



## Political Reform and Its Impact on Representing the Bahraini Political Associations in the Elections of the House of Representatives (2002-2018)

**Bashar Awad Al-Tarawneh**

Assistant Professor, the department of political sciences, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Applied Science Private University, Amman, Jordan

### Abstract

This study aimed at identifying the political reform and its impact on representing the political associations in the elections of the Bahraini House of representatives (2002-2018). The study used the analytical descriptive approach in order to describe the political reform that took place in Bahrain, describe the elections of the Bahraini House of representatives and analyze the amount of representing the political associations in the Bahraini House of representatives. The study results showed that the role of political reform that took place in Bahrain resulted in positive outcomes during the issuance of the most important law for the political associations, law No. (26) for the year 2005, which was later amended by issuing the law No. (34) for the year 2014. The results also revealed that the amount of representing the Bahraini political associations in the elections of 2002 was high; however, after those elections, the Bahraini political associations began gaining less seats in the elections of 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018. The study recommended that the Bahraini political associations should promote themselves under the regulations of law that organizes its work in order to communicate its vision and plans to all the categories of the Bahraini population. The study also recommended the necessity of attracting all the age categories in the Bahraini community to become members in the Bahraini political associations, particularly those whose ages range between (20-30) years old.

**Keywords:** Political reform; Political associations; Elections of the House of representatives.



CC BY: [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

### 1. Introduction

The legislative authority is considered as one of the most important formal authorities in the political system. The importance of this agency stems from gathering all the classes of the community to represent the people who selected it via the elections that took place in the country according to an election law which includes an elective system that converts the value of the votes into seats in the Parliament. The electoral system should take into consideration the political pluralism inside it; i.e. the existence of dependent and independent members. The independent members are those who affiliate to political parties.

As for the election law for the Bahraini House of representatives, the individual voting system was adopted ([A Decree-Law No. \(15\) of 2002](#)). The state of Bahrain has a legislative agency called "the national council", where the national council with its two parts consists of the advisory Council and the House of representatives. The advisory Council is assigned by the King, while the house of representatives is elected by people (the legislative group, 2014). In 2002, the constitution's legislator decided to apply the system of the two councils which became as the most prominent feature characterizing the legislative authority in the kingdom of Bahrain ([Al-Moslouhi, 2019](#)) as a result of the political reform.

Since the return of the parliamentary life, the kingdom of Bahrain held five elections in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018. On the other side relating to the political pluralism in the Bahraini House of representatives, Bahrain did not experience the concept of political parties, but rather realized the concept of "political associations". Hence, we recognize the importance of pluralism in the Parliament, particularly the house of representatives in the kingdom of Bahrain via representing people by the dependent and independent members (the members affiliating to political associations).

The political reform, since the beginning of 2000, in the kingdom of Bahrain resulted in the issuance of the law of the political associations in 2005 in order to activate the work of the political associations in the political life in Bahrain in general and in the life of the parliamentary Councils in particular. Despite that reform and citing a sober legislation for the associations and their participation in the elections of Parliamentary Councils (2002-2018), their chances of gaining seats were too humble; a topic that we will address in the study context later on. Therefore, the current study was conducted to identify the development of political reform and its role in engaging the Bahraini political associations in the elections of the Parliamentary councils. In the light of that, we will cite recommendations that could have a role in promoting these associations in the Bahraini political life in the future, particularly in the elections of the Parliamentary Councils.

#### 1.1. The Study Problem

This study aimed at identifying the impact of political reform that took place in the Kingdom of Bahrain during the reign of King Hamad Bin Eissa Aal Khalifa since the beginning of his reign in 1999, particularly the reform that took place in the context of political participation; i.e. the level of political participation for the political associations

in the elections of the Parliamentary councils (2002-2018) after the issuance of legislations that had a great role in promoting the participation of the political associations in the political process during the elections of the Bahraini Parliamentary Councils.

## 1.2. The Study Importance

The study importance lies in evaluating the political reform that took place since the King Hamad took over the reins of government in Bahrain after the death of his father, and Sheikh Eissa, particularly in relation to representing the Bahraini political associations in the elections of the Parliamentary councils (2002-2018).

