

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST FACING TRIAL IN BAHRAIN DETAINED

Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja was arrested on 2 August 2012 and has been charged for allegedly tearing up a picture of Bahrain's King. Her detention was extended on 4 August to seven more days pending investigation.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was arrested in the evening of 2 August 2012 when she was protesting alone outside the capital, Manama, at al-Qadam roundabout in Budaya road, Two days later her detention was extended for a further seven days and she was charged with "destroying government property", as she had allegedly torn up a picture of Bahrain's King while detained in May.

In the past nine months Zainab Al-Khawaja has been arrested and released several times. She has been put on trial several times for "illegal gathering" and "insulting officials". She is still facing three more trials. The first is an appeal hearing on a charge of "insulting an officer" in a military hospital. She had been acquitted of this charge on 2 May but the prosecution appealed and the appeal hearing is now under way; the next session will be on 16 October. She faces two further trials: the first trial together with Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf, for "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime" has been postponed until 5 September. The second, for obstructing the traffic during a protest has been postponed until 1 November.

Zainab al-Khawaja was reportedly injured in the leg when she was hit by a teargas canister fired by riot police breaking up a protest she was monitoring a few weeks ago. It is not clear whether she has been given any medical treatment in detention. Amnesty International considers Zainab Al-Khawaja to be a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Expressing concern that Zainab al-Khawaja is held solely for exercising her rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and urging the Bahraini authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to drop all charges against her;;
- Urging them to protect her from torture and other ill-treatment, and ensure that she is granted any medical attention she may require.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 SEPTEMBER 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
Email, via website:

http://www.interior.gov.bh/complaints_en.aspx

Twitter: @moi_Bahrain

Salutation: Your Excellency

Public Prosecutor

'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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zainab Al-Khawaja is a Bahraini activist: her father, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, is one of 13 prominent opposition activists sentenced by a military court to harsh prison terms in June 2011.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was first arrested in December 2011 and released a few days later. She was charged with "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime" and her trial is ongoing. On 21 April 2012 she was arrested again, after sitting down on a highway close to the Financial Harbour in protest at her father's detention and the general poor human rights situation in Bahrain. She was released on 29 May after paying a fine of 200 Bahrain Dinar (around US \$530) for insulting a police officer, but she still faces an appeal hearing for "insulting an officer" in a military hospital and another trial, for obstructing the traffic during a protest, has been postponed until 1 November.

The human rights crisis in Bahrain is ongoing. Despite the authorities' claims to the contrary, state violence against those who oppose the Al Khalifa family rule is continuing, 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 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 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; and to bring to justice 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 deep-seated sense of discrimination and political marginalization, which has exacerbated sectarian divides in the country.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was previously the subject of UA 117/12 (MDE 11/026/2012) and updates.

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja

Gender m/f: f

UA: 232/12 Index: MDE 11/047/2012 Issue Date: 6 August 2012