On August 18, a delegation from Bahrain’s National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR), headed by Vice President and head of the Complaints, Monitoring and Follow-up Committee, Abdulla A Derazi, along with Committee Member Maria Antowan, visited the temporary detention center at Dry Dock Prison.

The visit came as news disseminated on social networks and newspapers about a number of detainees in the temporary detention center involved in the damaging of content in one of the wards during a riot. Upon hearing of the incident, the NIHR submitted a request to the Ministry of Interior (MoI) to visit the detention center to investigate the incident. The MoI responded to the request yesterday.

The delegation met with MoI Inspector General Major Ebrahim Habib and officials from the temporary detention center, and visited with all detainees of the ward. Additionally, they met with some of the detainees alone to conduct interviews to understand the current situation and to confirm that detainee’s rights are being cared for and protected.

The officials in the detention center said the incident occurred when an officers and members of the police force began a search in ward 10 after receiving information that there were mobile phones in the ward. Immediately after confiscating the mobiles, detainees began to riot inside the ward, broke the doors, and damaged some electrical appliances before being dealt with by security forces, who insist they only used stun grenades and pepper spray, not shotgun pellets or teargas canisters.

During meetings with the detainees, a physical examination was performed, which led to the discovery of marks of abuse and ill-treatment on the bodies of some of the detainees. The delegation listened to the demands of the temporary detainees, which included human treatment of prisoners in accordance with international standards of human rights. Additionally, detainees demanded that prison authorities reconsider the strict visitation system to allow privacy when meeting with families, allow detainees to meet their lawyers and go outside to exercise, provide higher quality meals more frequently, provide personal hygiene tools, and provide enough beds for all detainees.

The NIHR delegation provided feedback during the visit to the prison officials and raised a number of cases put forward by detainees, finding the prison official responsive and cooperative to address these matters.

The head of the committee thanked the MoI for its cooperative and transparent policy and for facilitating the delegation visit to the temporary detention center. The committee head confirmed that the institute will continue to communicate with the MoI regarding prisoner concerns to ensure detainees enjoy their rights according to the International Human Rights Convention.

The head of the committee also confirmed that the NIHR considers the rights of all citizens and residence of Bahrain of high priority; therefore, it sent a high level delegation to follow up on the investigation, and a detailed report will be prepared and submitted to the MoI, which will include recommendations that the NIHR will follow up on.

It is noteworthy that article 2, paragraph (H) from royal decree number (46) for the year 2009 amended by royal decree number (28) for the year 2012 to establish the NIHR, illustrates the specialization of the institute to achieve its objectives, including receiving complaints, which is to “receive complaints concerning human rights, study, refer them to the specialized bodies and follow effectively, or inform stakeholders with procedures to follow and help them action them, or support in settling them with concerned bodies.”

The field visits to detention centers and places that human rights violations could be committed in is under the responsibility of the complaints, monitoring and follow up committee.