## 1.3. The Study Objectives

This study aims to achieve the following objectives :

- 1- Identifying the development of political reform in Bahrain.
- 2- Identifying the role of political reform in Bahrain with regard to the issuance of the law of political associations in 2005, and making amendments to it in 2014.
- 3- Identifying the amount of representing the Bahraini political associations in the elections of the Parliamentary Councils (2002-2018).

## 1.4. The Study Questions

The current study aims to answer the following questions:

- 1- How did political reform develop in Bahrain?
- 2- What is the role of political reform in Bahrain in the passage of the law of political associations in 2005, and making amendments to it in 2014?
- 3- What is the extent of representing the Bahraini political associations in the elections of the Parliamentary Councils (2002-2018)?

## 1.5. The Study Period

This study addressed the period through which King Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa ruled Bahrain since 1999 and the political reform that took place since that time, with a historical reference to the reign period of his father, Prince Eiss Bin Salman Aal Khalifa, and then focusing on the period of electing the Bahraini parliamentary Councils (2002-2018) as well as the representation of the political associations there.

## 1.6. The Previous Studies

Faiad (2019), conducted a study entitled by "elections and the democratic conversion in the kingdom of Bahrain (2002-2019)". The study aimed to analyze the relationship between parliamentary and municipal elections that took place in Bahrain and describe them in terms of five legislative and municipal periods (in 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018), while investigating the democratic path in Bahrain. The study also described the domains of the election process in each period and uncovered the extent to which the Bahraini parliamentary and municipal elections satisfy the conditions that should be available, so that the elections actually express the path of democratic conversion.

Al-Moslouhi (2019), conducted a study entitled by "the system of the two councils and the legislative excellence, a research in some domains of the legislative policy in the kingdom of Bahrain, a comparative study". The system of the two councils is one of the most prominent features of authority in Bahrain since it was passed based on the constitutional amendments in 2002. The study emphasizes the issue of legal justifications that would justify adopting this system in geographically-limited countries, such as Bahrain. Since the justifications of adopting a dual-council are diverse according to the juristic schools, the historical context for countries as well as the regional and political structure, the referential documents that characterized the constitutional path in the kingdom since 2002 link between the dual formation of the national council with justifications that have an artistic and functional nature related to legislative excellence. The constitutional legislator decided to create a second parliamentary commission that share the legislative characteristics with the elected Parliamentary Council.

Abd (2013), conducted a study entitled by " the political developments in Bahrain after 1975". The study results revealed that since the 1930s, Bahrain witnessed invitations to reform the political circumstances in the country by citing a constitution and establishing a parliament whose members are elected by people. The population' pressure urged the ruling family to declare the 1973-constitution, which had common characteristics with the parliamentary and Royal systems; however, this constitution wasn't applied for a long time. It was suspended and a severe opposition was evoked against the ruling system. Therefore, a new constitution was declared in 2000, through which the king attempted to clamp down authority. This resulted in expanding the gap between the system and the citizens who were deprived from practicing their political rights, and consequently started an uprising on 14/2/2011 to express their refusal to the authoritative style practiced by the government.

Khalaf (2013), conducted a study entitled by "the Bahraini parliamentary elections and their impact on the start of the popular uprising". The study addressed the first Bahraini national Council and the advisory Council as an alternative to the national Council in 1992. The study also addressed the promises to retrieve the parliamentary life and displayed the elective experiences after continuing the parliamentary life in 2002, 2006, until the elections in 2010 and extending to the start of uprising on 14/ 2/ 2011. The results revealed that Bahrain witnessed a parliamentary and constitutional experience which is distinguished from the other states of the Gulf cooperation

Council, in that the return of the parliamentary life in Bahrain in 2002 was followed by two election cycles in 2006 and 2010.

### 1.7. The Study Methodology

The study used the analytical descriptive approach in order to describe the political reform that took place since King Hamad Bin Eissa Aal Khalifa reigned Bahrain. The study then analyzed that reform as well as its implications on the level of political participation to the Bahraini political associations in electing the parliamentary Councils (2002-2018).

## 2. The Development of the Political Reform in Bahrain

Bahrain performed its own political reform based on the political circumstances that suited it at that time. The independence of Bahrain was synchronized with the existence of political organizations, which were mostly opposing to the system. The researcher suggests that Bahrain started well in terms of establishing a democratic life via making elections and issuing the first constitution in 1973; however, this rapidly retreated back after declaring the termination of Parliamentary life in 1975, a new era represented by the national Council as a single legislative authority in the Emirate of Bahrain at that time. This case continued until the King Hamad Bin Eissa Aal Khalifa ruled Bahrain in 1999.

