

EXTERNAL

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Fear of Torture/Incommunicado Detention

3 March 1998

BAHRAIN Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad al 'Ikri, aged 17

Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad al-'Ikri is being held incommunicado and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment. He was reportedly arrested on 24 February 1998 at his mother's home in al-Qadam village in Jidd Hafsa. His precise whereabouts are unknown. The reasons for his arrest are unclear, but it is believed to be connected with a previous arrest and conviction.

Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad al-'Ikri had previously been arrested on 10 April 1995 on charges of throwing a petrol bomb at police personnel. He was convicted on 9 July 1995 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment by the Juveniles Court. However, his sentence was overturned on appeal and he was released in September 1995. Several weeks after his release the Bahraini authorities tried to rearrest him. Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad al-'Ikri managed to escape and was able to hide. Whilst visiting his mother on 24 February 1998 the authorities arrested him again.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Scores of minors have been among those arrested by security forces in connection with mass protests in Bahrain calling for the restoration of the National Assembly and the release of political prisoners. In many cases juvenile defendants are denied their fundamental rights during pre-trial detention, having been held incommunicado and denied access to their families and defence counsel. Charges brought against them under the Penal Code have included arson attacks on public property and inhabited private property, rioting, participation in illegal gathering, and incitement of hatred towards the government. Sentences passed by the Juveniles Court have been, in the opinion of some defence lawyers, unnecessarily harsh, a number of children having been handed the maximum penalty of 10 years' imprisonment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language:

- expressing concern at Muhammad 'Ali Muhammad al-'Ikri's incommunicado detention and urging that he be granted immediate access to his family and legal counsel;
- seeking assurances that he is being treated humanely;
- requesting clarification of the reasons and legal basis for his arrest;
- urging that he be immediately released unless he is promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
P.O.Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Faxes: + 973 533033
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Muhammad Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior

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P.O.Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain

Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 8333 ALAMAN BN

Faxes: + 973 276765/290526

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO:

diplomatic representatives of BAHRAIN accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 14 April 1998.