

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVISTS' SENTENCES TO BE REVIEWED

The Court of Cassation in Bahrain is set to review the verdict and sentences imposed on 14 opposition activists. Amnesty International is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

On 2 April the Court of Cassation will review the verdict and sentences imposed on 14 opposition activists: **Hassan Mshaima**, **'Abdelwahab Hussain**, **'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja**, **Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace**, **Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad**, **Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad**, **Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri**, **Mohammad Hassan Jawwad**, **Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il**, **Abdullah al-Mahroos**, **'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher**, **Ebrahim Sharif**, **Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja** and **Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh**.

The 14, along with seven other Bahraini opposition activists who were tried in their absence, had been convicted by Bahrain's National Safety Court, a military court, on 22 June 2011. The 14, who were present in court, were sentenced to between two years and life in prison on charges including "setting up terror groups to topple the royal regime and change the constitution". On 28 September 2011, in a session that lasted only a few minutes, the National Safety Court of Appeal, a military appeal court, upheld all the convictions and sentences imposed on the defendants.

The 14 are held in Jaw prison in the capital, Manama. One of them, 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, has now been on hunger strike for 50 days, and his health has deteriorated substantially. His lawyer told Amnesty International he has lost 16kg since his arrest, most of which since his hunger strike began on 8 February and that he intends to stop taking glucose and minerals in a few days' time and only drink water by way of sustenance.

On the basis of the research it has conducted into the cases, Amnesty International believes that none of the 14 used or advocated violence during the popular protests of February and March 2011 and no such evidence was shown by the authorities during the trial. The organization accordingly considers the 14 to be prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Urge the authorities to release the 14 opposition activists immediately and unconditionally, since they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to order an immediate independent investigation into their allegations of torture, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 11 MAY 2012 TO:

**** The fax numbers will not work until 2 April ****

King

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Prime Minister

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Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
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Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

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Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the fourth update of UA 139/11. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/046/2011/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 14 opposition activists were arrested between 17 March and 9 April 2011. Most were arrested in the middle of the night by groups of several security officers who raided their houses and took them to an unknown location, where they were held incommunicado for weeks. Many of the 14 defendants alleged they were tortured during their first few days of detention when they were being interrogated by officers from the National Security Agency (NSA), an intelligence gathering body. None of the 14 was allowed to see their lawyers during NSA interrogations just after they were arrested. Some saw their lawyers during questioning by the military prosecutor ahead of the trial, while others were only allowed to see them during the first court hearing in May 2011, which was the first time any of the activists saw their families following their arrest.

On 22 June, Bahrain's National Safety Court, a military court, announced its verdict. Seven of the 14 activists were sentenced to life imprisonment: Hassan Mshaima', 'Abdelwahab Hussain, 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad and Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri. Four people, Mohammad Hassan Jawwad, Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il, Abdullah al-Mahroos and 'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher, were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Two people, Ebrahim Sharif and Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja, brother of 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, were given five-year prison terms while Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh received a prison sentence of two years.

An Amnesty International observer was present at one of the appeal sessions, on 6 September. The observer concluded that no evidence was presented in court proving that the defendants had committed a crime and used or advocated violence.

Names: Hassan Mshaima', 'Abdelwahab Hussain, 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad and Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri. Four people, Mohammad Hassan Jawwad, Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il, Abdullah al-Mahroos and 'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher, Ebrahim Sharif, Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja, Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 139/11 Index: MDE 11/019/2012 Issue Date: 30 March 2012