

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 11/03/96

UA 29/96

Fear of torture / Legal concern

8 February 1996

BAHRAINAhmad Mansur 'Ali Ahmad, administrator in private company
Ahmad al-Shamlan, aged 54, lawyer

Amnesty International fears that the two men named above may be facing torture in incommunicado detention. Ahmad Mansur Ali Ahmad has been held in al-Qal'a prison since his arrest on 24 January 1996, while the whereabouts of Ahmad al-Shamlan, arrested on 7 February, remain unknown. Amnesty International is concerned that the two men may be held solely for their non-violent political activities.

Since his first week of detention, which was approved by a judge, Ahmad Mansur 'Ali Ahmad has been held in administrative detention under an interior ministerial decree, which permits detention without charge for up to three years. His detention may be connected solely with his peaceful political activities. A well-known Shi'a non-religious political activist, Ahmad Mansur 'Ali Ahmad is a member of the Petition Council, a group made up of 14 members representing different political tendencies, including Shi'a and Sunni religious scholars and non-religious political activists. In 1994, the Council presented a petition signed by 25,000 people to the Emir 'Issa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, calling for the restoration of parliament, dissolved in 1975, and the reinstatement of the 1973 constitution. A number of the petition's sponsors were later dismissed from their jobs or banned from travel.

Ahmad al-Shamlan, a Sunni lawyer who is also a member of the Petition Council, was reportedly arrested at his house at 5am on 7 February 1996. Security officials searched both his home and his office. No reason was given for his arrest, but on 8 February the daily Bahraini *Al-Ayam* newspaper quoted a security source accusing Ahmad al-Shamlan of "inciting crimes... of violence and sabotage." The source also claimed that Ahmad al-Shamlan was in contact with "extremist, terrorist parties outside the country".

Some opposition activists and lawyers believe Ahmad al-Shamlan's arrest may be connected to a public statement made on 3 February by the Petition Council in which it called on the Bahraini Government to restore parliament, re-instate the 1973 constitution and release political prisoners. The statement, which also denounced recent violence, was published by at least two Arabic-language dailies, the London-based *Al-Quds Al-Arabi* and *Al-Arab*.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ahmad Mansur Ali Ahmad and Ahmad al-Shamlan are among hundreds of people detained during January and February 1996 after clashes between security forces and demonstrators protesting against the closure of certain mosques where prominent Shi'a clerics had been calling on the government to restore democratic rights.

Among the detainees are Shaikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri and Abdel-Wahab Hussein, also members of the Petition Council. They and six other prominent clerics and leaders were arrested on 22 January 1996, about four months after their release from detention following unrest in 1994 and early 1995 (see UA 26/96, MDE 11/02/96, 2 February 1996).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic, or your own language or your own language:

- seeking assurances that Ahmad Mansur 'Ali Ahmad and Ahmad al-Shamlan are being treated humanely in accordance with international human rights standards

and urging that they be granted immediate access to lawyers, relatives and independent doctors if necessary;
- calling for the current whereabouts of Ahmad al-Shamlan to be made known, and for the reasons for the arrest of both men, and details of any charges and trial proceedings against them, to be clarified;
- calling for their immediate and unconditional release if they are being held solely for their non-violent political activities.

If possible, please organize appeals from lawyers.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness
Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of His Highness the Amir
P.O. Box 555
The Amiri Court, Rifa'a Palace, Bahrain
Telexes: 8666 Qasar BN; 8500 Qasar BN
Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +973 668884
Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency
Shaikh Muhammad Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 8333 ALAMAN BN
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +973 276765 or 290526
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman al Khalifa
Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Faxes: +973 533033
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 March 1996.