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## **Open letter to Bahraini authorities: Drop all charges and release Nabeel Rajab**

We the undersigned call on Bahraini authorities to release [Nabeel Rajab](#) immediately, to repeal his convictions and sentences, and drop all charges against him. On 31 December 2018 the Court of Cassation in Bahrain may issue its verdict in the appeal of the [five-year prison sentence](#) handed to him for peaceful comments posted and retweeted on his Twitter account about the killing of civilians in the Yemen conflict by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, and allegations of torture in Jau prison.

We are concerned that the authorities intend to increase Rajab's prison sentence unopposed, by setting 31 December as the date for a hearing and possible issuing of a verdict, while most Bahrainis and people around the globe will be focused on year-end celebrations. This is not an idle concern, as, opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman was arrested on 28 December 2014 and subsequently convicted and sentenced to four years in jail following an unfair trial. And last month, in yet another case brought against him on spying charges, the Court of Appeal overturned his initial acquittal and sentenced him instead to [life in prison](#).

Rajab has been a tireless champion of human rights for many years, helping to found and run the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, both members of the IFEX network.

He has been detained [since his arrest on 13 June 2016](#). He was held [largely in solitary confinement](#) during the first nine months of his detention, violating UN rules on pre-trial imprisonment, and has been subjected to humiliating treatment. His books, toiletries, and clothes have been confiscated and his cell frequently raided at night.

Rajab was [sentenced to two years](#) in jail in 2017 on charges of “publishing and broadcasting false news that undermines the prestige of the state” during TV interviews he gave in 2015 and 2016 in which he stated that Bahraini authorities bar reporters and human rights workers from entering the country. He was sentenced in 2018 to five years in prison on charges of “disseminating false rumors in times of war” for tweets about torture in Jau Prison and the war in Yemen.

[At its eighty-first session](#), 17-26 April 2018, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Rajab's “deprivation of liberty constitutes a violation of articles 2 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles 2 (1) and 26 of the Covenant – on the grounds of discrimination based on political or other opinion, as well as on his status as a human rights defender”.

We therefore urge Bahraini authorities to [immediately and unconditionally release](#) Nabeel Rajab, quash his convictions and sentences, and drop all charges against him; and

undertake a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into his allegations of ill-treatment. The findings of the investigation must be made public and anyone suspected of criminal responsibility must be brought to justice in fair proceedings.

As this case is part of a pattern of abuse and harassment against human rights defenders and journalists in Bahrain, we also urge the authorities to cease all such actions and ensure that the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press is respected.

Signed,

Bahrain Center for Human Rights  
ActiveWatch – Media Monitoring Agency  
Adil Soz - International Foundation for Protection of Freedom of Speech  
Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC)  
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)  
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)  
Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression (AFTE)  
Association of Caribbean Media Workers  
Bytes for All (B4A)  
Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)  
Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF)  
Foro de Periodismo Argentino  
Freedom Forum  
Free Media Movement  
Globe International Center  
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)  
I'lam Arab Center for Media Freedom Development and Research  
Independent Journalism Center (IJC)  
Index on Censorship  
Initiative for Freedom of Expression - Turkey  
International Press Centre (IPC)  
Maharat Foundation  
Mediacentar Sarajevo  
Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance  
Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA)  
Media Rights Agenda (MRA)  
Media Watch  
Norwegian PEN  
OpenMedia  
Pacific Freedom Forum (PFF)  
Pacific Islands News Association (PINA)

Palestinian Center for Development and Media Freedoms (MADA)  
PEN America  
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)  
Social Media Exchange (SMEX)  
Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA)  
South East European Network for Professionalization of Media (SEENPM)  
South East Europe Media Organisation  
Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)  
World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)  
World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers  
Amnesty International  
Bahrain Interfaith  
Campaign Against Arms Trade  
CIVICUS  
FIDH under the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders  
Frontline Defenders  
Gulf Institute for Human Rights  
ISHR  
Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders  
MENA Monitoring Group  
OMCT under the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders  
RAFTO  
Salam for Democracy and Human Rights