

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI WOMEN ACTIVISTS RELEASED

Bahraini activists Zainab Al-Khawaja and Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf were released on 29 May. However, both women still face other charges and have to appear in court on 13 and 24 June respectively.

A lower court in the capital, Manama, ordered on 29 May that **Zainab Al-Khawaja** be released, after payment of a fine of 200 Bahraini dinars (around US\$530) imposed on 21 May on a charge related to insulting a police officer, and as she had already served the 30-day prison sentence imposed on 24 May for taking part in an "illegal gathering" and assaulting an officer. She had refused to pay the fine unless **Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf** was also released.

Zainab Al-Khawaja had been arrested on 21 April 2012 after sitting down on a highway close to the Financial Harbour in protest at her father's detention and the general human rights situation in Bahrain. She was acquitted on 2 May of a separate charge of "insulting an officer" in a military hospital. She faces two further trials: the first together with Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf, for "illegal gathering", "inciting hatred against the regime" and a further charge related to an alleged assault on police officers, relating to their arrest in December 2011. and the second, for obstructing the traffic during a protest. She will appear in court again on 24 June when the first of these two trials will resume.

Zainab Al-Khawaja is a Bahraini activist and the daughter of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, one of the 14 prominent opposition activists sentenced by a military court to harsh prison terms in June 2011. In the evening of 28 May he ended the hunger strike he had begun 110 days earlier, in protest against his detention. .

Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf was released on bail on 29 May, charged with "illegal gathering" and allegedly assaulting three policewomen in April 2012. She had been arrested on 27 April, together with another two women, after taking part in a protest in front of the Ministry of Interior. The other two women were released a few days later, but all three women face a court hearing on 13 June on charges of "illegal gathering" and "assaulting three policewomen".

Zainab Al-Khawaja and Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf were previously arrested on 15 December 2011 after police broke up a peaceful protest at a roundabout on the outskirts of Manama, using teargas and sound bombs. Both women were charged, but released on 20 December.

According to Amnesty International's research, there is no indication that either Zainab Al-Khawaja or Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf has used or advocated violence, and they both deny all the charges against them.

No further action is requested from the UA network. Amnesty International will keep monitoring the situation and will take action when necessary. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the second update of UA 117/12. Issue date: 31 May 2012. Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/035/2012/en>.

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