### 2.1. Political Reform in the Era of Prince Eissa Bin Salman Aal Khalifa

When we discuss any political system, we should take into consideration that it has two dimensions; the internal and external dimensions. The internal dimension is more important in our study, since it is related to the objectives and directions of the public policy of the existing system in all the social, economic and political domains ([The diplomatic Bulletin, 2017](#)). The kingdom of Bahrain, since its independence in 1971, attempted to create new directions that would have a prominent role in the political life in general and in the political participation in particular in order to include all the categories of the Bahraini community, including the political associations, the Bahraini woman in the elections of the parliamentary councils.

Just like any other country outgoing from the British imperialism, Bahrain started, since independence in 1971, to establish a political life and move towards a democratic life. The majority of the affairs relating to political life started during the era of Prince Eissa, where the political lie during his reign passed through several stages. The first stage was establishing a council elected by the Bahraini citizens in 1972, followed by issuing the first Bahraini constitution in 1973. Then, a single elected authority was established in Bahrain, known as the national Council, which was first elected in 1973. After that, the elected national Council was disintegrated by citizens in 1975, only after two years of electing it. Later, the articles relating to the national council in the Bahraini constitution were hindered, and finally, the Bahraini woman didn't have the right to practice the political life in general and particularly in the legislative elections; the evidence for that was mentioned in the decree of electing the national council for the year 1973, which stated that only men have the right to elect ([A Decree-Law No. \(10\) of 1973](#)).

Despite all the pre-mentioned stages, the political life in Bahrain and all the affairs related to the political reform remained unchanged by disrupting the political life; i.e. the elected national council. Also, the Bahraini woman wasn't given the right to participate in elections, and even later in the assignments that followed establishing the advisory council at the beginning of the 1990s, particularly in 1992 ([Khalaf, 2013](#)).

### 2.2. The Political Reform During the Era of King Hamad Bin Eissa Aal Khalifa

Following the death of Sheikh Eissa Bin salman Aal Khalifa in March, 1999, after he established the modern state with its institutions, Sheikh Hamad Bin Eissa Aal Khalifa took over the reins of the government in an atmosphere of love and public agreement at the level of leadership and population. The Bahraini experience in political reform is characterized by the existence of a clear version and a comprehensive project representing a political program with clear boundaries and steps. King Hamad intended to establish constitution and promote the role of institutions; his reform project encompassed all the legislative and executive sectors, the independence of judicial authorities and promoted the administrative and financial surveillance systems over the country's agencies, and at the same time did not overlook the role of the civil society who can participate positively in construction and development. He also paid more attention to the necessity of making gradual reform steps and not making sudden or rapid steps that could result in diverse consequences ([Abdullah et al., 2009](#)).

The reform project during the era of King Hamad started by the code of national Work which was approved during the referendum on 15-16 /2/2001, with a majority of 98.4%. This code asserted many issues: first, the legitimacy of the reign of Aal Khalifa and confirming the legitimacy of Sheikh Hamad through referendum. Second, emphasizing the assets of the community and the state as stated in the first constitution for the country issued in 1973, as well as confirming the political rights of the woman side by side with man. Third, opening the way to get out from the crisis of constitutional life path by suggesting a limited amendment to the constitution of 1973, whereby the legislative authority is divided into two councils; an elected Council that exercises legislation and surveillance as well as an assigned council for consultation ([Al-Akry, 2008](#)), and during the era of King Hamad, Bahrain was converted from an emirate to a kingdom ([Power, 2012](#)).

The era of King Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa witnessed a number of political reforms at the level of domestic affairs in Bahrain. These reforms started by establishing a number of legislations and laws that helped Bahrain to achieve more progress at the level of political participation as well as building its own domestic political model.

