

AI Index: PRE 01/533/2011  
18 October 2011

## **Fears for Bahraini teacher after pre-dawn arrest**

There are fears for the safety of a former vice-president of the Bahrain Teacher's Association after she was arrested in heavy-handed fashion before dawn this morning after recently speaking out about earlier abuses.

Jalila al-Salman was taken from her home in Bahrain by a force of more than 30 security officials, including riot police, who arrived in seven vehicles. The officials reportedly said that they were enforcing a court order for her arrest though they refused to produce a formal arrest warrant.

Last month, Jalila al-Salman was convicted on charges that included attempting to overthrow the Bahrain government after a trial before the military National Safety Court, although she is a civilian. Her appeal is due to be heard in a civilian court on 1 December.

"The manner in which Jalila al-Salman was arrested this morning appears to have been intended to intimidate her and her family and to put them through another terrifying ordeal," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Director.

"She has told us how she was previously ill-treated and verbally abused after she was arrested in the middle of the night by armed officials following popular protests in Bahrain last March. This latest action by the security forces inevitably raises renewed concerns about her safety in detention."

"The Bahraini authorities also need to explain why Jalila al-Salman has been arrested at a time when others who are waiting for their promised civilian court appeals to be heard have been allowed their release on bail."

"She does not present a serious flight risk but has continued to speak out about her own experiences in detention and the plight of others, leading us to fear that this is the reason for the action taken against her this morning."

Jalila al-Salman was sentenced to three years of imprisonment on 25 September. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb, former president of the Bahrain Teacher's Association, was tried with her and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

The charges included using their positions within the BTA to call for teachers' strike, organize marches and demonstrations, incite "hatred of the regime" and seek its overthrow by force, and their trial was unfair.

In recent weeks, Jalila al-Salman has given a media interview and spoken at a conference about the human rights situation in Bahrain.

Amnesty International said that it feared both Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb may be imprisoned solely on account of their legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression,

association and assembly, in which case they should be released immediately and unconditionally and their convictions should be quashed.

“If their civilian court appeals are to go ahead, then there must be a totally new investigation, including into the defendants’ allegations that they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated in pre-trial detention and forced to sign statements incriminating themselves, and any officials found responsible for such abuses must be brought to justice.”