Saudi delegation during the Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council. © MENA Rights Group.

Most recommendations regarding ratification of international human rights mechanisms, amendment of domestic laws and cooperation with the UN were simply “noted”.

It is now crucial for MRG and partners to continue monitoring the effective implementation of accepted recommendations. MRG will also continue its efforts to urge Saudi Arabia to grant access to independent international observers and NGOs, and most importantly to extend invitations to UN Special Procedures mandate holders.

In March 2024, it was the government of **Djibouti** that informed the UN HRC of its decision to accept 228 out of the 269 recommendations received as part of its fourth UPR in 2023. Ahead of the review, MRG had submitted a shadow report containing a list of key recommendations, which was circulated among reviewing states.

Djibouti endorsed most recommendations related to freedom of expression, press freedom, right to association and to peaceful assembly, and also accepted all six recommendations regarding the National Human Rights Commission, Djibouti’s National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), including the ones asking for full compliance of the institution with the Paris Principles. At the time of Djibouti’s UPR adoption, doubts were raised about the implementation of these recommendations due to the near-total absence of independent voices in the country. MRG will continue to closely monitor Djibouti’s implementation of the accepted recommendations ahead of the country’s next review, which will take place in 2028.

Lastly, ahead of the UPR of **Iraq** that took place on January 27, 2025, MRG submitted two reports to the UN HRC and also presented our reports’ findings during the UPR pre-session held by *UPR-Info* in November 2024.



The Djibouti delegation during the 4th cycle of its Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council. © UN Web TV.

The first report provides a landscape of the human rights situation in the country. Our findings show that since its third UPR in 2019, the state of civil and political rights has significantly deteriorated. First, the country's national human rights institution, namely the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), has become non-operational. Second, the counter-terrorism framework and practices in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (K-RI) remain incompatible with international human rights standards. Third, Iraqi authorities still heavily employ the death penalty, and summary executions are rampant. Fourth, Iraq continues to have one of the highest numbers of enforced disappearances globally, and arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment remain systematic practices. Lastly, the Iraqi government has escalated its crackdown on civic space, with a severe repression on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association.

The second report, submitted jointly with local and international CSOs, specifically focuses on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. Informed by contributions from grassroots and international NGOs, as well as desk research and documented cases shared by victims' families, our report found that, in both federal Iraq and the K-RI, the legal framework regulating civic space falls short of international human rights standards. In addition, Iraqi and Kurdish authorities systematically weaponise vaguely worded laws with harsh criminal penalties to crack down on civic space. In practice, in the context of the October 2019 demonstrations, Iraqi security forces carried out violent attacks against peaceful demonstrators, employing excessive and unnecessary lethal force with little accountability while shutting down press agencies covering the protests. In the K-RI, authorities initiated a widespread campaign of arrests and detentions targeting activists, protesters, and journalists, arbitrarily charging

them with “espionage” or “destabilising national stability” on the basis of the vaguely worded national security law.

## Committee against Torture

In the context of the review of **Jordan’s** fourth periodic report by the Committee against Torture (CAT), MRG submitted an alternative report evaluating the Kingdom’s implementation of the UN Convention against Torture. The report analyses Jordan’s legislation on the criminalisation of torture, legal safeguards for detainees, and the prevention of torture. It also examines issues such as politically motivated extraditions, the treatment of detainees, and the adequacy of investigations into torture complaints. Ahead of the review, MRG attended the NGO briefing and shared with the UN experts our key concerns and recommendations.

We were pleased that following the review, the CAT made strong findings and recommendations contained in its Concluding Observations, which echoed the concerns

highlighted in our report. The Committee notably urged the Jordanian authorities to adopt a definition of torture in line with the Convention. The CAT also echoed our findings regarding consistent reports of suspects being held by the police, particularly the General Intelligence Directorate (GID), for prolonged periods before being presented before a judicial authority. Additionally, the Committee expressed concern over the State Security Court (SSC)’s lack of independence and impartiality. As highlighted in our submission, the SSC has used coerced confessions obtained under torture as evidence in trials.

Furthermore, regarding the principle of *non-refoulement*, the Committee urged Jordan to ensure that deportation decisions, including those arising from requests by the AIMC, are subject to independent judicial review. This recommendation was directly informed by MRG’s evidence-based research on the role of the AIMC in facilitating politically motivated extraditions and enabling transnational repression. The CAT’s direct reference to the AIMC in its Concluding Observations is

Drapeaux de Jordanie à l’aéroport et décollage de l’avion commercial. rendu 3D d’animation. © max.ku, licensed under Shutterstock.





groundbreaking, marking the first time a UN Treaty Body addresses the role of the AIMC in potential violations of the Convention against Torture.

## Human Rights Committee

Ahead of the sixth periodic review of **Jordan**, MRG submitted a contribution to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRcT), focusing on the Kingdom’s obligation to respect the principle of *non-refoulement* in the context of extradition proceedings.

The report details how the AIMC’s role in facilitating extraditions in the Arab region specifically plays out in Jordan, shedding light on the functioning of the country’s national AIMC liaison division: the Arab and International Police Department. In practice, the report illustrates the concerning role played by the AIMC and the Jordanian liaison division in the case of Khalaf al-Romaithi, a prominent Emirati dissident and member of the “UAE 94” who was arbitrarily extradited from Jordan to the UAE in May 2023, and has since remained disappeared.

## Committee on Enforced Disappearances

In the context of **Morocco’s** first review by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), MRG submitted an alternative report evaluating the implementation of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. During the pre-session, civil society actors were also invited to present oral statements to the Committee members. This year, with generous support from the City of Geneva, MRG facilitated the participation of two Moroccan human rights defenders, Abdelhak



Moroccan civil society attending the review of Morocco by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances. © Courtesy of Justine Lager.

El Ouassouli and Ahmed El Haij, who traveled to Geneva to attend Morocco’s review and engage in advocacy activities.

