

Report (15)

Report on PDRC's Announced Visit to Dar Al Aman Abused Women Shelter 16 January 2019

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Introduction

In the performance of its functions, and as part of the efforts it expends to foster the respect of human rights in prisons, jails and detention centers, and in view of its jurisdiction and authority as provided in Decree No. (61) of 2013, the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC) has decided to carry out an announced inspection visit to Dar Al Aman Abused Women Shelter in order to assess its conditions, the treatment its residents receive, their living conditions, healthcare services provided to them, and their legal rights and guarantees, subject to the principles, standards and indicators as adopted by the PDRC, and the procedural and professional processes which are followed when conducting such visits, including the PDRC team recording its notes during its visit to the Shelter, and subsequently making recommendations which contribute to the reinforcement, respect and adherence to human rights, in compliance with international principles and standards. This inspection visit to Dar Al Aman was made on Wednesday 16 January 2019. It is the first announced visit to this Shelter.

Section 1: Background and Methods

The PDRC carries out comprehensive inspections, which are either announced in advance or unannounced, to prisons, jails, detention centers, juvenile care centers and other locations, as specified in the Decree concerning the formation of the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC). During such inspections, the PDRC assesses the conditions of those places and the treatment of their internees and residents, and hears their statements, comments or complaints. In addition, PDRC's teams collect information using a precise approach, including:

A. Interviewing Shelter Residents:

PDRC's members interviewed a random sample of the Shelter's residents. This sample was selected by PDRC's team without any interference on the part of the Shelter's Management, in order to ensure that the various groups of residents are adequately represented by age, nationality, medical condition and social status. In addition, others were asked verbally, and their statements were written according to applicable standards. Moreover, the statements of those who expressed a given opinion or made a certain complaint to PDRC's members while they inspected the Shelter, were also taken.

Meetings with the residents were totally separate at places which allowed privacy, without any of the Shelter's staff being present. The inspection team members introduced themselves to the interviewees, and informed them of their functions and the purpose of the interviews. They also assured them that the interviews are being conducted in privacy and confidence. They listened to them attentively and meticulously, and all their answers and comments were recorded, taking into consideration the statements made by other Shelter residents.

B. Questions to the Shelter's Management

PDRC's team met with the Shelter's Management who gave a presentation on the condition of the Shelter, the procedures it follows, the services it provides, key data, figures and statistics related to its residents, as well as its supervisory staff. Major projects and programs implemented by the Shelter were introduced. Meetings with the Shelter's Management continued throughout the inspection visit, and questions were asked as to allegations made by the interviewees or discoveries noted by the inspection team during the direct inspection of the Shelter and its processes.

C. Inspecting documents

The inspection team inspected documents related to the residents of the Shelter and the standards based on which the Shelter was inspected, such as the residents' detention documents to ascertain the legality of their detention, as well as administrative documents showing the numbers of residents, details of their facilities and assignment of their rooms. In addition, documents related

to maintenance, food supply, medical care at the Shelter, and other information were also inspected.

D. Direct Observation:

Direct observation was carried out according to an organized action plan which included the assignment of tasks and identification of all subjects and indicators which were inspected, including: observation of the condition of the Shelter, description of the Shelter and observation of the interaction between the Shelter's staff and residents, and vice versa.

All comments concerning the Shelter were recorded, considered and verified. They included two types of comments:

- A.** Comments discovered by the team.
- B.** Comments made based on the statements of the Shelter's residents and staff.

In both events, the inspection team revisited these comments with the Shelter's Management, and at times with the Shelter's residents, as and when required.

Section 2: Key Data and Statistics

I) Information on the Shelter

- The Shelter was opened on 24 November 2006G. It operates under the supervision of the Social Welfare Directorate of the Ministry of Labor and Social Development. A ministerial resolution was issued to form the Social Welfare Board under the administration of a civil society organization (Bahrain Society of Sociologists).
- The Shelter is comprised of several apartments allocated for multiple purposes, including: management offices, library, visiting area, reception, living quarters containing bedrooms and toilets, a mess hall, a storage room, a lounge and an apartment allocated for children who are sheltered along with their resident mothers, as well as a psychiatrist's office.
- A section is allocated for first aid.

II) Shelter Admission Requirements:

- Cases involving physical or psychological injury or any form of violence.
- Social work, legal search, psychiatric evaluation and medical examination prove that the subject suffered violence.
- The subject must be free from contagious diseases and mental disorder.
- The subject must be willing to benefit from the Shelter's services.

