

URGENT ACTION

PROMINENT BAHRAINI OPPOSITION MEMBER JAILED

Leading Bahraini opposition member Khalil al-Marzouq was interrogated by the Public Prosecutor for seven hours on 17 September and ordered to remain in prison for 30 days pending investigation. He is a prisoner of conscience, targeted for his criticism of the government.

Khalil al-Marzouq, the Assistant Secretary General of the largest legal opposition group, al-Wefaq, presented himself to the head of al-Budaya police station in the capital, Manama, on 17 September, a day after receiving a summons. He was questioned for 25 minutes, with his lawyer present, in connection with events on 6 September. Opposition groups had organized a rally that day, attended by nearly 6,000 people, in the north-western village of Saar, during which Khalil al-Marzouq had given a speech very critical of the government. The police told him and his lawyer that the Public Prosecution had issued a warrant for his arrest. He was taken to the Public Prosecutor at 12.30 pm and interrogated in the presence of his lawyer until around 8 pm. The questions focused on his speech on 6 September and his links with the 14 February Movement, a loose network of youth groups established in 2011 calling for the overthrow of the monarchy. He has been charged with incitement to violence. If found guilty he could face imprisonment and be stripped of his nationality under recent amendments to Bahraini legislation.

Khalil al-Marzouq denied any links with the 14 February Movement. He has publicly stated that he is against violence. Al-Wefaq has declared many times that it is against the use of violence and that it is committed to peaceful means to achieve change.

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

- Expressing concern that Khalil al-Marzouq is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression, and urging the Bahraini authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urging them to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 OCTOBER 2013 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 (keep trying)
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
Twitter: @moi_Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 1284
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

During the 6 September rally of political associations Khalil al-Marzouq gave a speech critical of the government. He referred to the latest decree issued by the Minister of Justice which bans meetings between political associations and foreign diplomats without the presence of an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While he was concentrating on the speech a masked man approached and gave him a white flag which Khalil al-Marzouq held and then put aside. The white flag is said to be the symbol of the 14 February Movement, a loose network of underground youth groups which have been calling for the monarchy to be overthrown and replaced with a republican system. Khalil al-Marzouq and al-Wefaq have repeatedly stated that they are committed to peaceful means and that they oppose violence. Amnesty International has reviewed both the speech and the flag incident and does not believe there was anything that amounted to inciting violence.

Two-and-a-half years after the popular uprising in Bahrain, and beneath the fanfare of reform, prisoners of conscience, including some arrested during the protests, remain behind bars and the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly continue to be suppressed. In recent months, not only have prisoners of conscience not been released, but more people have been jailed simply for daring to express their views, whether via Twitter or on peaceful marches. A number of women activists have been detained too. Bahraini courts have appeared more concerned with toeing the government's line than offering effective remedy to Bahrainis and upholding the rule of law.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), appointed by Royal Order on 29 June 2011, was charged with investigating and reporting on human rights violations committed in connection with the 2011 protests. At the launch of the BICI report in November 2011, the government publicly committed itself to implementing the recommendations set out in the report. The report recounted the government's response to the mass protests and documented wide-ranging human rights abuses. Among its key recommendations, the report called on the government to bring to account those responsible for human rights violations, including torture and excessive use of force, and carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture. However, many of the government's pledges remain unfulfilled. The establishment of BICI and its report was considered to be a groundbreaking initiative, but, almost two years on, the promise of meaningful reform has been betrayed by the government's unwillingness to implement key recommendations around accountability; this includes its failure to carry out independent, effective and transparent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and excessive use of force, and to prosecute all those who gave the orders to commit human rights abuses. For further information see the report *Reform shelved, repression unleashed* (Index: MDE 11/062/2012), November 2012, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/062/2012/en>.

On 28 July 2013 Bahrain's parliament held an extraordinary session and then submitted 22 recommendations to the King, Shaikh Hamad Bin 'Issa Al Khalifa. The recommendations toughen punishments laid out in the 2006 anti-terrorism law. A few days later the King issued several decrees curtailing the right to freedom of expression further, including banning all protests, sit-ins and public gatherings in Manama indefinitely and giving the security forces additional sweeping powers.

On 9 September 2013 a joint statement on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the human rights situation in Bahrain, signed by 47 countries, expressed serious concern about the ongoing human rights violations in the country.

Name: Khalil al-Marzouq
Gender m/f: m

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