

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 11/28/96

UA 257/96

Fear of torture / Legal concern

7 November 1996

BAHRAIN Ishraq HABIB (f), aged 16, school student

Ishraq Habib is being held in incommunicado detention and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment. According to information received, she was arrested on 15 October 1996 at her parents' home in the al-Mahuz district of al-Manama, apparently on suspicion of possessing illegal literature. Her precise whereabouts are unknown, but most female detainees are held at a detention facility in Madinat 'Issa. She has not been brought to trial.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Scores of women and young girls, including school students, have been arrested in Bahrain since the outbreak of widespread protests in December 1994 calling for the restoration of parliamentary democracy. A number of them were held as "hostages" in order to coerce male relatives to give themselves up to the authorities, or as punishment for the opposition activities of their male relatives. Others were arrested for having participated in anti-government demonstrations. Most of those arrested were held incommunicado without charge or trial for up to two months and then released. Some of them later reported that they had been beaten while in detention or otherwise subjected to insults and humiliation.

Numerous appeals have been sent by Amnesty International to the Bahraini Government on behalf of these detainees, but to date no substantive response has been received. On 16 July, the organization published a report detailing its concerns about human rights violations against women and children in Bahrain, including arbitrary arrest, incommunicado detention and the torture of detainees. Again, no substantive response was received, but a letter dated 31 July received from Bahrain's Ambassador to London stated that Amnesty International's report "has no factual basis and ... no evidence to substantiate the accusations made in it".

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

- requesting immediate clarification of the whereabouts of Ishraq Habib, seeking assurances that she is being humanely treated and urging that she be granted immediate access to a lawyer, relatives and medical treatment as necessary;
- seeking information on the reasons and legal basis for her arrest and continued detention;
- urging that she be released immediately unless she is to be promptly charged with a recognizable criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards for fair trial.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness
Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of His Highness the Amir
PO Box 555
The Amiri Court
Rifa'a Palace, Bahrain

Telexes: 8666 Qasar BN; 8500 Qasar BN
Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +937 668884

Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency
Shaikh Muhammad Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
PO Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +937 276765 or 290526
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
PO Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 9336 PROM BN OR 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +937 533033
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 20 December 1996.