

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI TEACHERS' CONVICTIONS UPHELD

Convictions against Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Deeb and Jalila al-Salman, the former president and vice-president respectively of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA), were upheld on 21 October. However, their prison sentences were reduced.

On 21 October 2012, an appeal court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, upheld the guilty verdict against **Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb** and **Jalila al-Salman** but reduced their prison sentences. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's sentenced was reduced from 10 to five years in prison while Jalila al-Salman's was reduced from three years to six months.

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb has already spent some 18 months in prison, and is currently serving his sentence in al-Jaw prison. Jalila al-Salman spent five-and-a-half months in prison, and is now out on bail. Their lawyers have said they would appeal their verdict before the Court of Cassation.

Both were initially sentenced before a military court in 2011 on charges including using their positions as vice-president and president of the BTA to call for a strike by teachers, halting the educational process, "inciting hatred of the regime", and "attempting to overthrow the ruling system by force".

The day before the convictions were upheld, Jalila al-salman told Amnesty International: "I am very thankful for all the messages of solidarity around the world, they give us strength. I thank all Amnesty activists for their work."

Amnesty International believes neither of them used or advocated violence and is not aware that any such evidence was presented during their trials.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic or your own language:

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to release Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urging them not to re-arrest Jalila al-Salman as she would again be considered a prisoner of conscience;
- Urging them to quash the convictions and sentences against Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman;
- Urging them to make public any investigation carried out into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment made by both teachers and bring to justice anyone found responsible.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 DECEMBER 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 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 ninth update of UA 227/11 Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/021/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 29 March 2011, Jalila al-Salman's house in Manama was raided by more than 40 security officials. She was then reportedly taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama and ill-treated and verbally abused. She remained there for eight days until she was transferred to a women's detention centre in 'Issa Town, on the outskirts of Manama, where she was kept in solitary confinement for 18 days. She was then transferred to a cell with other women within the same facility. Jalila al-Salman was released on bail on 21 August after more than five months in detention. On 25 September the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, sentenced her to three years in prison. Her appeal before a civilian court of appeal started on 11 December.

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb was detained on 6 April 2011 after a raid on his uncle's house. Both he and his uncle were arrested; his uncle was released 72 days later. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's family did not know where he was for 24 days. He spent 64 days in solitary confinement, during which he says he was tortured. His family and lawyer were only allowed to see him during the first session of his trial on 7 June 2011. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb has remained in prison since his arrest. He was sentenced with Jalila al-Salman on 25 September by the National Safety Court of First Instance to 10 years in prison. His appeal before a civilian court of appeal started on 11 December.

Both were convicted of, among other charges, using their positions at the BTA to call for a strike by teachers, halting the educational process, "inciting hatred of the regime", "attempting to overthrow the ruling system by force", possessing pamphlets and disseminating fabricated stories and information.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) was established by Royal Decree on 29 June to investigate abuses during the protests in Bahrain during February and March 2011 and other abuses in the following months. The full report was published on 23 November. Hundreds of cases were covered in the report, including beatings of protesters by 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 46 people have died in connection with the protests, including five security personnel. The report urged the Bahraini government to establish immediately 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.

Name: Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb (m), Jalila al-Salman (f)
Gender m/f: both

Further information on UA: 227/11 Index: 11/060/2012 Issue Date: 25 October 2012