III) Services Provided by the Shelter:

- Free accommodation throughout the period of residence at the Shelter.
- Health, social, psychiatric and legal services.
- Recreational, cultural and awareness services.
- Referral of cases by type to relevant departments during or after the period of residence at the Shelter.
- Coordination with various government and private sector organization concerned with the problem involved in each case in order to provide required protection and to take action towards sheltering the subjects.
- Building a database to survey and monitor cases.

IV) Types of Accommodation at the Shelter and Conditions for Termination:

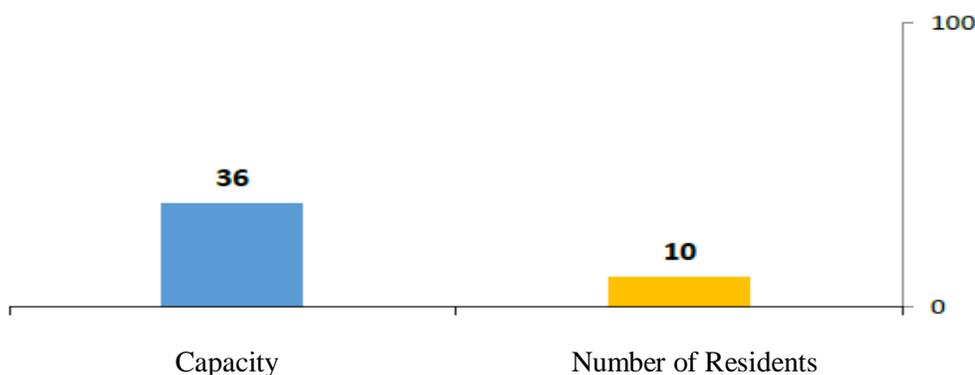
- Emergency Accommodation: For cases that merit shelter following a quick initial inquiry, made before completion of the accommodation processing, to ensure that all admission requirements are satisfied for accommodation, whether during the Shelter’s business hours or during holidays and weekends, provided the emergency accommodation period does not exceed 48 hours.
- Temporary Accommodation: For cases which are admitted to the Shelter for a period not exceeding eight weeks, pending completion of case study and evaluation.
- The maximum length of the temporary accommodation is eight weeks, in accordance with international standards on shelters. The Ministry may under exceptional circumstances extend the length of temporary stay once only for a similar period.
- Note (1): It was found that the length of stay exceed three years in some cases. The Shelter’s Management justification was that this occurs due to humane considerations.
- Note (2): According to the Shelter’s Management, Al Aman Shelter is dedicated to the accommodation of women only. In the future, action will be taken to accommodate abused men by establishing a social welfare center for men. Young men are currently accommodated at Dar Al Karamah Shelter. Moreover, for the mother who does not wish to be separated from her sons, they are all transferred and accommodated at Dar Al Karamah Shelter.

V) Key Statistics (*):

Total Number of Residents at the Shelter

	Females
Residents	10
Capacity	36
Number of Children	0

Capacity of the Shelter



Nationalities of the Residents

	Females
Bahraini	9
Non-Bahraini	1
Total	10

Number of Staff: Twelve (12) staff members, as follows:

Shelter's Manager, Psychiatrist, Legal Advisor, Services Supervisor, Social Workers, Secretary, Accountant, Head of Accommodation Affairs, Accommodation Supervisor, Community Police female officer, and a driver.

(*) These statistics were collected on 16.1.2019G during the inspection visit.

Section 3: Humane Treatment and Conditions

PDRC's team found that the residents are treated by the Shelter staff with respect. Residents stated that they find the staff members trustworthy. It was also found that their placement at the Shelter is carried out in accordance with the law. The resident is interviewed by the social worker at the start of her stay. In addition, the shelter is well within its capacity and not overcrowded. The administrative procedures ensure that the resident keeps her personal effects in her possession, while Management maintains the files and records of the residents. It was also found that every resident is treated positively and exceptionally well from the start of her stay at the Shelter.

It was also found that there is no discrimination against residents on the basis of race, color, gender, language or religion. The religious beliefs and practices of the residents are respected. The team noted that staff members wear civilian clothing and understand the special needs of the residents. They are aware of their responsibilities for the assessment and management of risks arising from dealing with the residents, or from the interaction of the residents with each other. They also realize the possible risks certain residents pose towards other residents, and know how to handle such risks. They receive ongoing training on risk management.

On the other hand, although proper care is given to residents with chronic illnesses and their stay at the Shelter is facilitated, the Shelter nonetheless is not equipped to accommodate persons with disabilities.

The team also verified the safety standards and condition of the Shelter, with constant supervision of the areas where the residents gather. The emergency alarm is periodically checked to ensure that it is in good working condition. It was also found that fire alarms and fire extinguishers are periodically maintained. Staff members are capable of safely evacuating the Shelter in the event of an emergency. However, there are no buzzers in the residents' rooms or any other way to call the Shelter staff when necessary.