During this era, women were given the right to elect and nominate in the parliamentary councils, and the ruling system moved towards taking some procedures aiming at paving the way to return the parliamentary life back in Bahrain (Al-Hayajna, 2008), including:

- 1- The Higher national Committee was formed to prepare the project of the national work code.
- 2- Issuing an amnesty to all the prisoners and politicians who were imprisoned because of the civil disruptions that took place in the 1990s.
- 3- The Prince's cancellation for the law related to the procedures of the state's security for the year 1974, which authorized the minister of domestic affairs to arrest individuals without an accusation or a trial for a period of three years.
- 4- Giving a license to eleven new political associations in 2001, even though the establishment of political parties is illegal.
- 5- The first constitution was amended in February, 2002 to include establishing a legislative commission consisting of two councils.
- 6- In 16/7/2005, the King of Bahrain passed a law for establishing political associations... etc. (Al-Hayajna, 2008).

In this study, we may exclusively refer to the state of political openness as well as promoting the political development in the legislations that were passed during the era of King Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa, including:

- 1- Making amendments to the 2002-Bahraini constitution in 2012.
- 2- The issuance of the law of starting the political rights in 2002, and making amendments to it in 2006, 2014, 2016 and 2018.
- 3- Making amendments to the law of the Bahraini political associations in 2014.

Based on the above, we notice that the procedures taken during the era of king Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa several important political reforms took place in relation to promoting the political life, particularly with regard to the political participation either for the political associations or for woman in the elections of the parliamentary councils in Bahrain.

### **3. The Role of Political Reform in Bahrain in the Issuance of the Law of Political Associations**

Before king Hamad took over the reins of the government, some researchers, such as Al-Akry (2008) mentioned some of the political Systematizations in Bahrain, including the Islamic movement of Bahrain librarians- an Islamic Shiite organization which is the most widely popular organization; the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain- an Islamic Shiite organization; the National Liberation Front in Bahrain- a left-wing Shiite organization; the popular front in Bahrain, a left-wing Marx organization; and Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party, a national organization. However, he following two organizations advocate the ruling regime: Muslim brothers organization, an Islamic-Sunni organization; and the Salafi organization, an Islamic-Sunni organization.

It is noteworthy that all the legislations in Bahrain didn't mention the term "political parties"; however, they identified the term of "political associations". Some researchers suggest that the Bahraini law prevents the formation of political parties. The Bahraini law emphasizes the term of "political associations", where the minister of justice and Islamic affairs on 22/1/ 2008 confirmed that the political associations don't have the right to change their labels to parties. In another occasion, he also confirmed that "the constitution talked about associations not parties and that the law described them as associations not parties; therefore, we are committed to the statements of law, that they are associations not parties" (Al-Fardan, 2015).

The total number of political associations in Bahrain is only (16) political associations distributed to all the regions of the kingdom, in that the political associations were established soon after the issuance of the law of political associations in 2001. Therefore, during (2001-2002) eleven political associations were established, while the other five political associations were established during (2005-2012). The last approved political association was called the national association of change and willingness, noting that there are five religious associations among those (16) political associations (Faiad, 2019).

#### **3.1. Political Reform and its Role in the Issuance of the Law of Political Associations No. (26) for the Year 2005 and its Amendments**

The idea of political reform during the era of King Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa started to take the impression of openness in the Bahraini political system at the level of the official and non-official organizations, including the political associations. This case was evident since the issuance of the Bahraini national work code in 2002, the constitution in 2002 and the law of starting the political rights in 2002, in that the Bahraini national work code and the Bahraini constitution issued in 2002 as well as their amendment in 2012 included a discussion about the political associations as follows (The Legislative Group, 2014):

First: the Bahraini national work code in the first chapter confirmed the basic pillars of the community in the fifth point " to ensure that the community makes advantage of all the civil activities and capabilities, the state guarantees the freedom of establishing the private, scientific, cultural and professional associations and syndicates based on national bases and legitimate objectives according to the conditions and circumstances set by law. Also, no one is obliged to affiliate or continue in any association or syndicate."

Second: as stated in article (27) of the Bahraini constitution in the third chapter, " the public duties and rights", " the freedom to establish associations and syndicates based on national bases, legitimate objectives and right methods is guaranteed according to the conditions and circumstances set by law as long as they don't touch the bases of religion and public system. Also, no one is obliged to affiliate or continue in any association or syndicate."

Third: as stated by the interpretative memorandum for the constitution amendments in 2012 "...the plurality of the political associations and the right to establish associations and syndicates...". This memorandum was issued after the issuance of the law of the political associations in 2005. It also witnessed amendments with regard to the law of political associations in 2014, which will be discussed later.

