

URGENT ACTION

JAIL SENTENCE FOR 'INSULTING THE KING'

Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja was sentenced on 4 December to three years' imprisonment and a heavy fine, for ripping up a picture of the King in court. The verdicts in a further three cases against her will be issued on 9 December.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was sentenced on 4 December to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 3,000 Bahraini Dinars (BD - about US\$8,000) by a Lower Criminal Court in the capital, Manama, which had convicted her of "insulting the King". The court also set a 100BD bail: if she pays this and lodges an appeal, her sentence will only be implemented if the Appeal Court rules against her. Zainab Al-Khawaja was not present in court when the verdict was announced as she was still recovering after giving birth on 27 November. She will be appealing her sentence.

Zainab Al-Khawaja is the daughter of prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, an activist who is serving a life sentence. She had been arrested on 14 October for tearing up a picture of the King while appearing before the High Criminal Court of Appeal in relation to two separate cases. During the hearing she took out a picture of the King of Bahrain from her handbag, tore it up and handed it to the judge who ordered her arrest. She was released on 19 November following a court order.

The High Criminal Court is scheduled to issue its verdicts on 9 December in three other cases against Zainab Al-Khawaja. Two of these cases relate to "destroying government property" after she ripped up a picture of Bahrain's king while she was detained in 'Issa Town Detention Centre for Women on 4 and 6 May 2012 and the third case is on the charge of "insulting a police officer".

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

- Urging the authorities to quash Zainab Al-Khawaja's convictions and drop all outstanding charges against her, as they would make her a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to repeal all legislation that criminalizes the right to freedom of expression and respect and protect the right to freedom of expression.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 JANUARY 2015 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
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
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In February 2014, the authorities toughened penalties for "insulting the King". The offence is now punishable by up to seven years in prison and a fine of up to 10,000BD (about US\$26,500). The sentence could be tougher if the offence happens in the presence of the King. Under Article 214 of Bahrain's Penal Code, "A prison sentence shall be the penalty for any person who offends the emir of the country [the King], the national flag or emblem". This violates the right to freedom of expression.

Zainab Al-Khawaja is the daughter of prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, who is serving a life sentence for his activism.

Zainab Al-Khawaja has been arrested and released several times since December 2011. She was arrested on 27 February 2013, and spent nearly a year in prison serving several short sentences for an array of charges. These included "destroying government property", "insulting a policewoman", "illegal gathering and rioting" and "inciting hatred against the regime". She was last arrested on 14 October for tearing up a picture of the King while appearing before the High Criminal Court of Appeal in relation to two separate cases. During the hearing and according to witnesses, she said: "I am the daughter of a proud and free man. My mother brought me into this world free, and I will give birth to a free baby boy even if it is inside our prisons. It is my right, and my responsibility as a free person, to protest against oppression and oppressors."

Zainab Al-Khawaja was previously the subject of UA 117/12 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/037/2012/en>), UA 232/12 (<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/061/2012/en>) and UA 259/14 (<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/039/2014/en>).

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja

Gender m/f: f

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