

TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

APPEAL FOR ACTION

7TH UPDATE: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN BAHRAIN RELEASED ON BAIL AFTER TRIAL BY A MILITARY COURT

The trial of 20 Bahraini health professionals accused of felonies resumed on 7 September before a military court. All the remaining health professionals in prison were released on bail at the end of their trial session on 7 September. The court adjourned the trial until 26 September, when it will give its verdict in the case. Amnesty International believes that if the 20 health workers are found guilty they could be possible prisoners of conscience. Their trial so far has not met international standards for fair trial.

All 20 people are part of the original group of 48 health workers who were arrested in March and April 2011 and include paramedics, nurses and doctors, mostly from al-Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama. The 48 people were previously split into two groups, one of 20 health workers accused of felonies, or more serious offences, and the other of 28 health workers accused of misdemeanours, or less serious offences. All those accused of misdemeanours had been released on bail by the end of June. Trial proceedings in relation to the two groups started in early June before the National Safety Court of First Instance (a military court).

On 7 September the trial of 20 health workers accused of felony resumed before the National Safety Court of First Instance. The trial was attended by an Amnesty International observer and representatives of the French, British and US embassies, in addition to observers from two Bahraini NGOs. Amnesty International is concerned about the fact that during the trial session the president of the court did not give the defence witnesses enough time to provide their testimonies, frequently interrupted them and sometimes prevented them from giving evidence. The judge agreed to refer two defendants for medical examination, as requested by defence lawyers, but, as far as Amnesty International is aware, did not respond to a request made by lawyers of the defendants that the court listen to each defendant's testimony, including testimony regarding their treatment while in custody. Amnesty International is concerned that the judge, by announcing that the verdict in the trial would be given at the next session on 26 September, has effectively refused this request and that this testimony will not be heard by the court.

After families and observers left the court at the end of the session on 7 September a court clerk informed the lawyers that the court had decided to release on bail the rest of the defendants still remaining in prison. However, the charges against them have not been dropped. Amnesty International is urging the Bahraini authorities to immediately stop trials of civilians before military courts.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:

- Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;
- Expressing concern that the 20 health workers will continue to be tried before a military court whose proceedings do not meet international standards for fair trial;
- Urging the authorities to carry out an immediate and independent investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment against some of the health professionals, as well as against other detainees in Bahrain, to make the results public, and to bring to justice any officials responsible for the torture or other ill-treatment of detainees;
- Urging the authorities to ensure that confessions obtained under torture are not submitted or used as evidence in the trial of the 20 health professionals or any other trials in Bahrain;

- Expressing concern that, despite the serious charges brought against them, these health professionals appear to have been brought to trial solely because of their peaceful efforts to provide medical assistance to people injured by government security forces during popular protests in February and March, in which case those held in custody would be prisoners of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 SEPTEMBER 2011 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 17664587

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Sheikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khlaifa

Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs,

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa

P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain

Fax: +973 175 31 284

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Social Development, Health and Human Rights

Dr Fatima bint Mohammed Al Balooshi

Ministry of Social Development

P.O. Box 32868, Isa Town, Bahrain

Fax: +973 17101955

Salutation: Your Excellency

Please send copies of any letters you receive to the International Secretariat, attention of the Health Team, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, or email: healthdetention@amnesty.org

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is the 7th update of a Health Professional Action on Bahrain. For the original action and earlier updates, please see the documents with the following index numbers: MDE 11/008/2011 (25 February 2011), MDE 11/22/2011 (26 April), MDE 11/25/2011 (11 May), MDE 11/30/2011 (8 June), MDE 11/33/2011 (14 June), MDE 11/38/2011 (8 July) and MDE 11/044/2011 (25 August).