Our joint advocacy effort has proven fruitful: the Committee’s Concluding Observations contained strong recommendations on Morocco’s obligation to codify enforced disappearance as a criminal offense under domestic law, transitional justice and the right to truth in the context of the “Years of Lead”, compliance with the principle of *non-refoulement*, including in the context of cases of extraditions, and the prevention of enforced disappearances with regard to the fight against terrorism.

The Moroccan government has four years to report to the CED on the implementation of these recommendations. The government’s initial comments on the Concluding Observations, transmitted to the Committee on October 21, 2024, stating that the document contains “erroneous conclusions” and relies on “unreliable data”, show a lack of political will to implement these recommendations. Regardless, together with our partners, we will continue to advocate for victims’ right to truth and justice and for Morocco to comply with its international obligations.



# IN FOCUS

## UN assessment of women and minorities' rights in Saudi Arabia

Saudi civil society outside the UN's Palais des Nations in Geneva before the CEDAW session.  
© Courtesy of Falah Sayed.

This year, **Saudi Arabia** was reviewed by two UN Treaty Bodies: the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and Girls (CEDAW) on October 9, 2024, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on November 27-28, 2024. In this context, and with the generous support of the State of Geneva, MRG carried out several research and advocacy activities exposing the Saudi government's numerous violations of the respective international Conventions protecting women on the one hand, and minorities on the other.

Ahead of the reviews, MRG drafted a [joint shadow report](#) on Saudi Arabia's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The report elaborates on four main themes: the increased persecution of women HRDs, travel bans as a tool of repression, the treatment of women in prison, and the role of the Saudi Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in whitewashing violations against women.

Similarly, MRG drafted another [joint shadow report](#) ahead of the review of Saudi Arabia by the CERD. The report raised the issues of discrimination against the Shi'a religious minority and the Saudi authorities' reprisals against the Huwaitat tribal community, which

is being forcibly displaced as a result of the construction of the NEOM megaproject. We also highlighted the SHRC's tendency to cover up such discrimination.

MRG also organised two advocacy missions to Geneva enabling civil society representatives to present the joint reports and brief Committee members in-person ahead of the reviews.

The civil society representatives of the CEDAW mission were Lina al-Hathloul, Saudi activist and Head of Advocacy at ALQST for Human Rights, Khulud al-Harathi, Saudi activist and writer, and Maryam al-Dossari, professor at the University of London. On October 7, they took part in the public interactive dialogue between NGOs and Committee members at the Palais des Nations, where al-Hathloul made an oral intervention for the Committee. During the review on October 9, MRG live-tweeted about the Committee members' questions and the government's responses.

For the CERD mission, we were able to bring civil society representatives Taha al-Hajji, a Saudi lawyer and legal director of the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights (ESOHR), and Omaima al-Najjar, a Saudi activist. Both are members of the Shi'a minority. Al-Hajji also delivered a statement at the private meeting with NGOs which

took place on November 26 at the Palais Wilson. Most importantly, he highlighted the persecution suffered by the Shi'a population in Saudi Arabia, and the fact that they are increasingly exposed to death sentences for acts falling within the exercise of their right to freedom of expression. MRG also live-tweeted during the review of the CERD which took place in late November.

The Concluding Observations of the CEDAW were published on October 28, 2024 and those of the CERD on December 14, 2024. MRG was pleased to see that most of the issues that were put forth in our reports and orally during the missions in Geneva, were reflected in the Concluding Observations, including recommendations directly addressed at the SHRC and its lack of independence as it was heading the governmental delegation in both reviews.

In particular, the CEDAW's conclusions raised concerns about ongoing discrimination against women, especially the male guardianship system, which still restricts women's access to services and personal freedoms. The Committee also condemned the use of arbitrary travel bans on women HRDs and urged Saudi Arabia to impose a moratorium on the death penalty, especially for women on death row. It highlighted the lack of protection for migrant domestic workers, who remain excluded from labour law, and called for reforms to address exploitation under the kafala system. The Committee further stressed the need for an independent Saudi Human Rights Commission and stronger compliance with the Convention.

Meanwhile, in its findings, the CERD expressed concerns over the lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws and highlighted systemic discrimination against Shi'a Muslims,



Lina al-Hathloul of ALQST for Human Rights delivering a statement at the CEDAW review of Saudi Arabia. © Courtesy of Falah Sayed.

including barriers to religious freedoms and marginalisation in key sectors such as the judiciary. It also addressed the mistreatment of the Howeitat tribe in the NEOM project, including forced evictions without compensation or consultation. The Committee criticised the SHRC for undermining its independence by participating as part of the government delegation and urged the creation of an independent national human rights institution. Furthermore, the Committee raised concerns about the overrepresentation of Shi'a individuals, migrant workers, and domestic workers in the criminal justice system, urging a moratorium on the death penalty and better protections for these groups.

These documents are of major importance for human rights advocacy in Saudi Arabia and we will continue monitoring the implementation of recommendations of the CEDAW and CERD with partners.

# Assessing the performance of national human rights institutions

Among our tactics is assessing the performance of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) of MENA countries, which we believe are essential to ensure the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms at the national level. To that effect, they must abide by the Paris Principles, namely pluralism, independence and effectiveness, “in order to be considered credible and to operate effectively.” In 2024, MRG achieved significant impact with regard to the evaluation of the NHRIs in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq and Oman.

In 2024, we were pleased that the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), the body responsible for assessing and assigning compliance grades to NHRIs based on their degree of implementation of the Paris Principles, expressed concern over the ineffectiveness of the NHRIs of Bahrain, Egypt, and Iraq.

In 2023, MRG had submitted a detailed report on the National Institution for Human Rights in **Bahrain** (NIHRB) to the SCA, recommending that it downgrades or maintains the ‘B’ status of the NIHRB. In 2024, citing its lack of pluralism, independence and effectiveness, the SCA heeded our recommendation.

