Khalil al-Marzooq, Deputy-Secretary General of leading opposition party Al-Wefaq, said official numbers obtained by the party prove that 95,000 individuals were naturalized in Bahrain from 2002 – 2014, equal to 17% of the entire Bahraini population.

Al-Marzooq stressed in the press conference that al-Wefaq is not opposed to individuals “obtaining the citizenship legally,” but noted the presence of “legal regulations that should be met before obtaining citizenship.”

Al-Marzooq announced the official launch of a national campaign to highlight the Bahrain government’s use of “naturalization that will reveal official manipulation in numbers.”

“Despite attempts to hide these horrific numbers,” al-Marzooq said, “they remain the official numbers, and they do not come from the opposition."

He also noted that official reports from the Bahrain government reveal that the population reached 405,000 in 2001. “However,” al-Marzooq continued, “the number was later revised to 409,000, a manipulation that indicates a large, abnormal increase in the population.”

Al-Marzooq continued: "(Al-Wefaq) revealed previously that 69,000 (individuals) have been naturalized in the past eight years. The population statistics were changed retrospectively to reach a balance. This number is very scary, because they have been concluded from official numbers, and even after manipulating them, there are still 95,000 who were naturalized from 2002 to 2014. I’m talking here about official numbers, not opposition societies’ speculation."
Al-Marzooq said that, "when we talk about an abnormal increase of approximately 100,000, this means that we're talking about 20% of the population. This threatens Bahrain's national security." Moreover, "when we talk about a vision of 2030, we are talking about 40% of all citizens being naturalized. Nationalized citizens will become the majority in 2040 and 2050."

Al-Marzooq pointed out that "naturalization draws from many races and religions, and this will make us lose our national identity. This is caused by the authorities, not the naturalized. It affects the indigenous population, both Sunnis and Shias, not only one component."

"Whoever believes that naturalization benefits them politically, they're wrong, because they will be competing with them [the naturalized] on political positions and democratic gains," al-Marzooq said.

He stressed that "if the government believes that naturalizing this number will give it impunity from democratic transitions, they [the naturalized] will be demanding democracy and participation in governance; then they [the government] will have to bear the consequences."

Al-Marzooq said that "evidence on the ground confirms (the numbers). This means that tampering with the political, economic and social composition (of Bahrain) is a new addition to our problems, which will be inherited by the successors. Therefore, whoever believes they will gain through naturalization is mistaken."

He explained "we need a national program to address naturalization. The United Nations should look into this kind of naturalization as a violation of human rights. It should be addressed by an elected parliament with real powers. Also, it should be addressed regionally, especially with the increasing threat of terrorism."

He pointed out that "this campaign is national, not sectarian, racist, or on the basis that those naturalized are unwelcomed. On the contrary, this campaign aims to show how this issue endangers Bahrain's national security. Therefore, we need political, legal and social help, in addition to international assistance from the United Nations."