

URGENT ACTION

FURTHER ARRESTS OF ACTIVISTS AND DOCTORS

A crackdown on Shi'a opposition activists and doctors continues in Bahrain, with six more people detained in the past few days. Amnesty International believes that they have been detained solely for their criticism of and involvement in the protests and that therefore they are prisoners of conscience.

Salah 'Abdullah al-khawaja, an opposition activist, was arrested on 21 March in his house. His family does not know where he is being held. He is said to have recently denounced attacks on protestors by Bahraini security forces in interviews on Arabic satellite TV channels and to have been actively involved in documenting human rights cases.

Dr 'Ali al-'Ekri, who works at al-Salmaniya hospital in Manama was detained on 17 March. His whereabouts and those of four other doctors from the same hospital - **Dr. Bassem Dhaif, Dr. Ghassan Dhaif, Dr. Nada Dhaif, Dr. Mahmood Ashgar** – are currently unknown and have not been disclosed by the Bahraini authorities. A sixth doctor who was arrested has since been released. Some of the detained doctors had given TV interviews in which they condemned the security forces both for attacking protestors and for obstructing the efforts of medical workers to assist the wounded, including by blocking access to the hospital to people in need of medical assistance and preventing medical staff from leaving the hospital.

A doctor from al-Salmaniya hospital told Amnesty International on 23 March that many doctors and nurses have been receiving anonymous sms messages in the last few days containing threats against their lives such as: 'don't go to the hospital. If you go to work you will die in a car accident'.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Express concern that the activists and doctors detained since 17 March are prisoners of conscience, detained for exercising their legitimate right to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- Urge the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally and to protect them from torture or other ill-treatment;
- Urge the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of all those detained and give them immediate access to lawyers and their families;
- Urge the authorities to refrain from continuing to arrest and harass opposition activists, health professionals and any other person exercising the rights to freedom expression, movement and assembly in Bahrain, including the right to peaceful protest.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 MAY 2011 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
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17533033

Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah bin Ahmad
Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17232661

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 first update of UA 79/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/014/2011/en>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

FURTHER ARRESTS OF ACTIVISTS AND DOCTORS

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bahrain has been gripped by popular protests inspired by those in Tunisia and Egypt since 14 February 2011, when there was a 'Day of Rage', held on the 10th anniversary of the endorsement of Bahrain's National Action Charter, a programme of reforms. Protesters have largely been drawn from the majority Shi'a community who comprise some 70 per cent of the population but complain they are discriminated against and marginalized by the ruling Sunni minority. They have been calling for a new constitution, an elected government and greater freedoms and opportunities. Seven protestors were killed by security forces in February and hundreds injured, many by rubber bullets and riot police using shotguns. There was then a temporary hiatus after the government proposed a national dialogue involving opposition activists and political associations but this broke down earlier this week after Saudi Arabia sent in one thousand troops to buttress the government and 500 police arrived from the United Arab Emirates. Bahraini security forces, backed by these foreign forces, then launched a brutal crackdown which resulted in clashes between security forces and demonstrators and further deaths and injuries. The King declared a three month state of emergency and much of Bahrain has been placed under a virtual curfew. At least two government ministers, five members of the Shura Council, an advisor to the King, and many judges in the Shari'a (al-Ja'fariya) courts, who are all Bahraini Shi'a Muslims, have resigned in protest at the use of excessive force by the Bahraini authorities.

Further information on UA: 79/11 Index: MDE 11/015/2011 Issue Date: 23 March 2011

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