Cairo, Egypt, April 26, 2024: NCHR The National Council for Human Rights, an Egyptian human rights organization established in 2003 with a mission of promoting and maintaining human rights in Egypt. © Tamer A Soliman, licensed under Shutterstock.



In 2023, MRG had also submitted a report on **Egypt’s** National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) to the SCA, urging them to downgrade the NCHR to status ‘B’ given its failure to protect human rights in Egypt. In 2024, the SCA echoed our assessment and downgraded the NCHR’s status.

In 2024, MRG called on the SCA to downgrade the status of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) in a report detailing the Commission’s shortcomings in the protection of human rights in Iraq. The SCA echoed our concerns while recommending the IHCHR receive a status ‘B’.

Lastly, MRG made a similar plea to the SCA regarding the Omani Human Rights Commission (OHRC), citing its insufficient compliance with the Paris Principles. Consequently, the SCA deferred its review of the OHRC by 18 months and echoed our concerns.

The SCA’s recommendations to grant the NIHRB, NCHR and IHCHR status ‘B’, which marks insufficient compliance with the Paris Principles, illustrates the UN’s growing concern over their lack of independence, pluralism and effectiveness. MRG will continue to monitor and assess the activities of NHRIs across the region to hold them accountable for fulfilling their obligations.

# Engaging in key international law issues

## Human rights and counter-terrorism

In 2024, MRG continued to expand its thematic work on counter-terrorism (CT) and human rights. We have also, for the first time, integrated this theme as part of one of the key systemic objectives of our 2025-2027 Strategic Framework.

In addition to monitoring and documenting a great number of human rights violations stemming from CT abuse in the region, we produced research on the topic, enhanced our collaborative efforts with strategic partners such as the Global Centre on Cooperative Security and the CSO Coalition on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism, and continued to address several stakeholders within the UN CT architecture.

We were notably pleased to have contributed to the Scoping Study on independent civil society-UN counter-terrorism engagement led by the Global Centre on Cooperative Security and Rights and Security International. Based on a large-scale civil society consultation, the Study found that the UN is failing to meaningfully engage with, promote, and protect civil society in the context of its counter-terrorism efforts.

Our Executive Director, Inès Osman, was one of the Scoping Study's 15-member Advisory Committee, who, in 2023-2024, supported the project's team in the design and implementation of the civil society consultations and contributed to the analysis. MRG was also commissioned by the Global

Centre on Cooperative Security to prepare a Landscape Assessment on the MENA, which informed the Study. Our research provided an in-depth understanding of the context in which civil society operates in relation to the UN counter-terrorism architecture. On May 29, Inès Osman spoke during the launch event of the Study at the UN headquarters.

While in New York, she also attended the launch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) "Toolkit on Strengthening Human Rights in Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Policy", and met with a number of representatives from Permanent Missions. She also took part in convenings with UN CT bodies, including the Global Compact Working Group on Promoting and Protecting Human Rights, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Freedoms and Supporting the Victims of Terrorism, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Unfortunately, despite our regular engagement, we have had difficulties raising concerns with UN CT bodies, which have a long way to go in terms of prioritising human rights. Together with our partners, we will continue to build upon the findings and recommendations of the Scoping Study to raise awareness about our analysis and advocate for a fundamental transformation of the Global CT architecture.

Throughout the year, we also enhanced our active participation in the CSO Coalition on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism, a network of CSOs seeking to challenge the abuse of CT legislations, to transform the global CT architecture, and to protect civic space and human rights. In 2024, we joined their Steering Group and assisted in guiding the Coalition's activities.



MRG Executive Director Inès Osman speaks during the launch event of the Scoping Study on independent civil society-UN counter-terrorism engagement at the UN headquarters in New York. © Courtesy of the Global Centre on Cooperative Security.

Lastly, in response to the call for inputs of the OHCHR for its report on the use of administrative measures in counter-terrorism, we produced a briefing paper analysing the use of such measures by MENA states, including their legal framework and the entities responsible for imposing them. The paper also illustrates the practice with case studies, notably Algeria and Israel’s terrorism listing which severely restrict civic space, the use of citizenship stripping in Bahrain and the use of administrative detention against political and human rights activists in the UAE. We then presented our paper during a side-event on the sidelines of the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council.

counter-terrorism, MRG produced a briefing paper on “Transnational repression in the MENA: the role of regional organisations engaged in counter-terrorism”. Our analysis focuses on the AIMC and outlines recommendations to address the concerns posed by this body. In particular, it highlights the AIMC’s role in facilitating politically motivated extraditions of individuals notably accused of terrorism, and draws attention to its opaque collaboration with UN CT bodies, characterised by a lack of meaningful civil society inclusion, human rights monitoring, or impact assessments.

## Transnational repression

Throughout 2024, we continued to develop our thematic expertise on the issue of transnational repression, building on our prior groundbreaking research on the AIMC’s role in the cross-border crackdown on peaceful dissent in the MENA.

In response to the call for inputs of the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and

The national flags of countries members of the Arab League with its symbol. © Maxx-Studio, licensed under Shutterstock.



# IN FOCUS

## Citizenship revocation as a tool of repression in the UAE



United Arab Emirates passport on the Emirates flag, Emirati nationality, Arab Gulf countries.  
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This year, MRG addressed the issue of citizenship revocation in the UAE, a tool often used by the authorities against HRDs. In a [briefing note](#) published in July 2024, MRG analysed the legal dimensions of citizenship stripping in the UAE by examining the domestic law and international implications, particularly its role in stifling civic space and suppressing peaceful dissent within the country. We also shared our concerns with the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights while countering terrorism.

We notably found that the broad framing of article 16 of Federal Law No. 17 concerning Nationality, Passports and Amendments, which serves as the main legal basis for punishing legitimate criticisms of the government, does not comply with the principle of legality.

