

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 171/95 Death in custody / Arbitrary arrests /
Fear of torture

14 July 1995

BAHRAIN Sa'id 'Abd al-Rasul al-Iskafi, secondary school student, aged 16-17

The death in custody of a school student, reportedly as a result of severe torture, has raised fears for the safety of scores of people arrested on suspicion of involvement in demonstrations sparked by his death.

Sa'id 'Abd al-Rasul al-Iskafi died in custody some 48 hours after arrest. The youth had been summoned for interrogation by *Mabahith Amn al-Dawla* (State Security Intelligence) on 6 July in connection with his alleged participation in recent protests in Bahrain. His home in the village of al-Sanabes had been raided the previous day and his parents told that he was wanted for questioning.

Upon his arrival at the headquarters of State Security Intelligence, Sa'id al-Iskafi was taken into custody. Two days later, on 8 July, his family was told to collect his body from the Military Hospital. According to accounts received by Amnesty International, the security forces prevented his family from burying his body in the local cemetery in al-Sanabes, and he was later buried at the cemetery in the nearby district of al-Na'im, where he was born. His body allegedly bore traces of torture.

News of Sa'id al-Iskafi's death sparked off a renewed wave of protests as hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets in a number of areas, including al-Na'im, al-Sanabes, al-Daih and Abu Saiba'. Security forces and riot police, backed by several helicopters, were said to have surrounded the demonstrators and to have used live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas in an attempt to disperse them. An unknown number of demonstrators were reportedly injured as a result, including on 11 July when security forces reportedly used live ammunition to disperse mourners gathered in al-Na'im cemetery to pay their respects to the victim.

During the past week, the security forces carried out widespread arrests of scores of people known or suspected of having participated in the ongoing protests. Amnesty International has received the names of some of these detainees, and fears that they may be subjected to torture under interrogation.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sa'id al-Iskafi is the second detainee said to have died under torture since the protests in Bahrain began in December 1994. The first victim, Hussain Qambar, died on 4 January this year while in custody. The Bahraini authorities failed to set up an investigation into his death and no one has been brought to justice. Subsequently the authorities denied all knowledge of his case.

Numerous other detainees have been tortured under interrogation in recent months. Amnesty International has received testimonies from a number of such victims, and in several of these cases the torture claims are supported by medical evidence. The use of torture in Bahrain's prison remains one of Amnesty International's long-standing and serious concerns. The methods most commonly used by the security forces include severe beatings all over the body; burning the skin with cigarettes; forcing detainees to stand for prolonged periods without moving; suspension by the limbs; sexual abuse, particularly of male

youths; and threats of execution.

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

- expressing grave concern about the death in custody of Sai'd 'Abd al-Rasul al-Iskafi;
- calling on the government to set up a prompt, impartial and thorough investigation into his death and urging that those officials found responsible be brought to justice in accordance with international human rights standards;
- reiterating Amnesty International's call for a similar investigation into the death of Hussain Qambar on 4 January 1995;
- seeking assurances that all detainees arrested in recent protests be humanely treated in accordance with international standards, and urging that they be granted immediate access to their relatives, lawyers and independent doctors;
- calling for an immediate end to the use of torture and for clear instructions to be issued to detaining officials that such practices contravene international human rights standards and shall not be tolerated.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness

Al-Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa

Office of His Highness the Amir

PO Box 555

The Amiri Court

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Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency

Al-Shaikh Mohamed Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa

Minister of Interior

PO Box 13

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Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 8333 ALAMAN BN

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Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency

Al-Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa

Prime Minister of Bahrain

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BAHRAIN

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Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain

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 29 August 1995.