

URGENT ACTION

BAIL SET FOR PROMINENT ACTIVIST BUT NO RELEASE

On 20 May a Bahraini court granted bail to the prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab. However the charges of ‘insulting a national institution’ have not been dropped and, despite paying the bail amount, he remains in detention awaiting another court hearing on a separate charge. This hearing is scheduled for 28 May.

On 20 May a lower criminal court in Bahrain granted the prominent human rights activist **Nabeel Rajab** bail of BD300 (800 USD) in connection with his charge of “insulting a national institution” on Twitter. However the charge has not been dropped and on 23 May the case was adjourned until 24 June. Despite the fact that Nabeel Rajab has paid the bail, he remains in detention because he still faces a separate trial for allegedly calling on people to join him in illegal marches. A hearing for this charge has been postponed until 28 May. A travel ban has also been imposed on Nabeel Rajab.

Nabeel Rajab was arrested on 5 May on the charge of “insulting a national institution” via Twitter after he had posted comments on the social networking site. On 16 May, he appeared before a lower criminal court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. He reportedly told the court that the charge was vindictive, and explained that the decision to arrest and try him was political. He reportedly said: “I only practised my right to free expression. I did not commit a crime. The decision to arrest me and put me on trial was a political decision”.

Nabeel Rajab is the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and the Director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights. He has been targeted previously for his pro-democracy and human rights work, alongside other activists who have called for peaceful anti-government protests in recent months. Nabeel Rajab organised a protest calling for the release of political prisoners on 6 February 2012. During the protest, he was attacked by riot police who punched him several times in the face, head and back. He said: “I fell on the ground but they continued to beat me – they even stamped on me and kicked me”.

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

- Expressing concern that Nabeel Rajab has been detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and urging his immediate and unconditional release;
- Urging the Bahraini authorities to protect him from torture or other ill-treatment and calling for an investigation into the reports that he was beaten during a protest in February 2012. Anyone found responsible for abuses should be brought to justice promptly and fairly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 JULY 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 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

Public Prosecutor
Mr 'Ali al-Bu'ainein
Public Prosecution Office
P.O. Box 450, al-Manama,
Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 0884
Salutation: Dear Mr 'Ali al-Bu'ainein

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 first update of UA 128/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/029/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 26 April Nabeel Rajab had received a summons for questioning at the Public Prosecutor's Office in connection with a complaint made against him by the Ministry of Interior. He did not go because he was about to travel abroad. Nabeel Rajab was charged with "insulting a national institution" (the Ministry of Interior) in his tweets. He told the prosecutor that all tweets published in his account are his own, but he refused to answer other questions. He was arrested at Manama airport upon his return to [Bahrain on 5 May and remains in detention.

The human rights crisis in Bahrain is not over. Despite the authorities' claims to the contrary, state violence against those who oppose the Al Khalifa family rule continues, and in practice, not much has changed in the country since the brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters in February and March 2011.

The Bahraini authorities have been vociferous about their intention to introduce reforms and learn lessons from events in February and March 2011. In November 2011, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) set up by Shaikh King Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa, submitted a report of its investigation into human rights violations committed in connection with the anti-government protests. The report concluded that the authorities had committed gross human rights violations with impunity, including excessive use of force against protesters, widespread torture and other ill-treatment of protesters, unfair trials and unlawful killings. The report also urged the government to immediately establish an independent body made up of representatives of civil society, the opposition and the government; to oversee the implementation of the BICI's recommendations; to usher in legislative reforms to ensure laws are in line with international human rights standards; and to bring to account those responsible for abuses.

So far, however, the government's response has only scratched the surface of these issues. Reforms have been piecemeal, perhaps aiming to appease Bahrain's international partners, and have failed to provide real accountability and justice for the victims. Human rights violations are continuing unabated. The government is refusing to release scores of prisoners who are incarcerated because they called for meaningful political reforms, and is failing to address the Shi'a majority's deeply-seated sense of discrimination and political marginalization, which has exacerbated sectarian divisions in the country.

Name: Nabeel Rajab

Gender m/f: Male

Further information on UA: 128/12 Index: MDE 11/033/2012 Issue Date: 23 May 2012