Through extensive interviews with direct victims and their families, MRG concluded that citizenship revocation is indeed used to silence dissenting voices. This was the case during

the “UAE7” case, where seven individuals were suddenly stripped of their nationality following their political engagement as members of the al-Islah political association. This measure was also used against members of the “UAE94” as well as their relatives. In all these cases, Emirati authorities continue to refuse to provide an official decree that would serve as proof of statelessness. MRG also documented cases where UAE authorities denied the renewal of identity documents of dissidents without stripping them of nationality, leaving them *de facto* stateless with no access to domestic remedies.

We therefore concluded that citizenship revocation violates international law related to the right of nationality. These measures place individuals in a legal limbo with far reaching consequences on other human rights such as the right to family, the right to freedom of movement, the right to education, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to freedom of expression and the right to association.

MENA Rights Group led and participated in **74 advocacy** actions, including at the UN level.

We launched and joined various **campaigns** to raise awareness on human rights violations in the MENA region.

We highlighted victims' stories by publicising and sharing **15 cases** on our website and social media platforms.

We organised and participated in **13 public and online events**.

Our team members have been quoted in **several publications** and our work covered by diverse **media outlets**.



# Awareness raising

In 2024, MRG led or supported 74 joint civil society actions and organised or contributed to 13 events, raising awareness on pressing human rights issues across the region.

Civil society actions include open and joint letters, petitions and statements to relevant authorities and stakeholders, joint statements marking important international days. Our events range from webinars and panel discussions to UN events. Our goal was to raise awareness on an array of human rights issues, including but not limited to violations of international humanitarian and human rights law by Israel in Palestine and Lebanon, the repression of civic space in North Africa, women and minorities' rights in Saudi Arabia, the UAE's misuse of counter-terrorism laws, and transnational repression.

## Israeli human rights violations in Palestine and Lebanon

In light of the genocidal campaign in Gaza since 2023 and the continued human rights abuses against Palestinians in the West Bank, MRG remained steadfast in expressing solidarity with Palestinians and condemning Israel's actions. Similarly, in the context of Israel's bombing campaign against Lebanon and its invasion of the south of the country in 2024, we joined several advocacy campaigns denouncing Israeli war crimes and calling for an immediate ceasefire.

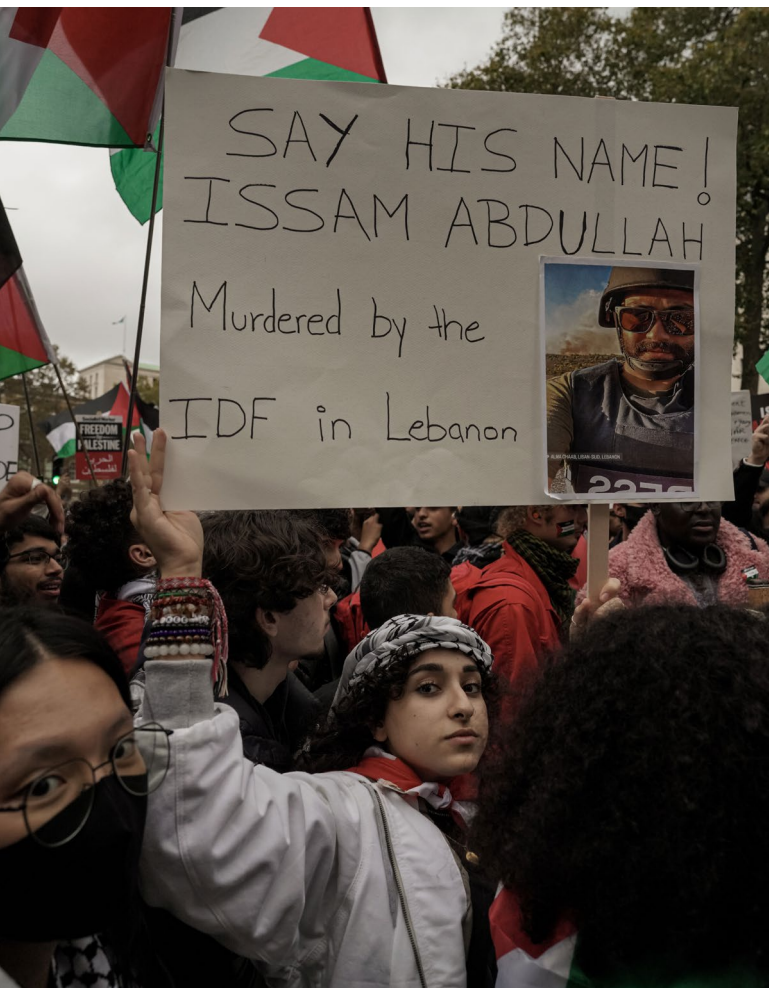
MRG also joined 110+ international, regional and local CSOs in calling on US authorities to halt weapon sales to Israel in the wake of its assault on **Gaza** and Lebanon. In an open letter, we urged US Senators to cosponsor and vote in favour of four joint resolutions of disapproval that would suspend particular

transfers of types of weapons that the Israeli government had used in strikes, killing thousands of civilians, including aid workers and journalists, in Gaza.

With local CSOs, MRG specifically condemned Israel's targeting of journalists in Lebanon and Palestine. The joint [statement](#) called for the

[Peace Advocates Rally in Washington DC to Support Gaza Amid Ongoing Protests - Washington DC - USA 10.21.2023](#). © Mike AZ, licensed under [Shutterstock](#).





Protester holds a photo of Reuters Journalist Issam Abdullah killed by a targeted IDF missile strike. © Alisdare Hickson from Woolwich, United Kingdom, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons.

unconditional protection of journalists, who benefit from special protection in international law. We also called for a full investigation of Israel's unlawful killings of journalists, measures of accountability and a total arms embargo on Israel.

In October, with local CSOs, we signed an open [letter](#) to the German ambassador to Lebanon, which condemned the German Minister of Foreign Affairs' use of dehumanising rhetoric to justify unlawful attacks by Israel on civilians in Lebanon. Following the publication of the letter, our Human Rights Officer Tanya Boulakovski was interviewed on the same topic by German daily newspaper [Die Tageszeitung](#), which sparked debate among readers.

