

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE RISKS 13 YEARS IN PRISON

The trial of prominent opposition leader Ebrahim Sharif started on 24 August. His next hearing is on 12 October. He was denied bail. If convicted he could face up to 13 years in prison. He is a prisoner of conscience.

The first hearing of **Ebrahim Sharif** took place on 24 August before the High Criminal Court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. He has been charged with “incitement to hatred and contempt of the regime” and “incitement to overthrow the regime by force and illegal means”, under Articles 165 and 160 of Bahrain’s Penal Code. He denied all charges against him. If convicted, he could face up to 13 years in prison.

Requests by his lawyers to release him on bail were rejected and the court ruled he should remain in custody until the next hearing on 12 October. The Public Prosecution demanded the toughest penalty against Ebrahim Sharif. His lawyers requested to receive the Prosecution’s case file in order to prepare a defence. He is currently being held in al-Hala police station in al-Muharraq governorate, north of Manama.

During the hearing, Ebrahim Sharif was allowed to read a five-minute statement in which he reaffirmed his commitment to non-violence and highlighted that the role of the opposition is to criticize and pinpoint the wrongdoings for the government to fix and reform. He also said that the situation in Bahrain can only be solved through a peaceful political solution.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to release Ebrahim Sharif immediately and unconditionally and to drop the charges against him, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to uphold the right to freedom of expression and repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 8 OCTOBER 2015 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 1766 4587 (keep trying)
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Interior
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1723 2661
Email: info@interior.gov.bh
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P.O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 1284
Email: <http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default76a7.html?action=category&ID=159>
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 168/15. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE11/2197/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ebrahim Sharif is the former Secretary General of the National Democratic Action Society (*Wa'ad*), a secular political opposition party in Bahrain which includes people from both Shi'a and Sunni communities. He was arrested at his home on 12 July at 2.30am and taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) where he was questioned about a speech he had made at a public gathering on 10 July and remanded in custody for 48 hours. In his speech, Ebrahim Sharif spoke about the need for change in Bahrain, highlighted the political opposition's commitment to non-violence and urged the government to introduce key economic reforms to avoid further bankruptcy.

He was brought to the Public Prosecution for interrogation on 13 July on charges of "incitement to hatred and contempt of the regime" and "incitement to overthrow the regime by force and illegal means", which Ebrahim Sharif denied. The prosecution ordered that he be detained for 15 days for further investigation which was renewed for a further 15 days on 28 July. On 11 August the Public Prosecution referred his case to court and ordered him to remain in custody until his first hearing on 24 August.

Ebrahim Sharif was jailed for five years in 2011, alongside 12 other leading opposition activists who were jailed for between five years and life imprisonment after an unfair trial, for leading widespread peaceful anti-government protests. Ebrahim Sharif was released on 19 June 2015 under a royal pardon. The other 12 opposition activists are currently serving their sentences in Jaw prison.

Name: Ebrahim Sharif
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 168/15 Index: MDE 11/2336/2015 Issue Date: 27 August 2015