

# URGENT ACTION

## HEALTH PROFESSIONALS' SENTENCES UPHELD

**On 1 October, Bahrain's Court of Cassation upheld the sentences against nine health professionals who challenged a Court of Appeals ruling. Six of them are at risk of being sent to prison at any time to serve their sentences. If jailed, they would be considered prisoners of conscience.**

On 1 October the Court of Cassation in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, upheld the convictions and sentences against nine health professionals, all currently free on bail. Six who have not completed their sentences risk being sent back to prison at any time: **'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri, Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim, Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji, Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab and Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far.**

In June, an appeal court upheld the convictions against the nine for their role in pro-reform demonstrations in February and March 2011, but reduced their sentences from between five and 15 years' imprisonment to between one month and five years in prison. Another nine were acquitted of all charges.

Most of the nine alleged that they were tortured during their 2011 detention. The first session of the trial of two police officers accused of mistreating the health professionals began on 1 October 2012, but it is unclear whether they have been charged with subjecting them to torture. Neither the health professionals nor their lawyers were officially notified of this, but representatives of the defence team were present in court. The prosecution had previously announced that charges had been brought against another five policemen accused of mistreating the health professionals but their trial has not yet begun.

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

- Reminding the Bahraini authorities of their acceptance of a recommendation at the recent Universal Periodic Review to release prisoners of conscience, and expressing concern that, if imprisoned, these health professionals would be prisoners of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly as there is no evidence that they have used or advocated violence;
- Urging the Bahraini authorities to overturn the health professionals' convictions and drop all charges against them relating to their role in pro-reform demonstrations in February and March 2011;
- Urging the authorities to make public the findings of any investigation carried out into the health professionals' allegations of torture and to ensure that anyone found responsible for abuses is brought to justice.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 12 NOVEMBER 2012 TO:**

His Majesty the 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  
**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  
 Twitter: @moi\_Bahrain  
**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  
**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 eighth update of UA 296/11. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/045/2012/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 14 June, the High Criminal Court of Appeal in Manama upheld the conviction of nine of 20 health professionals tried on charges relating to their role in demonstrations in February and March 2011, but reduced their sentences of between five and 15 years' imprisonment to between one month and five years' imprisonment. 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri's sentence was reduced to five years' imprisonment, and Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim's sentence was reduced to three years, both on charges of "illegal gathering and participating in unlicensed marches" and "calling for the overthrow the regime by force"; Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif and Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji's sentences were reduced to one year in prison for "kidnapping for a terrorist purpose", "illegal gathering and participating in unlicensed marches" and "instigating hatred against another sect". The sentence imposed on Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab was reduced to six months in prison, Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far's sentence was reduced to two months in prison, and sentences for Bassim Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Nader Mohammed Hassan Dewani and Abdulkhaleq 'Ali Hussain al-'Oraibi were reduced to one month in prison, all five on charges of participation in "illegal gathering and unlicensed marches". Two others, 'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi and Qassim Mohammad 'Omran, had their appeals rejected because they had not been present in court during the appeal process, so their 15-year sentences – imposed by a military court – still stand. According to Amnesty International's research findings, none of the health professionals had used or advocated violence, but were targeted for denouncing the excessive force used against protesters last year to international media.

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; however, he 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. All of them were released on bail.

Hundreds of cases were covered in the November 2011 report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), into abuses since February 2011, 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, over 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. The government also accepted more than 140 out of the 176 recommendations stemming from the Universal Periodic Review before the Human Rights Council in Geneva in September 2012, including measures aimed at releasing prisoners of conscience, bolstering fair trial guarantees and investigating human rights violations committed during and after last year's massive pro-reform protests.

Names: 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri (m), Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim (m), Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif (m), Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji (m), Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab (m), Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far (f)  
Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 296/11 Index: MDE 11/057/2012 Issue Date: 1 October 2012