

# URGENT ACTION

## BAHRAIN TEACHERS GIVEN JAIL SENTENCES

**The former president and vice-president of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA) have been sentenced by a military court in Bahrain to 10 and three years in prison respectively. Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience.**

On 25 September **Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb** and **Jalila al-Salman** were sentenced by the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court in Bahrain, to 10 and three years in prison respectively. They were charged with, among other offences, using their positions within the BTA to call for a strike by teachers, halting the educational process, inciting hatred of the regime and attempting to overthrow the ruling system by force, possessing pamphlets and disseminating fabricated stories and information.

Jalila al-Salman, former BTA vice-president, was released on bail on 21 August after spending nearly five months in detention, during which she alleges she was ill-treated and verbally abused. She is currently not in jail. She told Amnesty International: "We need the support of Amnesty International supporters. We know they are doing their best and we want to thank them for all they have done for us until now, but we still need their support."

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb, former BTA president, has been in detention since his arrest on 6 April. He alleges that he was held in solitary confinement for 64 days and tortured in prison, including by being beaten on the head, back and legs and being forced to remain standing for prolonged periods of time. Their lawyers say they will appeal the sentence and are demanding that the appeal be heard before a civilian court of appeal.

To the knowledge of Amnesty International, Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman have never advocated violence and appear to have been targeted solely for their leadership of the BTA and for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. As civilians they should not have been tried and sentenced by a military court; trials of civilians before such courts breach their right to a fair trial.

### **Please write immediately in English and Arabic:**

- Expressing concern that Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Deeb have been sentenced by a military court although they are civilians, in breach of their right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial court;
- Expressing concern that they appear to have been targeted solely on account of their leadership of the BTA and peacefully 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;
- Urging the authorities to protect them from torture and other ill-treatment and to order immediately a full, impartial and independent investigation into their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, publish the results and bring to justice any persons found responsible.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 7 NOVEMBER 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

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:**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the third update of UA 227/11. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/040/2011/en>, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/043/2011/en>,  
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/045/2011/en>

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Jalila al-Salman's house in Manama was raided on 29 March by more than 40 security officers. She was reportedly taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama where she was reportedly ill-treated and verbally abused. She remained there for eight days until she was transferred to a women's detention centre in 'Issa Town and kept there in solitary confinement for 18 days. She was then transferred to a cell with other women within the same facility. She was released on bail on 21 August

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb was detained on 6 April after a raid on his uncle's house. Both he and his uncle were arrested; his uncle was released 72 days later. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's family did not know where he was for 24 days. He spent 64 days in solitary confinement during which he says he was tortured. His family and lawyer were only allowed to see him during the first session of the trial on 7 June.

Together with Jalila and Mahdi, scores of health workers, opposition activists, human rights activists and others have been facing military trials in Bahrain. Months have passed since scores of people demonstrated in Pearl Roundabout in February and March 2011, but the human rights situation in Bahrain is still very grim. Hundreds of people suspected of being connected with the anti-government protests are detained amid serious allegations of torture; scores of them have received unfair trials before military courts; and at least 2,500 others have been suspended or fired from their jobs.

Fourteen opposition figures who led and participated in the demonstrations in February and March were sentenced on 22 June to very harsh prison terms, including seven life sentences, on broadly worded terrorism charges. They have appealed their convictions and a verdict in their appeal trial is expected on 28 September.

On 29 June, the King decreed that all cases linked to the February-March 2011 protests would be transferred to ordinary civilian courts; he then issued a further decree on 18 August ordering that the National Safety Court of First Instance continue to deal with felony (serious criminal) cases, while misdemeanour (less serious) cases would be referred to the civilian courts.

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

Gender m/f: Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb is male and Jalila al-Salman is female

Further information on UA: 227/11 Index: MDE 11/051/2011 Issue Date: 26 September 2011