In November, MRG joined a global coalition of 50+ NGOs in calling for an immediate [ceasefire](#) in Lebanon and urging the international community to restrict the transfer of arms to Israel. The statement condemned Israel's use of collective punishment against Lebanese civilians in their military campaign, which led to more than 3000 civilian deaths and the displacement of 1.2 million persons within Lebanon.

In the same month, alongside 20 Lebanese and international CSOs, we sent a joint [letter](#) to UN Member States urging them to hold an emergency session at the UN Human Rights Council to investigate and pursue accountability for Israel's war crimes in Lebanon. This letter garnered global media attention, receiving coverage by [Reuters](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Khaleej Times](#), [Middle East Monitor](#), among other outlets.

## The repression of civic space in North Africa

Throughout 2024, the North Africa region witnessed escalating attacks on fundamental freedoms, with state authorities continuously targeting journalists, lawyers and activists exercising their rights. To combat these human rights abuses, MRG led and contributed to numerous awareness and advocacy campaigns on the matter.

In **Algeria**, authorities continued to crack down on fundamental freedoms, including press freedom, freedom of expression and civic space.

On February 22, marking the fifth anniversary of the start of the Hirak protest movement, MRG and partner CSOs [called](#) for the end of the widespread repression of human rights defenders and activists in Algeria.



Picture of the #ReleaseThem campaign outside of the UN. © Courtesy of Alexis Thiry.

During the month of Ramadan, we took part in the #ReleaseThem campaign calling on Algerian authorities to release all prisoners of conscience and to open up civic space. Building upon these efforts, we also joined the #FreeThemAll campaign in September, which highlighted the plight of numerous prisoners of conscience, such as Ihsane El Kadi, Mohamed Chahid, Djamila Bentouis and Farid Belmokhtar, among others.

On World Press Freedom Day, MRG joined seven CSOs in calling on the Algerian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all arbitrarily detained journalists and HRDs, as well as guarantee a free press and the rights of journalists. Similarly, in June, we joined nine CSOs to urge the authorities to release all prisoners of conscience.

During the 56th session of the UN Human Rights Council, a joint statement on behalf of 14 CSOs was delivered during an interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on

freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. Professor Mouloud Boumghar notably addressed the crackdown on fundamental freedoms by the authorities and urged them to repeal repressive laws.

On Human Rights Day, our Legal Researcher Estelle Allemann spoke during a webinar titled “Human Rights in Algeria: Challenges and Perspectives.” Alongside local and international experts, she detailed the impact of a repressive legal framework on the exercise of fundamental rights in Algeria.

Meanwhile in **Tunisia**, authorities escalated their crackdown on HRDs, CSOs, lawyers, and journalists through arrests, harassment, and intimidation. The authorities have also stepped up their anti-migrant rhetoric and clamped down on African foreign nationals, including migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. With local and international CSOs, MRG urged Tunisian authorities to end this ongoing crackdown and condemned the detention of two lawyers and two journalists who were charged under Tunisia’s abusive cybercrime law.

Tunis, Tunisia. 02 May 2024. Tunisian lawyers in black robes hold a protest outside the Palace of Justice in the capital Tunis to demand the independence of the judiciary. © Hasan Mrad, licensed under Shutterstock.



In another joint letter, MRG and 25 CSOs expressed their solidarity with several Tunisian lawyers who were detained, brutalised and ill-treated by the authorities. The letter condemned the Tunisian government's authoritarian tendencies and called for the release of the lawyers.

Lastly, MRG signed a joint statement urging Tunisian authorities to drop all charges brought against activists and HRDs and to stop all acts of harassment and intimidation. The statement also called on the authorities to ensure the respect of freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The CSOs further called for the release of all prisoners who have been detained for exercising their right to free expression, especially journalists.

In **Egypt**, the authorities continued to detain, intimidate and harass activists, lawyers and CSOs.

In a statement marking 13 years since the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, MRG and 18 CSOs called on Egyptian authorities to release thousands of unjustly detained persons,

to end the use of enforced disappearance, extrajudicial killing and torture, and halt attacks against independent media and civil society.

MRG expressed its support for a letter by UN Special Procedures mandate holders condemning the targeting of Mohamed Issa Rajeh and Mahmoud Abdelmajeed Adel, two lawyers who work at the Egyptian Front for Human Rights (EFHR). The lawyers were investigated over bogus charges in reprisal against their legitimate work, including documenting human rights violations, providing legal aid, and cooperating with UN mechanisms. The statement called for the immediate release of all lawyers and HRDs detained for peacefully conducting their work.

In December, MRG joined 33 rights groups in calling on the Egyptian government to lift the arbitrary travel bans and asset freezes imposed upon three directors of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR). Gasser Abdel Razek, Mohamed Bashir, and Karim Ennarah had been briefly detained in 2020, but continue to be subject to arbitrary travel bans and their assets remain frozen to date.

Groups of Egyptians walk in a giant march across downtown area during first anniversary of Egypt's uprising calling for further political reforms in Cairo, Egypt on January 25, 2012, © Tom Bert, licensed under Shutterstock.



MRG also continued to advocate for the release of the arbitrarily detained human rights lawyer Hoda Abdelmoneim. In April, alongside 15+ CSOs, we renewed our call for her unconditional freedom after 2 000 days of imprisonment. In October, MRG also joined the “#FreeHoda” campaign with a joint statement marking six years of her arbitrary detention and calling for the dropping of all charges against her.

Similarly, MRG joined 80+ CSOs in reiterating our call on the Egyptian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release the prominent political activist Mohamed Adel, who has been arbitrarily detained for five years, amid mounting concerns over his cruel and inhumane detention conditions and denial of adequate medical care.

In **Morocco**, authorities continue to restrict fundamental freedoms and have yet to comprehensively address the practice of enforced disappearance.

