

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT BAHRAINI ACTIVIST IMPRISONED

Prominent Bahraini human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, was arrested on 9 July at his home to serve the three-month prison sentence imposed on him on that day by the Lower Criminal Court which convicted him of libel. He is a prisoner of conscience.

On 9 July, Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, issued its verdict against **Nabeel Rajab** and sentenced him to three months' imprisonment – 21 days of which he has already served - after convicting him of libel. Nabeel Rajab chose not to attend the hearing. He was arrested at his home by eight masked police officers with an arrest warrant and who were supported by a helicopter about three hours after the verdict was issued. For around six hours his family and lawyers did not know where he had been taken. They were later informed by the police that he was held in al-Jaw prison, in Manama. His lawyer immediately lodged an appeal which is scheduled to be heard on 18 July.

Nabeel Rajab is charged with libel for “publicly vilifying the people of al-Muharraq and questioning their patriotism with disgraceful expressions posted via social networking websites.” In one of his tweets dated 2 June 2012 Nabeel Rajab addressed the Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, following his visit to the area, and wrote: “Khalifa: Leave the al-Muharraq alley ways, their sheikhs and their elderly, everyone knows that you have no popularity there; and if it was not for their need for money they would not have come out to welcome you - when will you bow out?” He was arrested on 6 June following a complaint by several people from al-Muharraq district and charged with libel on 14 June then released on 27 June.

Nabeel Rajab faces three further court cases. The first relates to a charge for “illegal gathering” and “disturbing public order” for calling for demonstration in Manama against the government on 6 February without prior notification. The next hearing for this case is scheduled for 26 September. Secondly, he is facing a second charge of “illegal gathering” brought against him on 6 June. The next hearing will take place on 16 July. Thirdly, he has appealed his conviction of “insulting a national institution” in his tweets, passed on 28 June by Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court. The appeal is due to be heard on 27 November.

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

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab immediately and unconditionally, as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to drop all other charges against Nabeel Rajab and to overturn all convictions which are related solely to his legitimate exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urging them to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression. and assembly and ensure that all human rights organizations and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without hindrance;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 AUGUST 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

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 6343

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. This is the fifth update of UA 128/12. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/042/2012/en

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT BAHRAINI ACTIVIST IMPRISONED

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bahraini human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, organized a protest in Manama calling for the release of political prisoners on 6 February 2012. During the protest, he was assaulted 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."

On 26 April Nabeel Rajab received a summons for questioning by 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. He was arrested on arrival at Manama airport on 5 May upon his return to Bahrain. 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 were his own, but he refused to answer other questions. On 16 May, he appeared before a lower criminal court in Manama and apparently told the court that the charge was vindictive, explaining that the decision to arrest and try him was political: "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."

The Bahraini authorities have publicly stated their intention to introduce reforms and learn lessons from events in February and March 2011, when they cracked down on anti-government protesters. In November 2011, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), set up by the king, Shaikh 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 establish immediately 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; to bring to account those responsible for abuses; to release all prisoners of conscience and to conduct investigations into allegations of torture.

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. Despite the authorities' claims to the contrary, abuses continue to be committed against those who oppose the Al Khalifa family's rule. 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: M

Further information on UA: 128/12 Index: MDE 11/044/2012 Issue Date: 10 July 2012