

# URGENT ACTION

## HARSH JAIL TERMS FOR OPPOSITION FIGURES

**14 opposition figures who led and participated in the demonstrations in February and March in Bahrain have been given very harsh prison terms on broadly-drawn terrorism charges, including seven life sentences. Their trial, before a military court, was unfair and politically motivated.**

On 22 June, Bahrain's National Safety Court, a military court, announced its verdict in the trial of 21 Bahrain opposition activists. Seven of them were tried in absentia. Among the 14 defendants present in court, seven were sentenced to life imprisonment. They are: **Hassan Mshaima**, **'Abdelwahab Hussain**, **'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja**, **Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace**, **Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad**, **Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad** and **Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri**. Four people, **Mohammad Hassan Jawwad**, **Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il**, **Abdullah al-Mahroos** and **'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher**, were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Two people, **Ebrahim Sharif** and **Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja**, brother of 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, were given five-year prison terms while **Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh** received a prison sentence of two years.

The session lasted for about an hour, during which the president of the court, who is a military judge, announced the verdict. The charges against the 14 included "setting up terror groups to topple the royal regime and change the constitution". Foreign observers representing a few Western embassies attended the session. Defence lawyers have up to two weeks to appeal against the verdict before the National Safety Court of Appeal, also a military court.

The trial did not meet international standards for fair trial and both the trial and the verdict seem to be politically motivated. Amnesty International is not aware of any evidence that the accused used or advocated violence. They were allowed only very restricted access to their lawyers, who were not allowed to be present when the defendants were questioned by the Military Prosecutor or interrogated by National Security Agency officials while held in pre-trial detention. Many of the defendants may be prisoners of conscience detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly; if so, they should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Following their arrests the detainees were held incommunicado and denied access to their families; some, including Ebrahim Sharif and 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, are alleged to have been tortured in detention.

### PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in Arabic or English:

- Express concern at the harsh sentences issued by the military court after what appears to have been a patently unfair and politically-motivated trial;
- Express concern that many or all of the defendants may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their legitimate exercise of the rights to freedom of expression and association, and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience being held in Bahrain;
- Urge the authorities to immediately set up an independent investigation into the alleged torture or other ill-treatment of some of the defendants, to make its results public, and bring to justice anyone responsible for torture.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 3 AUGUST 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  
Office of the Prime Minister  
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 17533033  
Salutation: Your Highness

#### Commander-in-Chief of the BDF

Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed  
Al Khalifa  
Bahrain Defence Force  
Riffa Road, Bahrain  
E-mail: dgcbdf@gmail.com  
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

This is the first update of UA 139/11. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/026/2011/en>

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