In November, our Legal Advisor, Alexis Thiry, travelled to Rabat, Morocco, to attend the launch of the annual report of the *Association Marocaine des Droits Humains* (AMDH). On this occasion, he spoke at a press conference attended by local press, and presented the Concluding Observations of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which had reviewed Morocco weeks prior. The press conference also provided an opportunity to announce that a letter would be sent to the Moroccan authorities asking them to take account of the Committee’s concerns and implement its recommendations. The letter was effectively sent on November 28, 2024. Finally, Thiry deplored the authorities’ reaction to the Committee’s Concluding Observations, describing them as “erroneous” and based on “unreliable data”.



MRG Legal Advisor Alexis Thiry speaks during a press conference alongside members of the Association Marocaine des Droits Humains. © Courtesy of Association Marocaine des Droits Humains.

## Transnational repression and counter-terrorism

MRG organised and participated in a number of events showcasing our expertise on and raising awareness of transnational repression and the abuse of counter-terrorism laws and policies in the MENA.

On May 29, MRG’s Executive Director, Inès Osman, spoke during the launch event of the Scoping Study on independent civil society-UN counter-terrorism engagement at the UN headquarters in New York. She presented the findings of our Landscape Assessment and shared insights into our challenging experience engaging with NY-based UN counter-terrorism bodies, in a context of heightened securitisation and crackdown on civic space throughout the region.

In October, our Human Rights Officer, Tanya Boulakovski, travelled to New York where she, together with the Global Center on Cooperative Security, had organised a side-event at the UN headquarters. The event was co-sponsored by the CSO Coalition on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism and the Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN. The panellists, who



From left to right: Abdullah Alaoudh, Jenan al-Marzooqi, UN Special Rapporteur Ben Saul, MRG Human Rights Officer Tanya Boulakovski and Sherif Osman discuss transnational repression during a side event at the UN Headquarters in New York. © Courtesy of Matthew Schwartz/the Global Center on Cooperative Security.

included U.S.-Egyptian activist Sherif Osman, Saudi activist Abdullah Alaoudh from the Middle East Democracy Centre, and Emirati human rights defender Jenan al-Marzooqi from the Emirati Detainees Advocacy Centre, discussed the troubling regional trend of state authorities repressing civil society actors and activities under the guise of countering terrorism. They, together with the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and counter-terrorism, Ben Saul, spoke of the troubling role of regional and international bodies such as AIMC in legitimising and expanding the reach of CT abuse beyond their national borders, through the practice of transnational repression. The discussion was moderated by Franziska Praxl-Tabushi from the Global Center on Cooperative Security.

Similarly, in Geneva, MRG co-organised a side event to the 57th session of the UN HRC on the adverse human rights impact of administrative counter-terrorism measures, during which the findings of our briefing paper were presented by our Human Rights Officer, Tanya Boulakovski. Other panellists included Samar Khamis from the OHCHR, who highlighted the findings of the OHCHR's

report, Saudi activist Abdullah al-Juraywi from ALQST for Human Rights, Emirati human rights activist and journalist Ahmad al-Nuaimi, and Yasmeen el-Hasan, from the Palestinian Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC). The discussion was moderated by Alexandra Tarzikhan from the American Bar Association. The speakers delved into state authorities' use of measures such as administrative detention, terrorism listing, citizenship stripping, and travel bans to stifle dissent and punish peaceful activism.

## Women and minorities' rights in Saudi Arabia

As part of our advocacy efforts around **Saudi Arabia's** review by the CEDAW and CERD, MRG organised multiple discussions on women and minorities' rights in the Kingdom.

MRG and the MENA Initiative of the Geneva Graduate Institute hosted a panel discussion titled "Women's rights in Saudi Arabia: a long way to freedom". Moderated by our Human Rights Officer Falah Sayed, the event grouped prominent Saudi women's rights defenders and human rights experts such as Lina al-Hathloul from ALQST for Human Rights, Dana Ahmed from Amnesty International and two Saudi activists, Maryam al-Dossari and Khulud al-Harhi. The panelists assessed the state of women's rights in Saudi Arabia and discussed the authorities' lack of implementation of the CEDAW Convention.

MRG also co-organised an online discussion on X around the CEDAW's Concluding Observations on Saudi Arabia. Moderated by Falah Sayed, three eminent Saudi women's rights defenders held the discussion in Arabic with the goal of targeting local and regional audiences. We also led a joint statement



Human Rights Officer Falah Sayed speaking at a UN side-event organized by the Gulf Center for Human Rights, on a panel with Michael Khambatta and Lina al-Hathloul. © Courtesy of Falah Sayed.

with partners calling on Saudi authorities to implement the recommendations issued by the CEDAW in their Concluding Observations. These include lifting travel bans against women HRDs and amending the male guardianship system. Following the CERD's adoption of its Concluding Observations, MRG wrote a [press release](#) summarising Saudi Arabia's shortcomings in addressing discrimination against minorities.

To further raise awareness of the CEDAW and CERD findings, MRG sponsored an [event](#) at the Senate House, University of London tackling women's rights and the protection of minorities in Saudi Arabia. Moderated by ALQST's Executive Director, panelists included Saudi women, human rights defenders and human rights experts from partner organisations. While in London, our Human Rights Officer, Falah Sayed, also contributed to a [discussion](#) in Arabic during ALQST's annual conference. The panel focused on effective tactics for human rights advocacy in Saudi Arabia in its current political climate.

