

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN ACTIVIST SENTENCED IN BAHRAIN

Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja was sentenced to two months imprisonment by the Lower Criminal Court in Manama on 26 September charged with tearing up a picture of Bahrain's King. She has been in detention since 2 August 2012.

On 26 September 2012 the Lower Criminal Court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, sentenced **Zainab Al-Khawaja** to two months imprisonment on charges of "destroying government property", as she had allegedly tore up a picture of Bahrain's King while detained in May. She was arrested on 2 August while protesting alone at al-Qadam roundabout in Budaya road, outside of Manama. Her detention has been extended several times.

Zainab Al-Khawaja may be released on 30 September, as she would have served the full sentence imposed. However, she still faces 13 trials - eight trials are ongoing and five cases are being investigated by the Prosecution – on charges including "illegal gathering" and "insulting officials". She will appear in court on 4 October on the charge of participating in an "illegal gathering" and entering the "restricted zone" on the Pearl roundabout. On 10 October she is due to appear in court, together with **Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf**, for "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime", for which they had been previously detained for several days in December 2011. An appeal hearing has also been scheduled for 16 October in relation to a charge of "insulting an officer" in a military hospital. She had been acquitted of this charge on 2 May but the Prosecution appealed the sentence. And finally on 1 November she will appear in court on charge of obstructing the traffic during a protest and "illegal gathering" at the al-Sobay' roundabout.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Expressing concern that Zainab Al-Khawaja is held solely for peacefully 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 and to overturn all convictions since they are related solely to her legitimate exercise of her rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- 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 7 NOVEMBER 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
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 first update of UA: 232/12. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/047/2012/en>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

WOMAN ACTIVIST SENTENCED IN BAHRAIN

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) on the count of 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, the human rights situation in the country remains dire 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, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/026/2012/en>) and updates.

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja, Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf,
Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 232/12 Index: MDE 11/056/2012 Issue Date: 26 September 2012