

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI POET RELEASED

A Bahraini poet sentenced in June for reading a poem was released on 13 July. However, there are reportedly conditions attached to her release and Amnesty International is calling on the authorities to remove any that have been imposed, to annul her conviction and to clarify her current legal status.

Ayat al-Qarmez, a poet and university student at the Faculty of Teachers in Bahrain, sentenced to one year in prison for reading a poem, was released on 13 July. Shortly after her release Amnesty International talked to her lawyer and family, who said that Ayat was well and happy to be free. However, her release is reportedly conditional on not travelling outside Bahrain or speaking to the media about her detention. The Military Prosecutor said that her release was at the request of the lawyer. The family received a phone call from a police station in 'Issa Town asking them to pick up Ayat on 13 July, but without providing any further information on Ayat's current legal status.

In February, while attending a pro-reform rally in Manama, Ayat al-Qarmez read out one of her poems, which she said was addressed to the King of Bahrain. Its lyrics include the lines "We are the people who will kill humiliation and assassinate misery / Don't you hear their cries, don't you hear their screams?" Ayat al-Qarmez was forced to turn herself over to the authorities on 30 March and was sentenced on 12 June by Bahrain's National Safety Court of First Instance – a military court – to one year in prison for taking part in illegal protests, disrupting public security and inciting hatred towards the regime. Ayat alleges she was beaten and tortured with electric shocks while she was imprisoned and held in solitary confinement for the first 15 days of her detention.

Amnesty International considered Ayat a prisoner of conscience and called for her immediate and unconditional release and for charges against her to be dropped.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Welcoming Ayat al-Qarmez's release but urging the authorities to clarify her legal status and to remove any conditions that have been attached to her release, as well as any other limitations currently imposed on her liberty, freedom of movement, expression, association and assembly;
- Urging the authorities also to annul her conviction and to drop any pending charges against her;
- Urging the authorities to immediately set up a full, independent and impartial investigation into her allegations of torture or other ill-treatment, to make its results public and to bring to justice anyone responsible for such acts;
- Urging the authorities to respect and uphold the rights to freedom expression, movement and assembly in Bahrain, including the right to peaceful protest.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 SEPTEMBER 2011 TO:

King

Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace, Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1766 4587

Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khaled bin Ali Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17531284

Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Social Development and Human Rights

Dr. Fatima bint Mohammed Al Balooshi
Ministry of Social Development and Human Rights
PO Box 32868, Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17101955

Email: info@social.gov.bh

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. This is the first update of UA 179/11. Further information:

www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/031/2011/en

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