Furthermore, MRG also supported multiple advocacy actions calling for the rights and freedoms of women's rights and human rights defenders in Saudi Arabia. For example, on International Women's Day, MRG led a coalition of CSOs in renewing our [call](#) on Saudi authorities to release women's rights activists and women HRDs who remain unjustly detained. The joint statement highlighted the decades-long prison sentences of [Nourah al-Qahtani](#), [Salma al-Shehab](#) and [Manahel al-Otaibi](#), among others. In May, we supported a [joint statement](#) calling for the lifting of an illegal travel ban on women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul. We also [called](#) on Saudi authorities to end their use of administrative measures, such as arbitrary travel bans, on HRDs. We further co-signed a [statement](#) urging Saudi Arabia's allies – the US, the UK, and the EU – to send observers to the trial hearings of Salma al-Shehab and Nourah al-Qahtani, two women's rights defenders imprisoned for their peaceful social media activity. In July, our Human Rights Officer Falah Sayed participated in a [side-event](#) to the 56th session of the UN HRC, where she shed light on the Saudi authorities' crackdown on women HRDs.

## Human rights abuses in the Arab Gulf region

In addition to our efforts on Saudi Arabia, we led a number of awareness raising activities on human rights abuses in the Arab Gulf region.

On the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the **UAE's** State Security Apparatus (SSA), MRG led the publication of a [joint statement](#) condemning the SSA's gross human rights violations. More specifically, the SSA has perpetrated enforced disappearance, torture, and arbitrary detention under the guise of counter-terrorism. We also urged UAE authorities to bring the SSA's legal framework



MRG Legal Researcher Estelle Allemann speaks during a webinar on citizenship revocation in the UAE.

and operations in line with international human rights standards and to hold perpetrators of abuses accountable, as well as provide remedy for victims. In this context, we also co-organised a webinar on the UAE SSA's 50 year history of perpetrating human rights violations.

In July, MRG organised a webinar on the UAE authorities' use of citizenship revocation against peaceful dissidents and human rights defenders. Our Legal Researcher Estelle Allemann presented the findings of our briefing note that detailed the human rights impact of nationality revocation, which not only affects the targeted dissidents but also extends to their family members.

During the 56th session of the UN HRC, our Human Rights Officer Falah Sayed spoke during a side-event titled "The Rule of Law in Jeopardy in the UAE", alongside an expert panel of family members of current prisoners, former detainees and human rights lawyers. Sayed shed light on the arbitrary detention of the "UAE84", a group of civil society members who were unjustly arrested and convicted with fabricated charges of terrorism.

Sayed also participated in the second European legal debate: "International law in the face of autocracy – examining the UAE's role" in Brussels. Alongside prominent human rights lawyers, she detailed the UAE authorities' sheer disregard for human rights and international law, despite its image of a progressive state. The debate also discussed the arbitrary nature of the "UAE84" mass trial.

On World Parliament Day, Sayed spoke during a side-event to the 56th session of the UN HRC that posed the following question: "Does the existence of 'parliaments' in the Gulf states mean that citizens really have a voice in public affairs?" The panelists argued that citizens across the Arab Gulf region have yet to enjoy a significant participation in public affairs, notably due to the restriction of their fundamental rights.

In February 2024, Sayed contributed to a webinar marking 13 years since the popular protests in Bahrain. Joined by fellow human rights experts, Sayed detailed the role of Bahraini institutions in addressing the grievances put forward by protesters, including their brutal crackdown on the movement.



# Capacity building

During his visit to Morocco in November 2024, MRG's Legal Advisor, Alexis Thiry, trained around 20 members of AMDH on international human rights law and how to engage with the UN human rights mechanisms. During the two-day training, Thiry introduced the participants to the concept of strategic litigation, explaining how a single individual case can bring broader social change, particularly in the Moroccan context. This trip and training for human rights defenders would not have been possible without the generous support of the City of Geneva.

On October 10, 2024, Thiry participated in a series of webinars on “the Human Rights

of Vulnerable Migrants in North Africa” during a session devoted to “reporting and monitoring human rights mechanisms”. The series, organised by the Regional Office of UN Human Rights for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA), brought together more than 50 participants including human rights defenders from the MENA region, UN experts, members of the OHCHR as well as human rights practitioners. The training introduced the reporting system of the UN CED, the opportunities for civil society and the submission of individual cases of enforced disappearances.

MRG Legal Advisor Alexis Thiry delivers a training session on strategic litigation to human rights lawyers in Morocco. © Courtesy of Association Marocaine des Droits Humains.



# Digital engagement

## 2024 in numbers



**15**

new profiles of victims published on our website



**93K**

new website users



**6K+**

followers on X



**77K+**

views on Instagram, **53K+** accounts reached



**35%**

increase of Facebook page visits



**64%**

increase of LinkedIn followers with over **50K** impressions

MENA Rights Group continues to reach audiences in our priority countries, particularly Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Algeria:

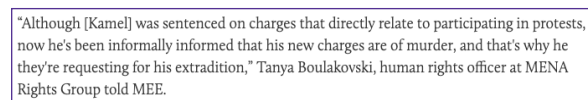
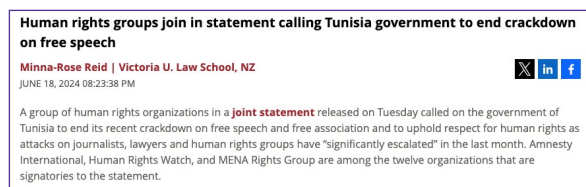
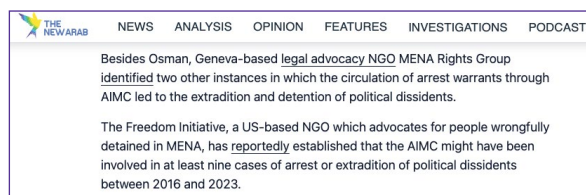
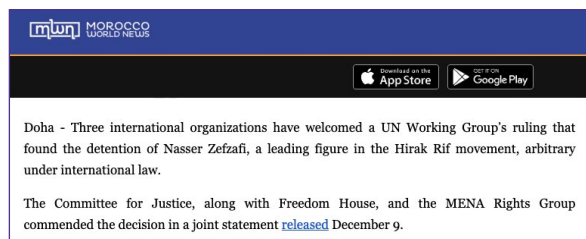


