

Penal Code Amendments Boost Human Rights Focus



“The amendments represent a qualitative shift in Bahrain’s human rights approach.”

– ALI AL SHEHABI



“Replacing ‘prison’ with ‘Reform and Rehabilitation Center’ is a significant legislative correction.”

– DR. JEHAD ABDULLA AL FADHEL



“The reforms mark a transition from punishment to reintegration.”

– SAYED HISHAM AL QASSAB



● “Prison” officially replaced with “Reform and Rehabilitation Center”

● Compulsory labour removed and replaced with training programs

● Strong emphasis on rehabilitation and reducing reoffending

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

The Shura Council approved a draft law amending several provisions of the Kingdom’s Penal Code, originally issued under Decree-Law No. (15) of 1976. The amendments, submitted alongside Decree No. (68) of 2025, aim to modernize the country’s penal framework in line with international standards.

During the session, Shura Council member Dr. Jehad Ab-

dulla Al Fadhel described replacing the term “prison” with “Reform and Rehabilitation Center” as a significant legislative correction. She noted that the terminology has been formally recognized since 2014 under the Reform and Rehabilitation Institution Law, reflecting a broader shift toward viewing inmates as individuals capable of reform.

Al Fadhel also highlighted removing compulsory labour provisions, replacing them with structured rehabilitation and vocational training programs. She explained that such programs not only align with international expectations but also help reduce reoffending by equipping inmates with practical skills needed in the labor market.

“The cost of rehabilitation is far lower than the cost of repeated crime,” she said, describing these initiatives as long-term investments that benefit both individuals and society while enhancing public safety.

Dignity

Meanwhile, Ali Al Shehabi said the amendments represent

a qualitative shift in Bahrain’s human rights approach, emphasizing dignity and restorative justice over punitive measures. He noted that the reforms reflect the broader national vision led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, focusing on reintegration rather than isolation.

Al Shehabi added that adopting the term “Reform and Rehabilitation Centers” underscores Bahrain’s commitment to international conventions, including standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO). He also highlighted the role of the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission, which operates under the Ombudsman’s General Secretariat, in ensuring transparency and safeguarding inmates’ rights.

Sayed Hisham Al Qassab described the amendments as a major step forward in developing Bahrain’s penal system in line with global best practices. He pointed to the Kingdom’s adoption of modern correctional policies—including rehabilitation programs, alternative sentencing, and the open prisons system—as evidence of its pro-

gressive approach.

According to Al Qassab, the reforms signal a clear transition from traditional punishment toward rehabilitation and reintegration, further strengthening Bahrain’s legislative alignment with international conventions.

The approved amendments mark a significant milestone in the Kingdom’s ongoing efforts to build a more humane, effective, and rights-based penal system, while promoting community security and supporting the successful reintegration of inmates into society.

Pension, Rental Law Changes



Lawyer Dalal Jasim Al-Zayed
Shura Council Legislative and

Legal Affairs Committee confirmed the constitutional and legal validity of three draft laws: amendments to the Social Insurance Law, the Real Estate Lease Law, and a tax agreement with Jersey.

Chaired by lawyer Dalal Jasim Al-Zayed, the committee reviewed the proposals and found them consistent with Bahrain’s Constitution and legal framework.

Among the key proposals is an amendment to Article 144 of the Social Insurance Law (Decree-Law No. 24 of 1976), submitted by the Council of Representatives. The amendment aims to ensure equal treatment between retirees in the private and public sectors regarding pension substitution loans. It allows retirees to apply for a new loan every two years from the date of their last loan, rather than waiting until the previous loan is fully repaid.

The committee also examined proposed changes to Article 6 of the Real Estate Lease Law (Law No. 27 of 2014). The amendment introduces administrative fines for landlords who misuse resi-

dential properties intended for family housing. If the landlord is unaware of the violation, the tenant will be held responsible. The fines and enforcement procedures will be set by the relevant municipal authority, subject to approval by the minister in charge of municipal affairs.

In addition, the amendment grants designated municipal officials judicial authority to monitor compliance, detect violations, and document offenses.

Clears Bahrain-Jersey Tax Deal

The committee further reviewed a draft law ratifying an agreement between Bahrain and Jersey to avoid double taxation on income and prevent tax evasion. The agreement is attached to Decree No. 66 of 2025.

Following its review, the committee concluded that all three draft laws meet constitutional and legal standards. The proposals have now been referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee, the Services Committee, and the Public Utilities and Environment Committee for further discussion.

Clean Audit for Fiscal Year 2025

● Effective financial management practices

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

The Shura Council yesterday approved its audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending 31 December 2025, following review by the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and examination by the National Audit Office.

The Committee reported that the General Secretariat prepared the accounts in line with legal requirements, internal regulations, and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), strengthening the reliability of the financial data. It also confirmed that the National Audit Office issued an unqualified audit opinion, stating that the statements were free



H.E. Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, Shura Council Speaker

The audited financial statements were free from material issues and fairly presented in accordance with international auditing standards.

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The report highlighted effective financial management practices that prevented budget overruns and ensured alignment between planned and actual spending, reflecting strong fiscal discipline and internal controls. It also praised the General Secretariat’s development and contributions to supporting parliamentary work.

Council members noted that the structured review process enhances transparency and oversight. They pointed to improved efficiency in resource management and expressed confidence in the Council’s financial approach.

Shura Council Speaker Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh thanked members and the General Secretariat, led by Secretary-General Karima Mohammed Al Abbasi, for their efforts, also acknowledging the National Audit Office for its role in strengthening institutional performance.

19-Year-Old Turns Passion Into Business

● Journey began at age 16

Ghadeer Alkumaish
TDT | Manama

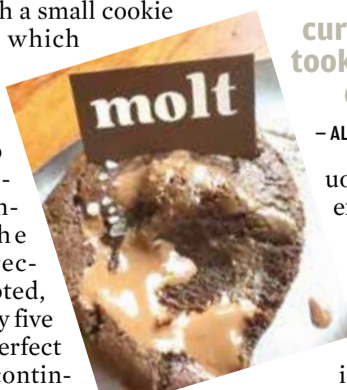
Bahraini entrepreneur Al-Bhareth Shaker Haji has transformed his early passion for baking into a growing business success with the launch of his brand Molt, founded when he was just 19.

Haji said his journey began at age 16 with a small cookie business, which he later rebranded and refined into a more focused concept. The current recipe, he noted, took nearly five years to perfect through contin-



“The recipe currently in use took five years to develop.”

– ALBHARETH SHAKER HAJI



uous development and experimentation.

Rather than expanding into multiple products, Haji chose to specialise in a single cookie offering, believing

that simplicity helps customers make clearer choices and strengthens brand identity.

His early entrepreneurial path involved significant challenges, including long working hours during events and balancing business operations with academic exams. He also recalled logistical difficulties, such as quickly setting up an entire event space with minimal preparation time.

Despite the demands, Haji said his age and circumstances encouraged him to take risks and explore entrepreneurship without hesitation. He described himself as still at the beginning of his journey rather than at a stage of major success.

He also launched a content initiative titled “100 Bahraini Businesses in 100 Days,” aimed at promoting local enterprises. Inspired by regional models, he said stronger support for Bahraini businesses can raise standards across the market and contribute to broader economic growth.