### **3.2. The Law of the Political Associations No. (26) for the Year (2005) and its Amendments in 2014**

In 2001, Bahrain allowed the political currents to establish political associations under the law of clubs and associations (Meo, 2005) After that, on 23/7/2005, in the Palace of Rifa', Law No. (26) of 2005 was issued in relation to the political associations, where the law stated 29 articles and defined the term of political associations, " the political association refers to each organized group established in accordance with the provisions of this law, based on common principles and objectives and works publicly using democratic and legitimate means with the aim of participating in the political life in order to achieve certain programs related to the social, economic and political affairs for the Kingdom of Bahrain. The associations that are based on religious, scientific social, cultural, physical or professional purposes aren't considered as political ones."

The first article of law states that " citizens either as men or women have the right to establish political associations and affiliate to them according to the provisions of this law ", article No. 3 states that " the political associations established according to the provisions of this law contribute to achieving the political, social and economic progress in the kingdom. These associations, being considered as democratic, popular and national organizations, do their tasks related to organizing people and representing them as well as promoting the political culture and practice within the domain of national unity and social peace in accordance with the constitution and the national work code". The article No. 4 stated some items related to establishing a political association or maintaining it as follows:

- 1- The association should have a basic system written and signed by establishers.
- 2- The number of establishers for any association should be, at least, fifty members.
- 3- The principles, objectives, programs, policies and methods of associations should not oppose with:
  - A – the principles of the Islamic Sharia, which is the primary source for legislation.
  - B –the national assets on which the ruling system in Bahrain is based.
- 4- The association should not be based on ethnic, classy, geographical or professional basis, and should not discriminate between people based on gender, origin, language, religion or ideology.
- 5- The association should not aim to establish any military or semi-military structures or take the form of violent training which calls for fighting or urging people to practice ethnic, national or religious offence.
- 6- The association must not be a branch for a political party or association or any other political organization outside the country.
- 7- The association shouldn't be related to any parties, organizations, groups, individuals or political powers that oppose the rules, principles or provisions stated in section 3 of this article.
- 8- The residence of the main association and its branches should be inside the kingdom of Bahrain and practice its activities on the land of Bahrain.
- 9- The association must declare its principles, objectives, programs, methods, organizational structures and resources of funding.

According to article 7 from the law, a written application is submitted to the minister of justice in relation to the establishment of the political association; this is an overt context that the political associations are directly involved with the head of the Bahraini judicial commission: the minister of justice.

The law No. (34) for the year 2014 was issued with respect to amending some provisions of the law No. (36) for the year 2005, concerning the political associations, where the king Hamad Bin Khalifa approved all the amendments. The new law permitted the minister of justice to observe the activities, accounts and decisions of those associations as well as instating a lawsuit to stop the activities of the association. The law allows the minister to ask the establishing members to submit any required data or documents to apply the provisions of this law, including that the funds of the association are considered as public money and the principals and staff of the association are considered as public employees... (Bahrain, 2014). Some individuals pointed to the most important new amendments to the law and the extent to which they correspond with the freedom of political work, as follows (Ismail, 2014):

- 1- Using concepts and phrases that lack a clear definition.
- 2- Mixing between the association as a legal personality and its members based on their personal characteristics.
- 3- The right of the young to affiliate to the political association.
- 4- The journalism of political associations.
- 5- Affecting the basic systems of the political association and bypassing the decisions of its public conferences.

In short, the pre-mentioned law of political associations aims to promote the manifestation of democracy in the county, while maintaining the national unity. This applies to the role that should be played by the political

associations, either during the stage of municipal and Parliamentary elections or the other stages within the domain of national work (Bahrain institution for political development, 2014).

#### 4. Representing the Bahraini Political Associations in the Elections of the Parliamentary Councils (2002-2018)

The political associations are considered as an authentic side in the process of elections. Politicians defined political associations as " an organization that includes a group of people with common intellectual perception; it mobilizes the public opinion for the sake of its own interest in order to reach the legislative power. It is also one of the pillars of the state's democratic structure". Political associations have various roles in the electoral process according to the directions of each of them. Based on the expectations and perception of most electors, the political associations select their nominates within criteria that aim to work side by side with the state to promote democracy in the country, attain economic development and high levels of security stability and enhance all the levels in the kingdom. The political associations gain their importance from being a connection tool between electors and nominates as well as between the government and citizens; they are basic pillars in the democratic structure whose participation in elections target both citizens and country (Bahrain Institute for Political Development, 2014).

