

# URGENT ACTION

## ZAINAB AL-KHAWAJA IMPRISONED WITH HER CHILD

**Zainab Al-Khawaja has been arrested and taken into custody, with her 15-month-old son. She is a prisoner of conscience.**

**Zainab Al-Khawaja** was arrested at her home on 14 March. Police jeeps had sealed off her street to be ready to arrest her. She was taken with her 15-month old son to al-Hoora police station in the capital, Manama, then to the Ministry of Interior for medical check-ups and finally to the women's detention centre in 'Issa Town, south-west of Manama, on 15 March. She is a prisoner of conscience.

The Ministry of Interior announced on its website on 21 March that Zainab Al-Khawaja had been taken into custody on 15 March and was to spend one year in prison for insulting a public employee in 2013 and two months for intentional damage in 2014, as well as another two months in relation to another case. It also said she had insisted on keeping her child with her, and this had been granted.

The High Criminal Court of Appeal had upheld Zainab Al-Khawaja's one-year sentence for "insulting a public official" and a four-month sentence for "destroying public property" on 3 December 2015.

Zainab Al-Khawaja, now aged 32, had been sentenced on 9 December 2014 to one year in prison for "insulting a public official" after she spoke out in defence of a fellow prisoner, who had been insulted and humiliated by a prison guard in 'Issa Town women's detention center. She was sentenced to two months in prison for each of two charges of "destroying government property" when she ripped up framed pictures of the King belonging to the Ministry of Interior while detained at a police station in 'Issa Town in May 2012.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was given injections on 17 March and 18 March to ease muscle spasms in her back, and has to wear a back brace. Her family believes this is because she had to carry her child for several hours while at Al-Hoora police station and the Ministry of Interior. She had recently undergone a medical procedure on her leg, and this put her in further pain.

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

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to release Zainab Al-Khawaja immediately and unconditionally, as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to give her immediate access to any medical attention she may require;
- Urging them to repeal all legislation that criminalizes the right to freedom of expression, and respect and protect this right.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 MAY 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**

Minister of Interior  
Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah Al Khalifa  
Ministry of Interior  
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1723 2661  
Email: (via website)  
www.interior.gov.bh/contact\_en.aspx  
**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  
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. This is the fifth update of UA 306/14. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/3011/2015/en/>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A group of police officers, some of them in civilian clothes, came to arrest Zainab al-Khawaja at her home on 14 March. They showed an arrest warrant, and took her and her son. She later called her family to tell them she was in al-Hooraa police station, in the capital, Manama, and would be transferred to prison the next day, after a medical check-up at the Ministry of Interior.

Her family visited her on 16 March at the women's detention centre in 'Issa Town. She told them she had been carrying her son for the five hours she was held in al-Hooraa police station, and had been offered no help to carry her bags when she arrived at prison. She therefore had to make several trips, always carrying her son, to collect her bags. Since then, she has suffered muscle spasms in her back, for which she received injections on 17 and 18 March, and has to wear a back brace. Zainab Al-Khawaja had recently undergone a medical procedure on her leg which increased her pain.

In her absence, the Second High Criminal Court of Appeal in Manama had upheld her nine-month prison sentence for "entering a restricted area" and "insulting a public official" when she tried to visit her father in Jaw prison in August 2014, when he was on hunger strike and she was seven months pregnant. She had been sentenced on 2 June 2015.

Zainab Al-Khawaja had been sentenced to three years in prison, reduced on appeal to one year and a fine of 3,000 Bahraini Dinar (BD) (about US\$8,000) for "insulting the King", after she ripped up a photo of him in court in October 2014. Neither she nor her lawyers were present during the hearing on 21 October, at her request, as she did not recognize the legitimacy of the court.

Zainab Al-Khawaja has been arrested and released several times since December 2011 on an array of charges including "destroying government property", "insulting a policewoman", "illegal gathering and rioting" and "inciting hatred against the regime". She had already spent a total of almost 18 months in prison when she was arrested on 14 March.

Before that, she had last been arrested on 14 October 2014 for tearing up a picture of the King while appearing before a Lower Criminal Court in relation to two separate cases. During the hearing, according to witnesses, she took out a picture of the King of Bahrain from her handbag, tore it up and handed it to the judge, who ordered her arrest. She was released on 19 November following a court order and sentenced on 4 December to three years' imprisonment and a fine of 3,000 BD (about US\$8,000).

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja  
Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 306/14 Index: MDE 11/3701/2016 Issue Date: 29 March 2016