

# URGENT ACTION

## VERDICT APPROACHING IN BAHRAIN MEDICS' CASE

**The verdict on the case of 20 health professionals on trial in Bahrain is scheduled to be announced on 14 June. If convicted and imprisoned, all 20 would be prisoners of conscience.**

On 10 May, the defence lawyers presented their final arguments in the case of the 20 health professionals appealing to the High Criminal Court of Appeal against their convictions of offences including "illegal possession of firearms for a terrorist purpose", "attempting to occupy a public hospital using force" and "attempting to topple the system of government by force" for which they were sentenced prison terms of between five and 15 years. On 26 April, the prosecution presented their arguments too, accusing the doctors of occupying the hospital and possessing weapons. Amnesty International is not aware of any substantial evidence presented in court during this trial that could prove the accusations against the health professionals.

The organization believes that the real reason for targeting them was that they were very vocal in denouncing the excessive force used by the armed forces against peaceful protesters to the international media and exercised their rights to freedom of expression and association during marches and protests. For these reasons the organisation believes that if convicted and imprisoned, the 20 would be prisoners of conscience.

Many in the group of 20 health professionals allege they were tortured in detention, including by being beaten, kicked, subjected to electric shocks, forced to stand up for prolonged hours, deprived of sleep and going to the toilet and held in solitary confinement. No independent investigation into their allegations of torture is known to have taken place.

### **Please write immediately in English or Arabic:**

- Noting that the verdict on the appeal of 20 medical professionals is expected on 14 June, and expressing concern that if jailed, they would be prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urging the authorities to launch an independent and impartial investigation, including an independent forensic examination, into the defendants' allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that anyone found responsible for abuses is brought to justice.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 JUNE 2012 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**

#### Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa  
Office of the Prime Minister  
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 17533033  
or +973 17532839

**Salutation: Your Highness**

#### Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa  
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs  
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 17536343/ +973 17531284  
Email via website:  
<http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default76a7.html?action=category&ID=159>

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fifth update of UA 296/11. Further information:  
[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/017/2012/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/017/2012/en)

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 20 are among 48 health professionals from the Salmaniya Medical Complex who were arrested in March and April 2011. Some of them had given interviews to foreign journalists and accused the government of human rights violations against protesters. All were held incommunicado for several weeks. In most cases their families did not know their whereabouts for most of this time and were only allowed to see them during the first session of their trial before the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, which started on 6 June 2011. The 48 were split into two groups on 13 June: 20 of them were accused of felonies while the rest were accused of misdemeanours. Many of them went on hunger strike in protest at their detention and trial and were gradually released on bail in August and September 2011. On 29 June 2011, the King decreed that all cases linked to the February-March 2011 protests would be transferred to ordinary civilian courts; he then issued a further decree on 18 August 2011 (Decree 28/20011) ordering that the National Safety Court of First Instance continue to deal with felony cases, while misdemeanour cases would be referred to civilian courts. In early October 2011, trials before military courts stopped and since then all trials have been heard before civilian courts. On 29 September 2011, the National Safety Court of First Instance sentenced the 20 health professionals to between five and 15 years in prison. Thirteen of the medics - 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri, Nader Mohammed Hassan Dewani, Ahmed 'Abdulaziz Omran Hassan, Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab, 'Abdulkhaleq 'Ali Hussain al-'Oraibi, Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Bassim Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim, Sayed Marhoon Majid al-Wedaei, Roula Jassim Mohammed al-Saffar, Nada Sa'eed 'Abdelnabi Dhaif, 'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi and Qassim Mohammad 'Omran - were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Hassan Mohammed Sa'eed Nasser and Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Fatima Salman Hassan Haji, Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far, Najah Khalil Ibrahim Hassan, Zahra Mahdi al-Sammak and Mohammed Faeq 'Ali Al Shehab were sentenced to five years in prison. All of them have since been released on bail.

On 23 October 2011, the health professionals' appeal hearing started before a civilian court and three charges were dropped: "spreading false news in detriment to public security", "public instigation of hate against the system of government" and "instigating public employees in Salmaniya Hospital to violate laws and refrain from performing their work duties".

Other charges remain including: "illegal possession of firearms for a terrorist purpose", "attempting to occupy a public hospital using force" and "attempting to topple the system of government by force "

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) was established by royal decree on 29 June 2011 to investigate abuses during the March/February protests and other abuses in the following months. The full report was published on 23 November 2011. Hundreds of cases were covered in the BICI report on the protests, including beatings of protesters by the security forces, mass arbitrary arrests of mainly Shi'a opposition activists and widespread torture, with five deaths resulting from torture in custody. In all, at least 60 people have died in connection with the protests since February 2011 until now, including five security forces personnel. The report urged the government to immediately establish an independent body made up of representatives of civil society, the opposition and the government; to oversee the implementation of the BICI's recommendations; to usher in legislative reforms to ensure laws are in line with international human rights standards; and to bring to account those responsible for abuses.

Names: 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri (m), Nader Mohammed Hassan Dewani (m), Ahmed 'Abdulaziz Omran Hassan (m), Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab (m), 'Abdulkhaleq 'Ali Hussain al-'Oraibi (m), Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif (m), Bassim Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif (m), Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim (m);, Sayed Marhoon Majid al-Wedaei (m); Roula Jassim Mohammed al-Saffar (f), Nada Sa'eed 'Abdelnabi Dhaif (f) , 'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi (m), Qassim Mohammad 'Omran (m) Hassan Mohammed Sa'eed Nasser (m), Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji (m), Fatima Salman Hassan Haji (f), Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far (f), Najah Khalil Ibrahim Hassan (f), Zahra Mahdi al-Sammak (f) and Mohammed Faeq 'Ali Al Shehab (m)

Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 296/11 Index: MDE 11/031/2012 Issue Date: 15 May 2012