

# Panel mulls tough penalties for misuse of social media

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**Manama**

At a time when the misuse of social media networks has been rapidly increasing, a committee in the Council of Representatives yesterday discussed toughening penalties for such offences with heavy jail terms and fines.

During their weekly meeting, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee members yesterday announced that they're studying deterrent punishments for crimes such as defamation using any means of social media networks, introducing fines of up to BD20,000 and imprisonment of three years.

The Committee Head Abdullah Binhowail said in

a press statement released by the council yesterday that "the committee discussed amending the Kingdom's Penal Code by toughening the punishment for committing the acts of publishing news, pictures or comments relating to the privacy of individuals or family life of individuals, even if they are true, if publicising it is considered an abuse to them".

The lawmaker underlined that "the amendment stipulates that such acts are considered an aggravating circumstance if they were committed using any mean of social media networks".

**BD10,000 to 20,000 penalty**

The discussed penalties were imprisonment for a period not exceeding three years and fines

between BD10,000 and BD20,000.

Binhowail added, "The amendment aims at ensuring mutual respect between members of the society, curbing the recently spreading insults and verbal abuse phenomenon on social media networks, ensuring freedom of expression within the framework of the law and without insulting others, and introducing deterrent punishments for such offences."

The committee plans to discuss the amendment with several official authorities that include Interior Ministry and the National Institution for Human Rights before it could refer it to the Council for more discussion and approval.

As reported on DT News recently, the misuse of social

networks to defame others have become a concern in Bahrain lately.

This comes as various accounts appeared on social networks, mainly Twitter, spreading personal and abusive information about Bahrain's leadership and citizens.

On March 31, Royal Guard Commander Staff Brigadier HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa warned of malicious attempts on social media to sow sedition and called on all citizens to ignore the tendentious social media accounts as well as the rumours and fallacies posted on them to defame the Kingdom's leadership and people.

"This requires a decisive stand against suspicious calls to undermine the strong and

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deep-rooted relationship between the Leadership and the Bahraini people," he said back then.

**Arrested**

Interior Minister Lieutenant-General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa also affirmed in a statement released

on March 25 that "tough steps will be taken to deal with the unprecedented chaos created by disruptive social media accounts".

Since then, the Interior Ministry has announced the arrest of at least seven people for committing offences related to misuse of social media.



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