

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 11/05/96

UA 67/96

Arbitrary detention / Fear of torture

8 March 1996

BAHRAIN Muna Habib al-Sharrakhi (f)
Zahra Salman Hilal (f)
Iman Salman Hilal (f)
Na'ima 'Abbas (f)
Huda Salih al-Jallawi (f)
Mariam Ahmad al-Mu'min (f)
Zahra 'Abdali (f)
Nazi Karimi (f)

and many others

Amnesty International fears that the eight women named above, reportedly held in incommunicado detention since their arrest on 29 February 1996, are at risk of torture. The organization does not know the exact reasons for their arrests but believes they may be connected with public calls by these women for the release of political prisoners.

Security forces reportedly raided several villages in the early hours of 29 February and dozens of people were arrested. Security forces reportedly forcibly entered the homes of Muna Habib al-Sharrakhi, Na'ima 'Abbas and the two sisters Zahra and Iman Salman Hilal and all four women were ordered to present themselves at the Centre for Criminal Investigation in al-Manama for questioning, early on 29 February. However, upon their arrival at the Centre for Criminal Investigation they were arrested. Other reports suggest that the arrests of Huda Salih al-Jallawi, Mariam Ahmad al-Mu'min, Zahra 'Abdali and Nazi Karimi, were carried out in the same manner. Their families were not given any reasons for their arrests.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The husband of Muna Habib al-Sharrakhi, Mohammad Jamil 'Abd al-'Amir al-Jamri, was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in 1988 after an unfair trial, on charges of spying for a foreign country. He is also the son of Shaikh 'Abd al-'Amir Mansur al-Jamri, a prominent Muslim Shi'a leader currently in detention since 22 January 1996. The husband of Zahra Salman Hilal, Ahmad Mahdi Salman, has been detained without charge or trial since January 1995. Zahra Salman Hilal was herself previously arrested on 1 April 1995 and remained in detention without charge or trial until her release on 29 May 1995. Nazi Karimi was also arrested on 9 April 1995 and held in detention for one month before being released.

Widespread arrests were made in Bahrain between December 1994 and April 1995, when demonstrators called on the government to reconvene the National Assembly (dissolved by Amiri decree in 1975), to respect the provisions of the country's 1973 Constitution, and to release all political detainees. In late October 1995, renewed demonstrations took place in protest against the continued detention of up to 600 people in connection with earlier unrest.

Protests erupted again in January 1996 following the closure of a number of mosques where prominent Shi'a clerics had been calling on the government to restore democratic rights. This was followed by a wave of mass arrests and opposition sources and lawyers say about 2,000 people are currently in detention, most of them without access to families or lawyers. The government has admitted that 260 people have been detained since the recent unrest. Among these are eight prominent Shi'a leaders and religious figures arrested on 22

January 1996 (see UA 26/96, MDE 11/02/96, 2 February 1996). The authorities have accused them of instigating violence and sabotage.

Reports and testimonies from former detainees held during the 1994-1995 unrest showed that torture was used to extract information, heightening Amnesty International's fears for those currently detained.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic or your own language:

- seeking information about the whereabouts of all eight women arrested on 29 February 1996 in al-Manama and the reasons and legal basis for their arrest;
- seeking information about the identities and current whereabouts of all others arrested on 29 February and the reasons and legal basis for their arrest;
- urging the prompt release of all those arrested unless they are to be charged with recognizably criminal offences;
- seeking assurances that they are being treated humanely and urging that they be granted immediate access to lawyers, relatives and independent doctors if necessary, in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness

Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa

Office of His Highness the Amir

P.O. Box 555

The Amiri Court, Rifa'a Palace, Bahrain

Telexes: 8666 Qasar BN; 8500 Qasar BN

Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, al-Manama, Bahrain

Faxes: +973 668884

Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency

Shaikh Muhammad Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa

Minister of Interior

P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 8333 ALAMAN BN

Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain

Faxes: +973 276765 or 290526

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency

Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa

Prime Minister

P.O.Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN

Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain

Faxes: +973 533033

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: Diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 30 April 1996.