

# URGENT ACTION

## APPEAL FOR JAILED PROTESTERS

**Fourteen people sentenced to six months in prison in Bahrain after a peaceful anti-government protest may be prisoners of conscience. Their appeal will be heard by a civilian court of appeal on 24 November.**

A lower criminal court sentenced the 14 - 12 females, of whom at least two are said to be girls under 18, and two men - to six months in prison on 20 October after convicting them of "illegal gathering," "incitement to hatred of the regime" and "subverting security and disrupting public order". All of them had been in among a larger group of people arrested for participating in a protest march towards the GCC Roundabout (formerly Pearl Roundabout – a frequent venue for anti-government protests) in Manama, Bahrain's capital, on 23 September. Others were released uncharged or acquitted on 20 October. Some of those held allege that they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated during pre-trial interrogation. The women and girls were not allowed access to lawyers before they appeared in court.

Defence lawyers for the 14 lodged an appeal against the trial verdict and the sentences imposed, and this appeal is due to be heard by the High Criminal Court of Appeal on 24 November. One of the women, Nada 'Ali Yahya al-Qayyam, was recently moved from prison to hospital because she is pregnant; while Ashwaq Mohammad Hassan Ali Abdallah al-Maqabi, a girl of 17, was also hospitalized with a genetic blood disorder (sickle cell anaemia) but then apparently returned to prison. Their lawyer has lodged a separate appeal for their release from prison on medical grounds; this appeal is to be heard on 25 December.

The woman and girls are said to have been accompanied by male riot police, not women police officers, whenever they were transported from 'Issa Town prison to court and to have been verbally abused by these male police officers.

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

- Expressing concern that the 14 people sentenced on 20 October may be prisoners of conscience, imprisoned solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, in which case they should be released immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging the authorities to carry out an immediate, independent investigation into allegations that some of the 14 were tortured or otherwise ill-treated in pre-trial detention, and to bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to grant the prisoners unhindered access to their lawyers, and ensure they are protected from all forms of verbal or physical abuse.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30 DECEMBER 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**

**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

Scores of health workers, opposition and human rights activists, teachers and others are facing trials in Bahrain. Months have passed since scores of people demonstrated at the Pearl Roundabout (now renamed) 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 harsh prison terms, including seven life sentences, on broadly-worded terrorism charges. Their sentences were upheld by a military court of appeal 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 (Decree 28/20011) 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. All trials taking place since October have been heard before civilian courts.

Names: Nada 'Ali Yahya al-Qayyam, Ashwaq Mohammad Hassan Ali Abdallah al-Maqabi  
Gender m/f: both

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