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Bahrain must end reprisals against dissent

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Bahrain

Since June 2016, the Bahraini authorities have dramatically stepped up their crackdown on dissent. As a result, Bahrain's formerly thriving civil society has found itself reduced to a few lone voices brave enough to still speak out.

The crackdown has extended to this Council where human rights defenders have faced reprisals for seeking to cooperate with the UN, including travel bans, some based on trumped-up charges, to prevent them from travelling to Geneva to participate in Bahrain's UPR or sessions of this Council.

Human rights defenders and political activists are also subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and torture. This includes imprisoned prominent human rights defenders Nabeel Rajab and Ebtisam al-Saegh, who was tortured while being interrogated about her human rights work, including her participation in the 34th session of this Council.

The families of human rights defenders living outside Bahrain have also been targeted as a direct reprisal for defenders speaking out at this Council. Some relatives have been interrogated about their family member's human rights activities, and subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and torture.

Amnesty International welcomes Bahrain's acceptance of recommendations to allow Bahraini human rights defenders to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms free from reprisals and to ensure accountability for all perpetrators of torture and ill-treatment.¹

Amnesty International considers human rights defenders Nabeel Rajab and Ebtisam al-Saegh and political leaders Sheikh Ali Salman and Fadhel Abbas Mahdi Mohamed to be prisoners of conscience and calls for their immediate release.

The organization welcomes Bahrain's accept of recommendations to release those detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and to repeal

¹ A/HRC/36/3, recommendations 114.22 (Czechia), 114.57 (Ireland), 114.79 (Norway), 114.80 (Czechia), 114.81 (Italy), 114.82 (Spain), 114.83 (Finland), 114.87 (Switzerland), 114.94 (Germany), 114.97 (Spain), 114.119 (Luxembourg), 114.124 (Estonia).

legislation impeding these rights² and urges Bahrain to ensure their immediate implementation.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Bahrain on 21 September 2017 during its 36th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered an oral statement. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis of the review through its submission on country: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/5310/2016/en/>

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² A/HRC/36/3, recommendations 114.102 (Switzerland) and 114.112 (Iceland)