



Bahrain: A message of thanks from newly released prisoner of conscience, Nabeel Rajab

10 June 2014 by Kristin Hulaas Sunde

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From the [Livewire blog](#)



Nabeel Rajab, Bahrain, 2012. © Private

Nabeel Rajab, a prominent Bahraini human rights activist jailed for calling for anti-government protests, was released on 24 May. He told us about being imprisoned – but not silenced – and what international support means to him.

I am Nabeel Rajab, President of the [Bahrain Center for Human Rights](#) (BCHR) and Director of the [Gulf Centre for Human Rights](#) (GCHR). I have just been released from prison after serving a two-year sentence for my peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

I'm one of many human rights defenders in Bahrain and the region who are being targeted, attacked, arrested and imprisoned. I was imprisoned on the basis of fabricated charges of "illegal practices, inciting illegal assemblies, and organizing unlicensed demonstrations through Twitter and other social networking sites".

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention decided that my detention was arbitrary. The authorities use the judicial system in Bahrain to target human rights defenders and activists. It is important to note that I have not been released as a gesture of goodwill, but because I have served the full length of my sentence.



Nabeel Rajab's wife, Sumaya (left), and daughter, Malak, during a protest calling for his release, Bahrain, June 2012. © Private

Two tough years

I've had two tough years away from my beloved family and the work that I love so much, which is to defend people's rights. I was kept away from other prisoners of conscience in a separate building inside Jaw Prison for two years, to make sure I didn't communicate with them.

During this time of isolation, my wife told me during our short calls and meetings about the free world's solidarity with me and campaigns organized by Amnesty and others. This made me feel in my heart that I'm not alone.

The Bahraini authorities were trying to break my resolve and my spirit; however every day I felt more determined to continue my struggle to defend fundamental freedoms.

The most painful event was the death of my mother, who has always supported and helped me. The authorities did not allow me to attend the condolence ceremonies. But the solidarity of people who love freedom gave me extra strength.

Creating hundreds of new activists

I know there is a heavy price to be paid if you work for human rights in this part of the world. But I am planning to continue. Maybe some people have to pay in order to achieve democracy, justice and respect for human rights. I am one of many willing to pay the price for my nation and for our coming generations.

The authorities arrested me in order to send a message that you will be arrested if you publicly defend human rights in Bahrain. Strangely enough they were not aware that in this way, they have created hundreds of activists who will follow the same path as me.

Most human rights activists and political leaders in Bahrain are behind bars. I'm putting endless effort into seeing them freed, using all kinds of peaceful means. Then we need a healthy national dialogue that will lead to respect for people's rights.

I and my colleagues at BCHR have won numerous human rights awards for defending the civil and human rights of all Bahrainis. We will continue our work because there are still many political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, being held on trumped-up charges.

I want to thank all members of Amnesty International for their persistence in defending human rights and freedom. Thank you also for all your work and campaigns to have me released. Your work has given me hope for a better future for the whole world.

Read more

[Bahrain: End prison ordeal for Nabeel Rajab immediately](#) (News story, 27 November 2013)

[Bahrain: Fears of renewed government crackdown ahead of Bahrain Grand Prix](#) (News story, 1 April 2014)

[Bahrain: EU must pressure Bahrain to free prisoners of conscience](#) (Press release 1 July 2013)

[‘Don’t forget Nabeel Rajab’ – Don’t forget basic rights of Bahrainis](#) (press release 22 March 2013)

[Bahrain: Reform shelved, repression unleashed](#) (News story/report, 21 November 2012)

[Bahrain: Further information: Human rights activist standing unfair trial: Nabeel Rajab](#) (Urgent Action, 16 October 2012)