The kingdom of Bahrain is still new concerning the political participation at the level of the elections of parliamentary councils and the participation of political associations since the continuity of the parliamentary life during the reign of king Hamad. The first elections for the Bahraini parliamentary councils were held in 2002 and continued up to the last elections in 2018. During this period, many developments took place: first, the participation of the Bahraini political associations in the elections based on the laws of 2001 and 2005 as well as their amendments in 2014, and second, the Bahraini woman gained its right to participate in the political life. It is worth noting that the kingdom of Bahrain has two types of elections; the municipal elections and the parliamentary elections (the house of representatives). The later will be the focus of our attention in this study.

Later, we will address the seats obtained by the political associations in the elections of the parliamentary councils in Bahrain (2002-2018). The 2018-elections are the last elections that took place in Bahrain and resulted in the fifth parliamentary council which is still valid at the time of writing this study. The House of representatives includes (40) seats which are competed upon by dependent and independent candidates; who are nominated on the behalf of the political associations in Bahrain. Table (1) shows the year of establishing each association and the seats obtained by each association in the elections of the Bahraini House of representatives during (2002-2018).

**Table-1.** The change in the number of the seats of political associations in the House of representatives during (2002-2018).

Num ber	Establish ment year	Association name	2002 elections	2006 elections	2010 elections	2014 elections	2018 elections
1	2002	Al-Asala Islamic association	6	5	4	2	4
2	2002	Democratic Islamic Arab medium association					
3	2002	Islamic consultation association					
4	2001	National work code association	2				
5	2002	National constitutional collection association					
6	2002	Islamic national platform association	8	7	3	1	
7	2002	Islamic connection association	4			1	
8	2002	Free thought association					
9	2001	Advancing democratic platform association	3				2
10	2002	Democratic national collection association					
11	2002	National dialogue association ( dialogue)					
12	2006	National justice movement association (justice)					
13	2007	Al-Saaf Islamic association (Saaf)					
14	2011	National unity assemblage association (Tajamo')					1
15	2012	National change and willingness association					
16	2005	National democratic assemblage association					
Total			23	12	7	4	7

\*Source: Faiad (2019)

The previous table shows that there are (10) political associations that have never won any seats in the Parliamentary elections since the year of starting it in 2002. The results showed that the associations of authenticity and Islamic platform were the most prominent ones concerning the seats of the political associations in the House of representatives during (2002-2018). While the Islamic platform association did not gain any seats in the latest parliamentary elections in 2018, the left-wing advancing platform association was one of the civil associations that gained a good number of seats in comparison with the other associations, particularly in the elections of 2002 and 2018 with a total of five seats (three seats in the elections of 2002 and two seats in the elections of 2018). The Islamic association society, a religious society, gained a limited number of seats in the elections of 2002 with a total of four seats; however, it only obtained one seat in the elections of 2014. The society of national unity, which was established in 2011, didn't obtain any seats except for one seat in the elections of 2018. The political associations participating in the elections of 2014 (authenticity, Islamic platform, national unity collection, the code, the association, Al-Saaf, the Arab medium, the home town, national dialogue) only obtained four seats even though they offered 27 candidates in 18 electoral circles, while the independent members obtained 36 seats. Three political associations obtained seats in the House of representatives; the authenticity (Asala) which had two seats, the Islamic platform with one seat and Al-Rabita association with one seat. The five political associations participating in the elections of 2018 (Asala, Islamic platform, National unity collection, Islamic Saaf, Advancing platform) which offered 15 candidates in 12 electoral circles obtained 7 seats, while the independent candidates obtained 33 seats. Three political associations obtained those seats; Asala (4) seats, Advancing platform (2) seats and the national unity collection (1) seat (Faiad, 2019).

We can also say that the Bahraini elector often prefers to vote for the independent candidates and gets away from the candidates of political associations. Indeed, this case has two implications: the weakness of those associations and the inability to communicate effectively with citizens to influence their decisions, and that the Bahraini citizens aren't convinced with the various ideologies, so they are more inclined towards the candidates of social services or the independent candidates who have the ability to satisfy the needs of electors within the items included in their electoral programs (Faiad, 2019)

Table (2) shows the percentage of political associations seats in the elections of the Parliamentary councils during (2002-2018), including the number of seats in the House of representatives.

