

URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST JAILED FOR SPEAKING OUT

A political activist has been sentenced to five years in prison in Bahrain for describing the war in Yemen as a violation of international law. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Fadhel Abbas Mahdi Mohamed was sentenced to five years in prison on 28 June for “spreading false information that could damage military operations of Bahrain and its allies and calling for resistance” after the political party he heads said the Saudi Arabia-led airstrikes in Yemen were a violation of international law.

Fadhel Abbas, Secretary-General of opposition political party The Unitary National Democratic Assemblage (al-Wahdawi party) had been arrested on 26 March, the day his party issued a statement denouncing the airstrikes in Yemen, and has been in prison since then. The day he was arrested the Ministry of Interior announced Bahrain’s support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen and issued a statement warning that the government would take steps against any “attempt to exploit the situation through division or sedition, or issuance of statements against the approach Bahrain has taken”. His trial before the High Criminal Court in the capital, Manama, started on 27 April and he pleaded not guilty during the first session.

Amnesty International believes Fadhel Abbas, aged 43, has been sentenced solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and has not used or advocated violence. Article 133 of the Bahraini Penal Code punishes with up to 10 years in prison anyone who “deliberately announces in wartime false or malicious news, statements or rumours or mounts adverse publicity campaigns, so as to cause damage to military preparations for defending the State of Bahrain or military operations of the Armed Forces, to cause people to panic or to weaken the nation’s perseverance”.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to release Fadhel Abbas 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 10 AUGUST 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
 Email: info@interior.gov.bh
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?action=category&ID=159>
 Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ai

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.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

POLITICAL ACTIVIST JAILED FOR SPEAKING OUT

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fadhel Abbas was convicted less than two weeks after another prominent opposition leader was jailed. Sheikh 'Ali Salman, the Secretary-General of Bahrain's main opposition group, al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, was sentenced to four years in prison for "public incitement to loathing and contempt of a sect of people which will result in disrupting public order" and "publicly insulting the Interior Ministry", and to another two years in prison for "publicly inciting others to disobey the law" in speeches he had made in the past two years.

These sentences and the trials 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 of silencing legitimate demands for reform and the respect of human rights.

Another al-Wefaq leader was already behind bars in early 2015. The authorities had charged the president of the al-Wefaq Consultative (Shura) Council, Sayed Jamil Kadhemi, in October 2014, under the 2002 Law on Exercising Political Rights, with "violating freedom of the elections by disrupting and spreading false statements about them with a view to impacting their outcome". They did this after he posted a message on Twitter about "political money" that he said had been offered to certain people to run as candidates in the November 2014 elections and in which he called for a boycott of the elections. He was sentenced to six months in prison on 13 January (see UA 40/15, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/0012/2015/en/>).

Several other people are to go on trial at the Public Prosecution Office or in courts for insulting the king and criticism of the authorities' practices, including activist Zainab Al-Khawaja and prominent human rights defender Nabeel Rajab.

These and other cases of prisoners of conscience show the Bahraini authorities are intolerant of criticism of their policies, ruling figures or the practices of their security forces. Instead of upholding the rights of Bahrainis and embarking on serious reform, they have chosen to silence dissent and imprison their critics.

Name: Fadhel Abbas Mahdi Mohamed

Gender m/f: m

UA: 142/15 Index: MDE 11/1962/2015 Issue Date: 29 June 2015