

URGENT ACTION

TEACHERS TO BE TRIED BY A MILITARY COURT

The former president and vice-president of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA), who were detained at the end of March, will be tried before a military court on 29 August. Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience.

Jalila al-Salman and **Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb** will be tried before the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, on 29 August. The two have already appeared before this court three times; on 15, 22 and 29 June, on charges that include "inciting hatred towards the regime", "calling to overthrow and change the regime by force", "calling on parents not to send their children to school" and "calling on teachers to stop working and participate in strikes and demonstrations". They deny the charges. Jalila al-Salman, former vice-president of BTA, was released on bail on 21 August. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb remains in detention.

Their trial was supposed to have been transferred from the National Safety Court to a civilian court, following the issuance of a decree by the King of Bahrain on 29 June referring all cases linked to the February-March 2011 anti-government protests to ordinary civilian courts. However, on 18 August the King issued a new decree (Decree 28/20011) stating that the National Safety Court of First Instance will continue to deal with felony (serious criminal) cases whereas all misdemeanour (less serious) cases will be referred to ordinary civilian cases.

Amnesty International has reviewed statements issued by the BTA and has also listened to speeches delivered by Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb calling on teachers and employees of the Ministry of Education to go on strike, and on parents not to take their children to school during demonstrations in Bahrain. These do not include advocacy of violence and while Amnesty International does not have full details of the evidence presented to the trial court, it considers that they appear to have been targeted solely on account of their leadership of the BTA and their legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. As civilians they should not be tried by a military court; trials of civilians before such courts breach their right to fair trial.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Express concern that Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb are to be tried before a military court although they are civilians, in breach of their right to fair trial before an independent and impartial court;
- Express concern that they may have been targeted solely on account of their leadership of the BTA and legitimately exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, in which case they are prisoners of conscience who should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Urge the authorities to protect them from torture or other ill-treatment and to immediately set up a full, impartial and independent investigation into the alleged ill-treatment of Jalila al-Salman, to make its results public, and bring to justice anyone responsible.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 OCTOBER 2011 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: +973 176 64 587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 33 033
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs,
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 31 284
Salutation: Your Excellency

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

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

This is the first update of UA 227/11. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/040/2011/en

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

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After the February-March 2011 unrest in Bahrain, the Minister of Human Rights and Social Development dissolved the board of the BTA and other associations and substituted the board members by government-appointed members. Local human rights organizations have reported that many teachers and members of the BTA have been subjected to torture, detention and harassment for their participation in peaceful protests. All teachers have reportedly been released except the two mentioned above.

Jalila al-Salman's house in Manama was raided on 29 March by more than 40 security officers. She was taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama where she remained for 10 days during which she was reportedly beaten, including with objects, and held in solitary confinement. She was then transferred to the custody of the military and held by the military for around two months, before being transferred again to a detention centre in 'Issa Town in Bahrain, where she was held until her release on bail on 21 August. Jalila al-Salman's family were not aware of her whereabouts until soon after her transfer to the detention centre in 'Issa Town.

Hundreds of people have been detained in Bahrain in connection with anti-government protests since mid-March when Bahraini armed and security forces crushed the protests. Scores of detainees, including medical doctors and prominent opposition activists, were brought before military courts for leading the protests and in some cases for calling for regime change. On 29 June the King of Bahrain issued a decree transferring all cases being examined by military courts to ordinary civilian courts.

Name: Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb

Gender m/f: Jalila al-Salman - female

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb - male

Further information on UA: 227/11 Index: MDE 11/043/2011 Issue Date: 23 August 2011

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