

TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

APPEAL FOR ACTION

6TH UPDATE: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO BE TRIED BY A MILITARY COURT IN BAHRAIN

The trial of 20 Bahraini health professionals accused of felonies will resume on 28 August, again before a military court instead of a civilian court, as previously indicated. Amnesty International believes that the 20 health workers are possible prisoners of conscience and that their trial does not meet international standards for fair trial.

All 20 people are part of the original group of 48 health workers who were arrested in March and April 2011 and include paramedics, nurses and doctors, mostly from al-Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama. The 48 people were previously split into two groups, one of 20 health workers accused of felonies, or more serious offences, and the other group of 28 health workers accused of misdemeanours, or less serious offences. All those accused of misdemeanours had been released on bail by the end of June. Trial proceedings in relation to the two groups started in early June before the National Safety Court of First Instance (a military court).

During a trial session on 13 June at least two medical doctors told the court that they had been tortured and forced to sign confessions while blindfolded. On 29 June, the King of Bahrain issued a royal decree by which all ongoing military court cases in connection with the protests in February and March would be transferred to ordinary civilian courts. However, on 18 August the King issued a new decree (Decree 28/20011) stating that the National Safety Court of First Instance would continue to deal with felony cases whereas all misdemeanour cases would be referred to ordinary civilian cases. The case of the group of 28 health workers will resume on 24 October before an ordinary court.

Among the 20 health workers due to appear before the National Safety Court of First Instance on 28 August are six women who have been released on bail. They include **Zahra Mahdi al-Sammak, Najah Khalil Ibrahim Hassan, Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far, Fatima Salman Hassan Haji and Nada Sa'eed 'Abdel-Nabi Dhaif**. The sixth woman, **Rula Jassem Mohammad al-Saffar**, the head of the Bahrain Nursing Society, was only released on 21 August 2011, one day after she had been visited in prison by Professor Cherif Bassiouni, the Chairman of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry.

Two health workers are being tried in absentia. They are **'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi and Qassim Mohammad 'Omran**. The remaining health workers who will appear before the military court on Sunday have all been detained since March and April this year. On 22 August they were visited by Professor Bassiouni in the Dry Dock Prison in Manama. They include doctors **'Ali Essa Mansoor Al Ekri, Nader Mohammed Hassan Dewani, Ahmed 'Abdul'aziz 'Omran Hassan, Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab, 'Abdulkhaleq 'Ali Hussain al-'Oraibi, Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Bassim Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Najah Khalil Ibrahim Hassan and Saeed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji**; one nurse, **Ebrahim Abdullah Ebrahim**; one paramedic, **Sayed Marhoon Majid Al Wedaei**; one laboratory technician, **Mohammed Faeq 'Ali Al Shehab**; and **Hassan Mohammed Sa'eed Nasser** (profession undefined).

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:

- ✓ Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;
- ✓ Expressing concern that the 20 health workers will continue to be tried before a military court whose proceedings do not meet international standards for fair trial;
- ✓ Urging the authorities to carry out an immediate and independent investigation into the allegations of torture and

other ill-treatment against some of the health professionals, as well as against other detainees in Bahrain, to make the results public, and to bring to justice any officials responsible for the torture or other ill-treatment of detainees;

- √ Urging the authorities to ensure that confessions obtained under torture are not submitted or used as evidence in the trial of the 20 health professionals or any other trials in Bahrain;
- √ Expressing concern that, despite the serious charges brought against them, these health professionals appear to have been brought to trial solely because of their peaceful efforts to provide medical assistance to people injured by government security forces during popular protests in February and March, in which case those held in custody would be prisoners of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 AUGUST 2011 TO:

King Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17664587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Sheikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khlaifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs,
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 31 284
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Social Development, Health and Human Rights
Dr Fatima bint Mohammed Al Balooshi
Ministry of Social Development
P.O. Box 32868, Isa Town, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17101955
Salutation: Your Excellency

If you receive no reply within six weeks of sending your letter, please send a follow-up letter seeking a response. Please send copies of any letters you receive to the International Secretariat, attention of the Health Team, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, or email: HEALTH@AMNESTY.ORG

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is the 6th update of a Health Professional Action on Bahrain. For the original action and earlier updates, please see the documents with the following index numbers: MDE 11/008/2011 (25 February 2011), MDE 11/22/2011 (26 April), MDE 11/25/2011 (11 May), MDE 11/30/2011 (8 June), MDE 11/33/2011 (14 June) and MDE 11/38/2011 (8 July).