**Table-2.** The percentage of the seats of the Bahraini political associations in the elections of the Parliamentary councils (2002-2018)

Number	Elections year	The total number of seats in the Bahraini House of representatives	The percentage of the seats of the political associations in the House of representatives
1	2002	40	%57.5
2	2006	40	%30
3	2010	40	%17.5
4	2014	40	%10
5	2018	40	%17.5

\*Source: (the researcher's analysis based on the previous data)

Table (2) shows that in all the elections of the Parliamentary Councils in Bahrain during (2002-2018), the total number of the seats of the House of representatives was only (40) seats. When considering all the percentages obtained by the political associations in the Bahraini House of representatives we can see that the highest percentage was in the elections of 2002, with a percentage of (57.5%). Since the elections of 2006, the percentage began to decline until the elections of the year 2018. This indicates the difficult of the political associations in obtaining a high number of seats in the Bahraini House of representatives.

Furthermore, we may refer to the event that took place before the elections of the House of representatives in 2018 represented by the approval of King Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa when he issued the law No. (25) for the year 2018 for amending the third article of law No. (14) for the year 2002 concerning the continuation of the political rights. The first article of the law stated that the context of the second section of article (3) in law (14), 2002 relating to the political rights would be substituted by the following context: " nominating to the House of representatives is not allowed for the following: first, those sentenced for a crime even if he was released by private amnesty or rehabilitated. Second, those sentenced by prison in intentional crimes for a period of more than six months if he was released by private amnesty for that. Third, leaders and members of the political associations disintegrated by a final judgment for committing a grave offence to the provisions of the kingdom's constitution or laws. Fourth, those accused by hindering the flow of the parliamentary and constitutional life, either by ending or leaving the parliamentary work in the council, or his membership was cancelled for similar reasons. The second article stated that the head of ministers' council and the ministers should apply the provisions of this law, and it is applicable on the second day of publishing it in the official newspaper (al'ayam, 2018). Table (3) shows the number of political associations that boycotted the elections of the Bahraini parliamentary councils (2002-2018)

**Table-3.** The number of political associations that boycotted the elections of the Bahraini parliamentary councils (2002-2018)

Number	Elections year	The number of political associations that boycotted the elections
1	2002	4
2	2006	1
3	2010	5
4	2014	5
5	2018	6
Total		20

\*Source: (a collected table prepared by the researcher based the information below)

Table (3) shows that the number of political associations that boycotted the elections of the Bahraini House of representatives in 2002, were four associations: the Islamic national accord association representing the main current of Shiite, the democratic national assemblage society (Baath party), and the Islamic action society (Shiite society under construction) ([aljazeera.net., 2002](#)) As for the elections in 2006, elections were boycotted only by one association, the association of freedom and democracy (Haq); its interruption was related to the attachment to constitutional amendments ([aljazeera.net., 2006](#)).

The elections of 2010 were boycotted by (Al-Haq) society and other opposing parties, such as Islamic Wafaa current, Bahrain libertarian society, Khalas society and the Islamic action society. The elections performed in 2014 were boycotted by five political associations, including Al-Wifaq Islamic Shiite society and Waad left-wing society, claiming that the elections were not honest and that they would be an attempt to establish the absolute rule in Bahrain ([Noor and Al-Sheikh, 2016](#)). The elections of 2018 were boycotted by 6 political associations: the Islamic national Wifaq society, Islamic action society, national brotherhood society, democratic action society (Waad), democratic national collection society and the unified democratic collection society ([al'akhbar, 2018](#)).

In the light of the pre-mentioned, we may summarize the weakness in representing the political associations in the elections of the Bahraini Parliamentary councils during (2002-2018) as follows:

- 1- The emergence of political associations was new within the political system, following the procedures of political reform in Bahrain.
- 2- Some political associations boycotted the elections of the Bahraini House of representatives.
- 3- The Bahraini elector voted for the independent candidates instead of voting for those nominated by the political associations. This was illustrated in tables (1) and (2) concerning the seats and percentages obtained by the political associations in the elections of the Bahraini House of representatives (2002-2018).

