

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST RELEASED, STILL FACES CHARGES

Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja was released on 3 October, having served her two-month sentence for allegedly tearing up a picture of Bahrain's King. However, she is still facing other trials on charges relating to her peaceful exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

On 3 October, activist **Zainab Al-Khawaja** was released from prison, having served the full sentence imposed for allegedly tearing up a picture of Bahrain's King while detained in May. She was arrested on 2 August while protesting alone at al-Qadam roundabout on Budaya Road, outside of Manama, the capital of Bahrain, and was sentenced on 26 September by the Lower Criminal Court in Manama to two months' imprisonment on charges of "destroying government property".

Zainab Al-Khawaja is still facing several other trials – eight trials are ongoing and five cases are being investigated by the Prosecution – on charges such as "illegal gathering" and "insulting officials". She appeared in court on 17 October to be told that a trial on charges pressed on 6 May that include "insulting a police officer" would begin on 2 November. On 15 October, the Lower Criminal Court set 26 December as the date for the verdict in the case against her and **Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf** on charges of "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime", for which they had been previously detained for several days in December 2011. Zainab Al-Khawaja's next court appearance is due to take place on 1 November to face charges of obstructing traffic during a protest and "illegal gathering" at the al-Sobay' roundabout.

On 21 October, she was briefly arrested along with two other activists when they attempted to enter the village of al-Eker, south of Manama, to monitor the situation there after they heard rumours that the village was surrounded by security forces following the death of a police officer. They appear not to have been charged on this occasion.

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

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to drop all charges against Zainab al-Khawaja and Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf and to overturn all convictions since they are related solely to their legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urging them to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly and ensure that all human rights organizations and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment.

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 (keep trying)

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 second update of UA 232/12. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/056/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zainab Al-Khawaja is a Bahraini activist. Her father, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, is one of 13 prominent opposition activists sentenced by a military court to harsh prison terms in June 2011. Zainab Al-Khawaja was first arrested in December 2011 and released a few days later. She was charged with "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime" and this trial is ongoing. On 21 April 2012 she was arrested again, after sitting down on a highway close to the Financial Harbour in protest at her father's detention and the general poor human rights situation in Bahrain. She was released on 29 May after paying a fine of 200 Bahraini dinars (around US\$530) on the count of insulting a police officer in a military hospital. She had been acquitted of this charge on 2 May but the Prosecution appealed the sentence. On 16 October, the Appeal Court postponed its hearing into the case until 22 January 2013.

On 18 October 2012 a police officer died of his wounds following an explosion during a demonstration at al-Eker village, 12 miles south of Manama. The police reportedly surrounded accesses to the village. Seven people were arrested in relation to the death of the policeman.

The Bahraini authorities have been vociferous about their intention to introduce reforms and learn lessons from the crackdown on anti-government protesters in February and March 2011. In November 2011, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) set up by King Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa, submitted a report of its investigation into human rights violations committed in connection with the anti-government protests. The report concluded that the authorities had committed gross human rights violations with impunity, including excessive use of force against protesters, widespread torture and other ill-treatment of protesters, unfair trials and unlawful killings. The report also urged the 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 justice those responsible for abuses.

So far, however, the government's response has only scratched the surface of these issues. Reforms have been piecemeal, perhaps aiming to appease Bahrain's international partners, and have failed to provide real accountability and justice for the victims. Human rights violations are continuing unabated. The government is refusing to release scores of prisoners who are incarcerated because they called for meaningful political reforms.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was previously the subject of UA 117/12 (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/026/2012/en>) and updates.

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja, Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf
Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 232/12 Index: MDE 11/061/2012 Issue Date: 25 October 2012