

URGENT ACTION

HUNGER STRIKING ACTIVIST'S HEALTH FAILING

The health of **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, one of the 14 imprisoned activists in Bahrain, has deteriorated as he passes his 64th day on hunger strike. The authorities refused to release him and the other 13 opposition activists waiting for a hearing before the Court of Cassation on 23 April. Amnesty International is concerned that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja might die in detention.

The Court of Cassation was scheduled to review the verdict and sentences imposed last year by a military court on 14 opposition activists on 2 April. However on that day the court decided to postpone the hearing until 23 April and rejected the request from their lawyers to release the 14 on bail. They are all prisoners of conscience held for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association: they were sentenced in June 2011 after an unfair trial by a military court to up to life in prison.

One of them, **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, a dual Bahraini-Danish national, is continuing the hunger strike he started on 8 February 2012. His health has deteriorated dramatically since he decided on around 29 March to start reducing the doses of glucose and minerals he was taking until he was drinking water only. During the last week he was first transferred to the Ministry of Interior Hospital and then to the Military Hospital, where he remains. The authorities have not allowed visits from his family or lawyers since 5 April, although he was allowed to speak briefly to his wife on the phone on 10 April and a group of medical experts mandated by the authorities visited him some days ago. The Danish ambassador also announced he visited him on 10 April for 20 minutes and that he was very weak but conscious, he also added his condition was critical. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's lawyer asked to visit him on several occasions, most recently on 10 April, but has received no answer. Because any decision to release him might have to wait until his next hearing before the Court of Cassation on 23 April, and because he intends to pursue his hunger strike until he is released, Amnesty International fears that he might be at risk of death.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Urge the Bahraini authorities to grant Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja immediate access to his family and lawyer;
- Urge them to release all 14 opposition activists immediately and unconditionally, since they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to order an immediate independent investigation into the 14's allegations of torture, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 MAY 2012 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
+973 17532839
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17536343
+973 17531284
Website: www.moj.gov.bh
Salutation: Your Excellency

** Please note that faxes are most usually available in the morning (GMT+3) **

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. This is the sixth update of UA 139/12. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/046/2011/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 14 opposition activists were arrested between 17 March and 9 April 2011. Most were arrested in the middle of the night by groups of security officers who raided their houses and took them to an unknown location, where they were held incommunicado for weeks. Many of the 14 alleged they were tortured during their first few days of detention when they were being interrogated by officers from the National Security Agency (NSA). None of the 14 was allowed to see their lawyers during NSA interrogations just after they were arrested. Some saw their lawyers during questioning by the military prosecutor ahead of the trial, while others were only allowed to see them during the first court hearing in May 2011, which was the first time any of the activists saw their families following their arrest.

On 22 June, Bahrain's National Safety Court, a military court, announced its verdict and sentenced them, to between two years and life in prison on charges including "setting up terror groups to topple the royal regime and change the constitution". Seven of the 14 activists were sentenced to life imprisonment: 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.

An Amnesty International observer was present at one of the appeal sessions, on 6 September. The observer concluded that no evidence was presented in court proving that the 14 had committed a crime and used or advocated violence. On 28 September 2011, in a session that lasted only a few minutes, the National Safety Court of Appeal, a military appeal court, upheld all the convictions and sentences imposed on the 14.

Names: 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, Ebrahim Sharif, Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja, Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 139/11 Index: MDE 11/023/2012 Issue Date: 12 April 2012