

# URGENT ACTION

## ACTIVIST ARRESTED AGAIN IN BAHRAIN

**Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja was arrested on 9 December and her detention has been extended twice. She was also sentenced the following day to one month's imprisonment in relation to earlier charges of entering a restricted area and participating in an illegal gathering. This is her fifth arrest and detention since December 2011.**

**Zainab Al-Khawaja** was arrested on 9 December after holding a photograph of an injured protester while attempting to visit him at the Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. On 10 December the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO) ordered her detention for another week pending investigation and she was charged with "inciting hatred against the regime". On 13 December the PPO extended her detention until 27 December.

On 10 December the Lower Criminal Court in Manama sentenced Zainab Al-Khawaja to one month's imprisonment for entering a restricted area (the Pearl Roundabout) and participating in an illegal gathering on 12 February 2012. The verdict has, however, been suspended pending a ruling by the Court of Appeal in the case and following a bail payment of 100 Bahraini dinars (around US\$265).

Zainab Al-Khawaja is still facing several other trials. On 26 December the Lower Criminal Court is set to issue its verdict in the case against her and **Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf** on charges of "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime", for which they had been previously detained for several days in December 2011. The court hearing into the case of "obstructing the traffic on 21 April 2012 near the Financial Harbour" and "insulting a police officer" has been scheduled for 27 December. Other court hearings have been scheduled for the new year.

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

- Expressing concern that Zainab Al-Khawaja is held solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression, 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 24 JANUARY 2013 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 (keep trying)  
**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 check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 232/12. Further information: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/061/2012/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zainab Al-Khawaja is the daughter of activist and prisoner of conscience, 'Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja. She has been arrested and released on bail four times between December 2011 and October 2012. She was first arrested in December 2011, together with another activist, Mas'uma Sayyid Sharaf, before being released a few days later. They were charged with "illegal gathering" and "inciting hatred against the regime" after police dispersed a peaceful protest at a roundabout outside Manama using tear gas and sound bombs. When the police arrested her she was the only person remaining at the roundabout and she was sitting down peacefully. Video footage of her arrest shows how she was handcuffed and dragged by her handcuffs along the ground to a police car a few metres away by two policewomen, causing her head to repeatedly bang on the floor. After her release Zainab Al-Khawaja told Amnesty International that once she reached the police station, on the outskirts of Manama, she was punched in the head and kicked, and that Mas'uma Sayyid Sharaf was kicked and spat on.

On 21 April 2012 Zainab Al-Khawaja was arrested again, after staging a sit-down protest 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 dinars (around US\$530) for allegedly insulting a police officer. On 28 June she was injured while monitoring police behaviour during a protest. She was re-arrested on 2 August and sentenced at the end of the month to two months in prison for "destroying public property" after she tore up a picture of the King. She was released again on bail on 2 October pending other trials, but re-arrested and held for several hours on 20 October before being released again on bail.

The human rights situation in Bahrain has markedly deteriorated over recent months, with repressive practices increasingly entrenched and government disregard for the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) becoming more flagrant. The BICI was set up to investigate widespread human rights violations during the 2011 uprising. The blanket ban on all protests (issued in late October 2012) and the increasing harassment and arrest of human rights activists, has meant hope for an improved human rights situation in Bahrain is fading.

The BICI, appointed by Royal Order on 29 June 2011, included five renowned international legal and human rights experts, charged with investigating and reporting on human rights violations committed in connection to the 2011 protests. At the launch of the BICI report in November 2011, the government publicly committed itself to implementing the recommendations set out in the report. The report recounted the government's response to the mass protests and documented wide-ranging human rights abuses. Among its key recommendations, the report called on the government to bring to account those responsible for human rights violations, including torture and excessive use of force, and to carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture.

Later, during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) sessions held in May and September 2012 before the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, the government of Bahrain tried to evade criticism by relying almost exclusively on the promise to abide by the BICI process. During the May session, the Bahraini delegation stated that "a great number of BICI recommendations have been completely implemented while others are currently being implemented". During the final review in September, the government said that it accepted more than 140 of BICI's 176 recommendations, including those calling for the release of prisoners of conscience, investigations into allegations of torture, and prosecution of those found responsible for human rights violations. For further information see: *Bahrain: Reform shelved, repression unleashed* (Index: MDE 11/062/2012, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/062/2012/en>).

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

Further information on UA: 232/12 Index: MDE 11/069/2012 Issue Date: 13 December 2012