## 5. Conclusions

- a. The political reform in Bahrain passed through two stages. The first one in the era of Prince Eisa Bin Salman Aal Khalifa and the second stage was in the era of King Hamad Bin Eisa Aal Khalifa, during which several amendments were made to the Bahraini political life, including the national action code in 2001, being considered as the solid basis for all the following political reforms in Bahrain. In addition to the issuance of the 2002-constitution and its amendments in 2012, as well as the law of launching the political rights in 2002 and its amendments.
- b. Political reform in Bahrain had positive consequences during the promulgation of the most important political reforms Political Associations Law, No. 26 of 2005, and its amendments to Law No. 34 of 2014.
- c. The representation of Bahraini political associations in the elections of 2002 was high; however, after the elections, the political associations obtained less seats in 2006, 2010, 2014, 2018.

## 6. Recommendations

1. Continue efforts to find more political reforms by Political institutions in Bahrain and benefit from the proposals made by the Bahraini people, political societies and all civil society organizations in order to promote and advance political reforms in Political life in Bahrain.
2. The political associations should promote their activities in Bahrain under the borders of the law organizing their actions in order to communicate their ideas and plans to all the categories of the Bahraini citizens.
3. Attracting all the age categories in the Bahraini community in order to affiliate to those political associations, especially those between (20-30) years old.

## References

- A Decree-Law No. (10) of 1973 Concerning election provisions for the national assembly.
- A Decree-Law No. (15) of 2002 Concerning the advisory council and house of representatives.
- Abd, I. M. (2013). *Political developments in Bahrain after the year 1975*. International Studies.
- Abdullah, M. A., Al-Abideen and Basheer, Z. (2009). *Modern bahraini history, the center for historical studies*. the University of Bahrain.
- al'akhbar (2018). Bahrain, the opposition agreed on boycott: elections to satisfy the authority. Available: [https://al-akhbar.com/Arab\\_Island/260026](https://al-akhbar.com/Arab_Island/260026)
- al'ayam (2018). Preventing the members of disintegrated associations from being nominated to the House of representatives. Available: <https://www.alayam.com>



- Al-Akry, A. (2008). *Disrupted reform*. 1st edn: Tarawis for Publishing And Distribution: Manama-Bahrain. 10.
- Al-Fardan, H. (2015). Does Bahrain have political parties? : Available: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1024100.html>
- Al-Hayajna, A. M. (2008). *Does democracy have a future in the Arab Gulf states?* the Center for Arab Unity Studies. 33-34.
- Al-Moslouhi, A. (2019). The dual council system and legislative excellence. Research in some aspects of legislative policy in the Kingdom of Bahrain (a comparative study). *Sharia and Law Journal*, (80): 185.
- aljazeera.net. (2002). Four Bahraini political association declare their boycott to elections. Available: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic>
- aljazeera.net. (2006). The most important political currents and association in Bahrain. Available: <https://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic>
- Bahrain Institute for Political Development (2014). *Political Culture 2, "Elections," The Book Series: 38*.
- Bahrain, M. (2014). The king of Bahrain declares new legal amendments to the minister of justice to dissolve the political associations. Available: <http://bahrainmirror.com/news/17792.html>
- Faiad, K. A. (2019). *Elections and democratic transition in the kingdom of bahrain (2002-2019)*. 1st edn Bahrain Institute for Political Development. 54-57.
- Ismail, H. A. (2014). A review of the amendments of some law provisions concerning the political associations. Available: <https://www.altaqadomi.org/?p=7640>
- Khalaf, H. Q. (2013). *Bahraini parliamentary elections and their impact on evoking the popular uprising*. Baghdad University. 156-84.
- Law No. (26) of 2005 *Concerning the political associations*. Official Newspaper.
- Meo (2005). Bahrain, the opposition criticizes the law of political associations. Available: <https://meo.news>
- Noor, A.-D. and Al-Sheikh, K. (2016). The situation in bahrain ( the third and last episode). Available: <https://www.wahdaislamyia.org/issues/169/knoureldine.htm>
- Power, G., 2012. "The difficult development of parliamentary politics in the Gulf: Parliaments and the process of managed reform in Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman." In *Research Paper, Kuwait Program on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States*. p. 12.
- The diplomatic Bulletin, O. I. (2017). *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 1st edn.
- The Legislative Group (2014). Parliament, general secretariat.