

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION POLITICIAN JAILED FOR COMMENT

A Bahraini court of appeal rejected a political opposition figure's appeal against his six-month prison sentence on 15 February. He was immediately taken to prison. He is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Sayed Jamil Kadhem, a member of Bahrain's main opposition group, al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, was arrested in court on 15 February after a judge upheld his six-month prison sentence. He is serving his sentence at Jaw prison, south of the capital, Manama.

Sayed Jamil Kadhem had been sentenced on 13 January to six months in prison and a fine of 500 Bahraini Dinars (about US\$1,325) by the Lower Criminal Court in Manama, under the 2002 Law on Exercising Political Rights, for "violating freedom of the elections by disrupting and spreading false statements about them with a view to impacting its outcome" after he tweeted about "political money" offered to people to run as candidates in the November 2014 elections. He also tweeted a call to boycott the elections. The High Electoral Committee, headed by the Minister of Justice, filed a complaint against him shortly after he posted this tweet, accusing him of undermining the electoral process through his comment on Twitter: the case was then referred to the Lower Criminal Court for trial.

He was arrested the day after he was sentenced, and taken to prison to serve his sentence. He was released on bail on 1 February, the day of the first hearing of his appeal.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to release Sayed Jamil Khadem immediately and unconditionally, as he is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to uphold the right to freedom of expression and repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 APRIL 2015 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 Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama
Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 1284
Email via website:
<http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/>
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

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.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sayed Jamil Kadhem was re-elected in December as President of the al-Wefaq Shura (consultative) council. He was one of 18 members of parliament from the main opposition group al Wefaq National Islamic Society who resigned from their seats in parliament in 2011 in protest at the crackdown on dissent that year.

The Secretary General of al-Wefaq, Sheikh 'Ali Salman, had been arrested on 28 December 2014 in connection with speeches he made in 2012 and 2014. He was charged with "incitement to promote the change of the political system by force, threats and other illegal means", "public incitement to loathing and contempt of a sect of people which will result in disrupting public disorder", "publicly inciting others to disobey the law" and "publicly insulting the Interior Ministry". Amnesty International has reviewed his speeches and believes he has been targeted for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression.

The charges against Sheikh 'Ali Salman and the trial of other outspoken activists as a result of their peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression highlight the Bahraini authorities' increasing intolerance of criticism and their aim to silence legitimate demands for reform and respect of human rights.

Numerous provisions contained in Bahraini legislation, including the penal code, the law on political associations and the anti-terrorism law are not compatible with international human rights law and standards guaranteeing freedom of expression, association and assembly. These provisions have been used to silence any dissent.

Name: Sayed Jamil Kadhem

Gender m/f: m

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