The team also found that there are surveillance cameras in all the corridors. Team members also checked the cameras and found them to be in good working condition.

Concerning the legally justifiable use of force at the Shelter, the inspection team found that there are no written rules or special training given to staff members on how to use legally justifiable force to handle residents at the Shelter when necessary to avert dangers.

Concerning the condition of the Shelter, the residents stated that they are housed in clean and safe rooms. The team noted that the toilets require periodic maintenance. The team also checked the condition of the rooms, ventilation and natural lighting, and found that the temperature of the rooms is appropriate.

The team also noted that the rooms are free and clear of any instruments which can cause self-injury. In addition, access to the toilets and sanitary facilities is easy, and hygiene items are available for the residents who acknowledged that personal hygiene items are provided to them at the beginning of their stay. Moreover, linen and bed covers are available and clean. Family members of the residents are allowed to bring them clothing, while the Shelter's Management provides such requirements to residents who cannot provide them on their own. The laundry service is also available, with a dedicated facility. In general, the Shelter satisfies all health and hygiene conditions, including tools, instruments, clothing and living requirements.

In respect of food served to the residents, it is available in ample quantity and appropriate quality containing required nutrients. In general, there is a diversity of food and beverages. Moreover, potable drinking water is available and easy to obtain throughout the day.

On the other hand, the team found that the residents could not go out to the yard to exercise due to the lack of proper facilities, while there are various entertainment and educational books available at the library. Residents are encouraged to visit the library regularly. In addition, educational and entertainment sessions and lectures are organized for the residents, and they are allowed to keep copies of religious texts of their respective faiths.

PDRC's team also found that residents are allowed visits and telephone calls. They are also allowed to keep their mobile phones and to freely receive visitors. Records of ordinary visits are kept.

In regards to transporting residents, the PDRC team found that residents are transported in the Shelter's private vehicle (an ordinary mini-bus), which is safe, clean, comfortable and unmarked for ensuring privacy. It is used to transport the residents to universities/institutes/schools/hospitals/ministries, depending on the required service. However, the mini-bus is not in good working condition. Moreover, there are no suitable vehicles for transporting persons with disabilities. In general, the residents are informed to their destinations, and a daily log is kept to record the daily movement of the residents.

As for rehabilitation plans, the residents stated that they participate in general training workshops. PDRC's team found that there is a separate social and psychological rehabilitation plan for each resident, commensurate with her personality and personal circumstances. Residents are also given the opportunity to enroll in education. In general, there is a social log to record the psychological progress of the residents and the development of their behavior.

Section 4: Individual Rights and Guarantees

The inspection team validated the administrative processes to ascertain the legality of the detention, and verified that all records and documents related to the legality of the detention are satisfied, and that data concerning each resident is updated while staying at the Shelter. A special file is kept for each resident containing documents on the legality of the detention. Residents are also verbally provided at the start of their stay, with information on the Shelter's system and the detention process.

PDRC's team also found that information on rights and guarantees at the Shelter is provided in the form of bulletin boards and announcements posted on walls. The resident however does not receive a written copy. Residents are also informed of the details and causes of their detention. The Shelter's Management has found that bulletin boards are attention getters, while written copies are discarded without reading them.

PDRC's team also found that the environment and conditions at the Shelter encourage the good behavior of the residents. Residents are urged to maintain personal hygiene and to keep the place clean and tidy. Residents are also informed of the daily routine and the services made available to them.

Concerning the process of filing and handling complaints at the Shelter, PDRC's team found that awareness stickers are available showing that complaints can be filed. There are also easily accessible complaint boxes to file complaints with the Shelter's Management. The team noted that the Ministry of Labor and Social Development complaint box is full. While residents are encouraged to amicably resolve their problems before filing a formal complaint, some residents stated that they had no knowledge of the complaint filing process, as they relay them verbally to the social worker or place them in the designated box. The Shelter's Management stated that complaints which are received through the box are sorted and replied to. The team reviewed the complaints records and asked about the process of resolving them, concluding that there are no written procedures and rules to organize the complaint filing process.

Moreover, there is no written process for actions and penalties taken by the Shelter's Management against residents who violate the Shelter's regulations.

Section 5: Healthcare

PDRC's team found that all residents undergo medical examination upon arrival to the Shelter, and they receive the same level of free primary care which is available to the community at large (outside the Shelter), without discrimination based on their legal status. All other medical specialties, examinations and child inoculations are covered by nearby government hospitals and centers. Ambulance services are also obtained from government hospitals.

