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## **Bahrain must release woman activist convicted for listening to 'revolutionary' music**

The Bahraini authorities must release the first woman activist to be convicted over her involvement in last year's pro-reform demonstrations, Amnesty International said today after a court rejected her appeal and upheld her prison sentence.

Fadhila Mubarak's 18-month prison sentence for protesting and listening to "revolutionary" music was today upheld by the Court of Cassation in the capital, Manama.

"Fadhila Mubarak is a prisoner of conscience who was reportedly beaten and tortured in detention and then sentenced in an unfair trial before a military court on spurious charges for standing up for her rights," said Hassiba Hadj-Sahraoui, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Programme.

"The Bahraini authorities must release her immediately and unconditionally. Fadhila Mubarak's sentence only serves to demonstrate the intolerance of the authorities and the failures of the justice system. They must also launch an independent investigation into allegations of torture against her and bring those responsible to justice."

Fadhila Mubarak was arrested on 20 March 2011 when her car, which was also carrying her eight-year-old son and two other children, was stopped at a checkpoint close to Rifaa, south-west of Manama.

She was told she had been stopped for playing music calling for the overthrow of the regime, and was asked to turn the sound down.

She refused and asked the police officer for identification, before being forced out of the car, beaten on the head and arrested.

Fadhila Mubarak was taken to Rifaa police station. During interrogation she is said to have been repeatedly beaten all over her body by female policewomen. She was then taken to 'Issa Town police station and beaten again.

The National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, found Fadhila Mubarak guilty of several charges on 17 May 2011 and she was sentenced to four years in jail.

She faced spurious charges of taking part in an illegal gathering of more than five people; taking part in illegal protests at the GCC (Pearl) Roundabout in central Manama; possessing CDs and leaflets inciting hatred towards the regime and assaulting a policeman by pulling his shirt.

Fadhila Mubarak was denied access to a lawyer before, during her trial and after her initial sentence.

Some witnesses have told Amnesty International that Fadhila Mubarak was still being beaten on the bus while on her way to court.

Her lawyer saw her for the first time in court on the first day of her first appeal on 25 May 2011.

During this hearing, her lawyer requested a forensic examination and also called on the policeman who beat her at the checkpoint to testify. These requests were denied.

On 8 June 2011 after four appeal hearings, the military court of appeal reduced her sentenced to 18 months in prison.

Amnesty International only became aware of Fadhila Mubarak's full story after other women inmates who were released on bail talked about her case.

Thousands of Bahrainis demonstrated against the government and called for more political reforms, freedom, democracy and social justice in February and March 2011. Their protests were brutally crushed in mid-March.

Dozens of peaceful protesters were killed as a result of excessive use of force by Bahrain security and military forces. Hundreds of people were arrested and many were tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Scores received lengthy prison terms after unfair trials before military courts.

A state of emergency was declared in mid-March, a day after Saudi troops were sent to Bahrain to help quell the protests. More than 4,000 people were dismissed from their jobs and more than 30 Shi'a prayer centres were demolished.