

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI TEACHERS' APPEAL GOING AHEAD

Jalila al-Salman, former vice-president of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA), was released on 1 November following her re-arrest in October. Her appeal and that of her colleague Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb, former president of the BTA, is on 11 December.

Jalila al-Salman was first arrested on 29 March. She was held in prison for over five months. During that time, she alleges, she was subjected to ill-treatment and verbal abuse. She was released on bail on 21 August, but sentenced by the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, on 25 September to three years in prison. She was not present in court at the time. She was rearrested on 18 October and subsequently released on bail on 1 November pending an appeal hearing. Her colleague **Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb** was tried and sentenced by the same court to 10 years in prison. He remains in prison, having been detained since his arrest. Both were convicted of using their positions 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, among other charges.

Both made appeals against their sentences, which will be heard by the High Criminal Court of Appeal on 11 December. Her lawyer has reportedly said he will ask the appeal court also to lift an outstanding travel ban on Jalila al-Salman. Amnesty International believes Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman have not used or advocated violence. They appear to have been targeted solely for their leadership of the BTA and for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. As civilians they should not have been tried and sentenced by a military court.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Express concern that Jalila al Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb were sentenced by a military court after what appears to have been an unfair and politically motivated trial;
- Express concern that both may be prisoners of conscience who have been convicted on criminal charges solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including criticism of the Bahraini government, in which case they should be released
- Urge the authorities to ensure that their appeal meets international standards of fair trial. This means the court must start a fresh investigation, it must dismiss statements obtained under torture and the court must hear defendants and allow defence lawyers to bring witnesses;
- Urge the authorities to immediately set up an independent investigation into their alleged torture or other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 DECEMBER 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: +973 176 64 587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama,
Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 33 033
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al
Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs,
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama,
Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 31 284
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 fifth update of UA 227/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/057/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When she was detained earlier this year, on 29 March, 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, 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.

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb was detained on 6 April 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 the trial on 7 June. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb has remained in prison since his arrest.

Together with Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman, scores of health workers, opposition activists, human rights activists and others been tried before military courts in Bahrain. Many of those convicted are now facing appeals before civilian courts. Months have passed since scores of people demonstrated at the Pearl Roundabout in Manama in February and March 2011, but the human rights situation in Bahrain is still very grim. Hundreds of people have been detained in connection with the anti-government protests and there have been serious allegations of torture. At least 2,500 others have been suspended or fired from their jobs.

Fourteen opposition figures who led and participated in the demonstrations in February and March were sentenced on 22 June to very harsh prison terms, including seven life sentences, on broadly worded terrorism charges. Their sentences were upheld on 28 September by the National Safety Court of Appeal, a military court.

On 29 June, the King decreed that all cases linked to the February-March 2011 protests would be transferred to ordinary civilian courts; he then issued a further decree on 18 August ordering that the National Safety Court of First Instance continue to deal with felony (serious criminal) cases, while misdemeanour (less serious) cases would be referred to the civilian courts.

Name: Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman

Gender m/f: Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb, M. Jalila al-Salman, F

Further information on UA: 227/11 Index: MDE 11/059/2011 Issue Date: 14 November 2011