COUNTRY	ACTIVE USERS
Saudi Arabia	16K ↑138....
United States	11K ↑76.3%
Morocco	7.1K ↑231....
United Kingdom	6K ↑22.9%
Algeria	5.6K ↑84.7%
France	5.2K ↑173....
Kuwait	4.5K ↑71.6%

# MENA Rights Group in the media

Throughout the year, MENA Rights Group team members have been interviewed and quoted in several publications and our work has received extensive coverage by various media outlets, including the regional [Middle East Eye](#), [The New Arab](#), [Arab Reform Initiative](#), [Arab News](#), [The African](#) and [EU Observer](#), the global publications [Jurist News](#), [Northeast Bylines](#), [StartNews Global](#), [The Geneva Observer](#), [Liberation News](#), [The Globe Post](#) and [Global Detention Project](#), French-speaking [Le Point](#), [L'Humanité](#), [AEF Info](#) and [Radio Cite Geneve](#), Arabic media [Sowt al-Naas](#), [Watan](#) and [InfoMigrants](#), the Algerian news outlets [AL24](#) and [Dzair](#), Kurdish [Firat News Agency](#) (ANF), [Medya News](#) and [Hawar News](#), Indonesian outlet [InNalar](#), the German newspaper [Die Tageszeitung](#), Italian-speaking outlets [Il Post](#), [La Nazione](#), [Swiss Info](#) and [Melting Pot](#), Greek outlet [Info Libre](#), policy institutes such as the [International Peace Institute](#), [Death Penalty Information Center](#) and [Statewatch](#), and many others.

Our team also contributed to information showcased in a documentary produced by Arte on the Bedouin communities impacted by the NEOM megacity project in Saudi Arabia, highlighting the human rights violations they have suffered at the hands of authorities, which left them displaced, imprisoned and sentenced to the death penalty.





Falah Sayed speaks during a debate on RTS' Infrarouge on the future of Syria post Bashar al-Assad. © Courtesy of RTS.

Within days of the fall of the Syrian regime, our Human Rights Officer Falah Sayed spoke during a debate on Swiss TV channel RTS titled "Syrie: quelle liberté après Bachar?", during which she detailed the horrific human rights violations committed by the Assad regime. Sayed highlighted the fundamental role played by Syrian civil society in shaping the future of Syria, which should not be defined by international political interests. This was also the first time in 13 years that Sayed was able to freely speak on issues such as political prisoners, enforced disappearance, justice for victims of human rights abuses and accountability for the perpetrators.

# List of Publications

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## Country reports

2024 Report on the Iraqi High Commission for Human Right, June 2024.

Citizenship stripping in the United Arab Emirates: Statelessness as a tool of crackdown, July 2024.

Civil and political rights in Iraq since the 2019 Tishreen protests: Universal Periodic Review of Iraq, August 2024.

Iraq: the escalating crackdown on civic space, September 2024.

Discrimination against women and girls in Saudi Arabia: report to the CEDAW, September 2024.

Lutte contre la disparition forcée au Maroc: tirer les leçons des violations du passé pour garantir leur non-répétition, September 2024.

Implementing the Convention against Torture: Jordan's fourth periodic review by the CAT, November 2024.

Discrimination against minorities in Saudi Arabia: report to the UN CERD, November 2024.

## Thematic reports

Intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the UN: Submission to the Secretary-General, April 2024.

Redefining civil society's role in the UN counter-terrorism architecture: a landscape assessment of the Middle East and North Africa, May 2024.

## Analyses

The detrimental impact of administrative counter-terrorism measures on human rights in the MENA, May 2024.

Transnational repression in the MENA: the role of regional organisations engaged in counter-terrorism, July 2024.

Révision du Code pénal algérien, quelles conséquences pour les droits fondamentaux? September 2024.

Maroc : halte à la répression des voix pro-palestiniennes, December 2024.

Jordan: Crackdown on pro-Palestine activism, December 2024.



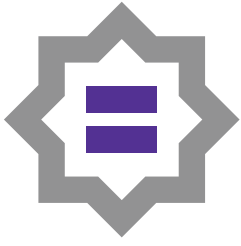
MENA Rights Group's team during our retreat. From left to right: Human Rights Officer Falah Sayed, former Legal Researcher Estelle Allemann, Legal Advisor Alexis Thiry, Coach Michael Romig, Communications Officer Zeinab Fayad, Legal Researcher Tanya Boulakovski and Executive Director Inès Osman.

## Thank you!

Thank you for taking the time to read our 2024 annual report. Your support greatly motivates us to continue our work. We look forward to advancing human rights in 2025 and achieving our vision of a MENA region where individuals live in just and peaceful societies, founded on the rule of law and the effective recognition and respect of the rights and freedoms of all.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of our donors this year, namely Open Society Foundations, the City of Geneva and the Canton of Geneva.

We would also like to extend our appreciation to the team that made this work possible in 2024, namely Estelle Allemann, Tanya Boulakovski, Zeinab Fayad, Justine Lager, Inès Osman, Falah Sayed, and Alexis Thiry, as well as our coach Michael Romig. Our special thanks go to Justine Lager, who significantly contributed to the drafting of this report.



**MENA**  
Rights  
Group

MENA Rights Group is a Geneva-based legal advocacy NGO defending and promoting fundamental rights and freedoms in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Adopting a holistic approach, we work at both the individual and structural level. We represent victims of human rights violations before international law mechanisms. In order to ensure the non-repetition of these violations, we identify patterns and root causes of violations on the ground and bring key issues to the attention of relevant stakeholders to call for legal and policy reform.

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For more information about our work, or any issues covered in this report, please visit our website: [www.menarights.org](http://www.menarights.org).

Donate now to support our work protecting and promoting human rights in the Middle East and North Africa:  
<https://menarights.org/en/support-us>.

Make sure to subscribe to our [monthly newsletter](#), MENA Rights Digest, to stay updated on our work promoting human rights in the region.