

URGENT ACTION

MEDICS' APPEAL POSTPONED UNTIL 9 JANUARY

The appeal hearing before a civilian court of 20 Bahraini health professionals sentenced by a military court has been postponed until 9 January.

The **20 health professionals** were sentenced on 29 September 2011 to between five and 15 years in prison, by a military court, in connection with popular anti-government protests in February and March. On 28 November they attended the second hearing of their appeal before the High Criminal Court of Appeal. An Amnesty International delegation was present in court, as were delegations of other NGOs and foreign media.

The 20 continue to face other charges, including: "possession of unlicensed weapons", "occupation of a public building" (Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama, Bahrain's capital), and "calling for the overthrow of the regime by force. On 28 November the prosecution presented some weapons, including knives, chains, swords, two Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition as incriminating evidence, but did not explain how those weapons had reportedly been used or how they were linked to any defendant. These weapons had not been produced by the Military Prosecution during the trial before the National Safety Court. The prosecution intended to play a DVD in court with testimonies of some witnesses accusing the doctors, but the defence lawyers objected and told the court that they too had documentary evidence to support their case, which should be heard at the same time. The court agreed that both defence and prosecution should be able to provide their evidence in the next hearing on 9 January. The defence lawyers also complained about the fact that the weapons were presented in court without having been listed in any record and there seemed to be a discrepancy between the number of bullets presented in court and the number the prosecution had said it would present.

The hearing has been postponed to 9 January and the defence lawyers have asked the court to lift the travel ban imposed on most of the doctors, to investigate allegations of torture used against the defendants, to allow defendants to be reinstated in their jobs, to allow lawyers to use the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report in their defence and to be given a list of the weapons presented as evidence by the prosecution.

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

- Urge the Bahraini authorities to ensure that the appeal complies with international standards for fair trial;
- Express concern that if imprisoned, the defendants may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely on account of peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to launch immediately an independent and impartial investigation into the alleged torture or other ill-treatment of some of the defendants, publish its results and bring anyone found responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 JANUARY 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: +973 176 64 587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 33 033
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 31 284
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 296/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/058/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 20 health professionals on trial and sentenced on 29 September are among 48 health professionals from the Salmaniya Medical Complex who were arrested in March and April 2011. Some of them had been vocal in giving interviews to foreign journalists and accusing the government of abuses against protesters. All were held incommunicado for several weeks. In most cases their families did not know their whereabouts for most of this time and were only allowed to see them during the first session of their trial before the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, which started on 6 June. The 48 were split into two groups on 13 June: 20 of them were accused of felonies, while the rest were accused of misdemeanours (less serious offences). Many of them started hunger strike in protest at their detention and trial and were gradually released on bail in August and September 2011.

Thirteen of the medics - 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri, Nader Mohammed Hassan Dewani, Ahmed 'Abdulaziz Omran Hassan, Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab, 'Abdulkhaleq 'Ali Hussain al-'Oraibi, Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Bassim Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif, Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim, Sayed Marhoon Majid al-Wedaei, Roula Jassim Mohammed al-Saffar, Nada Sa'eed 'Abdelnabi Dhaif, 'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi and Qassim Mohammad 'Omran - were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Hassan Mohammed Sa'eed Nasser and Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. Fatima Salman Hassan Haji, Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far, Najah Khalil Ibrahim Hassan, Zahra Mahdi al-Sammak and Mohammed Faeq 'Ali Al Shehab were sentenced to five years in prison. All of them are now released on bail.

On 29 June, the King decreed that all cases linked to the February-March 2011 protests would be transferred to ordinary civilian courts; he then issued a further decree on 18 August (Decree 28/20011) ordering that the National Safety Court of First Instance continue to deal with felony (serious criminal) cases, while misdemeanour (less serious) cases would be referred to civilian courts. In early October trials before these courts stopped and since then all trials have been heard before civilian courts.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) was established by Royal Decree on 29 June to investigate abuses during the March/February protests and other abuses in the following months. The full report was published on 23 November.

Hundreds of cases were covered in the report, including beatings of protesters by security forces, mass arbitrary arrests of mainly Shi'a opposition activists and widespread torture, with five deaths resulting from torture in custody. In all, at least 46 people have died in connection with the protests, including five security personnel. The report urged the Bahraini government to immediately establish 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 account those responsible for abuses.

Names: 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri (m), Nader Mohammed Hassan Dewani (m), Ahmed 'Abdulaziz Omran Hassan (m), Mahmood Asghar 'Abdulwahab (m), 'Abdulkhaleq 'Ali Hussain al-'Oraibi (m), Ghassan Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif (m), Bassim Ahmed 'Ali Dhaif (m), Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim (m), Sayed Marhoon Majid al-Wedaei (m); Roula Jassim Mohammed al-Saffar (f), Nada Sa'eed 'Abdelnabi Dhaif (f), 'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi (m), Qassim Mohammad 'Omran (m) Hassan Mohammed Sa'eed Nasser (m), Sa'eed Mothaher Habib Al Samahiji (m), Fatima Salman Hassan Haji (f), Dhia Ibrahim Ja'far (f), Najah Khalil Ibrahim Hassan (f), Zahra Mahdi al-Sammak (f) and Mohammed Faeq 'Ali Al Shehab (m)

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 296/11 Index: MDE 11/065/2011 Issue Date: 8 December 2011