

URGENT ACTION

EBRAHIM SHARIF SENTENCED TO YEAR IN PRISON

Political activist Ebrahim Sharif has been sentenced to one year in prison. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Ebrahim Sharif was sentenced to one year in prison on 24 February. The High Criminal Court in the capital, Manama, convicted him of “incitement to hatred and contempt of the regime” but acquitted him of “incitement to overthrow the regime by force and illegal means”. Both charges were related solely to a peaceful speech he made in July 2015, and he has not used or advocated violence. He is a prisoner of conscience.

The Public Prosecution has said in a statement that it is reviewing the verdict. It has 30 days to appeal, while Ebrahim Sharif’s lawyers have 15 days.

After his arrest, Ebrahim Sharif’s lawyers were able to visit him where he was detained, in al-Hala police station, north of Manama, but were unable to discuss his case in private, as two police officers were always in the room with them, the door was kept open and there was a camera and microphone in the room. Ebrahim Sharif was only allowed to receive a copy of his casefile from his lawyers after officers from the police station and the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) had examined it. The right to confidential communication with a lawyer is an important element of the right to a fair trial.

In his speech in July 2015, which Amnesty International has seen, Ebrahim Sharif spoke about the need for change in Bahrain, highlighted the political opposition’s commitment to non-violence and urged the government to introduce key economic reforms to avoid further bankruptcy.

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

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to release Ebrahim Sharif immediately and unconditionally and quash his conviction 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 8 APRIL 2016 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

Ministry of Interior
Shaikh Rashid bin ‘Abdullah Al Khalifa
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama
Bahrain
Fax: +973 1723 2661
Email via website:
www.interior.gov.bh/contact_en.aspx
Twitter: @moi_Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khaled bin Ali bin Abdullah 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/default76a7.html?acton=category&ID=159>
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Fax Email Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 168/15. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/2883/2015/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ebrahim Sharif is the former Secretary General of the National Democratic Action Society (*Wa'ad*), a secular political opposition party in Bahrain which includes people from both Shi'a and Sunni communities. He was arrested at his home on 12 July 2015 at 2.30am and taken to the CID where he was questioned about a speech he had made at a public gathering on 10 July. He was remanded in custody for 48 hours. He was brought to the Public Prosecution for interrogation on 13 July on charges of "incitement to hatred and contempt of the regime" and "incitement to overthrow the regime by force and illegal means", under Articles 165 and 160 of Bahrain's Penal Code, which Ebrahim Sharif denied.

Ebrahim Sharif's trial opened on 24 August, when he was allowed to read a five-minute statement in which he reaffirmed his commitment to non-violence and highlighted that the role of the opposition was to criticize and pinpoint the wrongdoings for the government to fix and reform. He also said that the situation in Bahrain could only be solved through peaceful political means.

After an unfair trial, Ebrahim Sharif was jailed for five years in 2011 for leading widespread peaceful anti-government protests, alongside 12 other leading opposition activists, who were jailed for between five years and life. He was released on 19 June 2015 under a royal pardon. The other 12 opposition activists are serving their sentences in Jaw prison.

Name: Ebrahim Sharif

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 168/15 Index: MDE 11/3525/2016 Issue Date: 26 February 2016