

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH CONCERN FOR PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE

Danish-Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja experienced a cardiac arrhythmia in early evening on 28 February 2023. He was taken to the prison clinic and then referred to the Bahrain Defence Force hospital where the doctor stated that he should be urgently referred to a cardiologist. While he was receiving treatment at the hospital, a plain clothed man who said he was the head of hospital security insisted that he should be handcuffed. Al-Khawaja refused and was taken back to Jaw prison without meeting and being assessed by a cardiologist. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is a prisoner of conscience who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Crown Prince and Prime Minister

Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa

Court of the Crown Prince

P.O Box 29091

Riffa – Bahrain

Email (via contact form): <http://www.crownprince.bh/en/contact>

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Your Highness,

Human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja - who has been arbitrarily imprisoned for nearly 12 years now solely for exercising his rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain - was transferred to Jaw prison's clinic in the early evening on 28 February 2023. A doctor later said he had experienced a cardiac arrhythmia. He underwent an electrocardiogram (ECG) and the doctor advised that he should be transferred to the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) hospital. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja agreed to the transfer having received assurances by the prison authorities that he would not be handcuffed. At the emergency room in the BDF hospital he underwent another ECG and he received an intravenous injection which stabilized his heartbeat. The doctor stated that he must be urgently referred to a cardiologist. While Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's treatment was finishing in the BDF hospital and he was still in the treatment room, a plain clothed man introducing himself as the head of security of the hospital ordered that he be handcuffed. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja refused to be handcuffed and left the room. He was returned to prison, and he did not see and was not assessed by a cardiologist. In an article published by the daily newspaper [Al Ayam](#) on 7 March 2023, the administration of government hospitals stated that an appointment with a cardiologist was scheduled for Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja for 19 March. Neither Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja nor his family had been informed.

On 13 February 2023 Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was examined by an ophthalmologist who was brought to Jaw prison without any equipment but who established that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's [glaucoma](#) had worsened and prescribed new eye drops and glasses for him. On 2 March 2023, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was taken to the BDF hospital for an ophthalmology appointment. Contrary to an agreement he made with the prison authorities, on arrival at the hospital he was tightly handcuffed.

We call upon your Highness to release Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights. In the meantime, and due to his serious health issues, we urge you to ensure he has timely access to adequate health care, consistent with international human rights standards; that he receives timely information about his access to care; and that he is protected from further torture and other ill-treatment.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, aged 61, co-founded both the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). Until early 2011, he worked as MENA Protection Coordinator for the human rights group Frontline Defenders. He also previously took part in an Amnesty International fact-finding visit to Iraq in 2003 and is a member of the International Advisory Network of the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre. He is a peaceful advocate of human rights and the recipient of several human rights awards, including the Dignity - World without Torture Award which he received in October 2013. Most recently, in 2022, he obtained the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is serving a life sentence in Jaw prison for his role in leading peaceful protests during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain.

Between 11 and 15 March 2023, Bahrain hosted the 146th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Manama, an annual gathering of parliament members from around the world. Parliamentarians from Denmark, Sweden, Ireland, Iceland, the Netherlands, Finland and Norway called for the release of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja. The Danish delegation's request to visit him in prison was ignored.

On 6 November 2022, during a call to his daughters, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja said that he was facing a number of separate new trials. On 3 November 2022, his first trial began in his absence before the Second Lower Criminal Court for allegedly breaking a plastic chair in November 2021 and insulting a police officer in Jaw prison after being denied phone calls to his daughters who live abroad. On 21 November 2022, his second trial began on charges of insulting a public servant. The case relates to an incident on 30 March 2022, when Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja protested against the normalization deal with Israel (Abraham Accords) and told a prison officer "You are a dirty and unclean person. You have a way of treating people like animals".

On 28 November 2022, the court convicted and fined Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in both cases. The two cases were taken before the Second High Criminal Court of Appeal. On 29 December 2022, the court postponed to 5 January 2023 its hearing in the first case in which he was convicted and fined 60 Bahraini dinars (equivalent to 160 US dollars) for breaking a chair and insulting a public servant. The court also ruled that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja did not have the right to appeal his conviction and 100 Bahraini dinars (equivalent to 265 US dollars) fine in relation to the second case for insulting a public servant.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was not allowed to attend any of the courts proceedings.

On 5 January 2023 his lawyer handed the head of the court a letter in which Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja said that he had instructed his lawyer to withdraw from the session in the event that he was unable to visit him prior to the hearing session or if he was not permitted to attend. Indeed, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was not brought to court, his lawyer withdrew from the court's session, and the judge upheld the conviction and fine. The next day, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja called his daughters and told them that prison guards had lured him to the prison administration building under the pretence to have a call with his lawyer, only to be taken to the prison guards' room to face the public servant he was convicted of insulting. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja resisted being forced into the room and started yelling and shouting slogans. On 8 January, he was informed that he would not be allowed to have calls with his lawyer anymore. On 6 March 2023, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was finally granted a visit by his lawyer.

On 15 December 2022, the European Parliament adopted an [urgent resolution](#) highlighting Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's case and those of other political prisoners and calling for his release. On 27 December 2022, he met his lawyer for the first time in prison.

In May 2012, the [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) considered that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's detention was arbitrary as it resulted from his exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; and called for his immediate release and an enforceable right to compensation.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Arabic
You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 May 2023
Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6345/2023/en/>