On the other hand, PDRC's team ascertained that residents who suffer mental health problems are able to receive healthcare services available at the Shelter, or communicate with external organizations which provides them with support. It was found that a plan and arrangements are in place for referral to psychiatric care, and that the medical staff has knowledge and awareness of mental health issues, and is capable of handling those issues. Residents with mental illness are examined by a court appointed specialist and housed at an external treatment facility until they are cured. In general, psychiatric services are provided by a psychiatrist who visits the Shelter regularly and when necessary. In addition, social and psychiatric workers are assigned to the Shelter to monitor and supervise the residents and their behavior and help resolve their problems. Certain cases are coordinated with the Family Guidance Unit of the Social Welfare Department.

The PDRC team also found that there is no nurse or pharmacist at the Shelter, with medicines being kept in a small refrigerator in one of the rooms and dispensed by the supervisor on duty, as and when needed.

Section 6: Recommendations

1. To employ a nurse and a pharmacist at the Shelter to monitor the health of the residents.
2. To carry out periodic maintenance of the Shelter's facilities on an ongoing basis.
3. To replace the residents transport bus by another, taking into consideration the needs of residents who are persons with disabilities.
4. To designate an area and a room for physical exercise.
5. To develop written procedures and rules to organize the filing of complaints.
6. To develop a written system for reward and punishment, and organize the procedures and penalties which are applied by Management in the event the resident is found in breach of the Shelter's Code of Conduct.

Section 7: Appendices

Appendix 1: References

- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- The National Action Charter.
- The Penal Code, as amended.
- The Code of Criminal Procedure, as amended.
- Decree on the Formation and Functions of the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission.
- Resolution No. (27) of 2007G Licensing the Foundation of Batelco Care Center for Family Violence Cases.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and its Optional Protocol.
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Charter of the United Nations.
- The Arab Charter on Human Rights.
- United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (The Geneva Rules, 1955).
- The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (The Bangkok Rules).
- The Ombudsman’s Standards for Visiting Prisons and Places of Detention.
- Inspection Standards of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons in the United Kingdom.
- The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules).
- The United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines).

Appendix 2: Principles and Standards

First Principle: Humane Treatment and Conditions

Includes the following standards:

- Respect.
- Safety.
- Legally justifiable use of force.
- Conditions of the shelter.
- Care of the residents.
- Provision of sufficient food and beverages for the residents.
- Other requirements (open air exercises – various reading materials – possible reception of visitors and making telephone calls).
- Escorting and transporting residents.
- Rehabilitation.
- Learning activities, skills and work.

Second Principle: Individual Rights and Guarantees

Includes the following standards:

- Legality of the detention.
- Providing assistance to residents with communicative disabilities.
- Legal rights.
- Complaints.
- Mother and Baby Unit (MBU).

Third Principle: Healthcare

Includes the following standards:

- Health services.
- Patient care.
- Dispensing prescribed medications to patients.
- Mental health

Appendix 3: Response of Dar Al Aman Abused Women Shelter

Following is the reply to PDRC's recommendations listed in PDRC's draft report on its announced visit to the Shelter on 16 January 2019G:

No.	Recommendation	Reply
1	To employ a nurse and a pharmacist at the Shelter to monitor the health of the residents.	A letter was already sent to the Ministry of Health to provide a physician or a nurse to work at the Shelter and follow up Shelter cases. This request will be re-sent.
2	To carry out periodic maintenance of the Shelter's facilities on an ongoing basis.	Maintenance of Shelter facilities is followed up by the Ministry periodically, year-round.
3.	To replace the residents transport bus by another, taking in consideration the needs of residents who are persons with disabilities	The bus which is available at the Shelter meets the requirements of the Shelter and its residents. In the event another bus is needed, it will be provided by the Shelter's Management.
4.	To designate an area and a room for physical exercise.	The Shelter's current building is temporary pending completion of the construction of Dar Al Aman Building as part of the Comprehensive Social Services Complex project in Hamad Town. At which time, a garden and a gym will be provided for the entertainment of the residents and their children. In addition, physical exercise facilities will be provided.
5.	To develop written procedures and rules to organize the filing of complaints.	The Shelter has a complaint box which is opened by the office of H.E. Minister of Labor and Social Development. The Shelter's management will communicate with the Ministry to open the complaint box weekly and whenever required.
6.	To develop a written system for reward and punishment, and organize the procedures and penalties which are applied by Management in the event a resident is found in breach of the Shelter's Code of Conduct.	The Shelter has rules and regulations which are signed by the resident at the time of admission to the Shelter. They will include penalties in the event of any violation, and will be documented as part of the procedures manual. Moreover, staff members were enrolled in training sessions on how to deal with Shelter residents. Additional sessions will be organized for those staff members in the future.

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