

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS' APPEAL HEARINGS BEGIN

The appeal of 13 opposition activists has started in Bahrain. Hunger-striker Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja attended the hearing in a wheelchair. Two of the 13 described to the court how they had been tortured in 2011.

On 22 May 13 opposition activists appeared before the High Criminal Court of Appeal. A 14th defendant, **Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh**, was released on 30 April after his two-year sentence was reduced to six months. He is no longer facing trial.

Their appeal started on 8 May, but was adjourned until 22 May because two of the 13 were in hospital. **Abdulhadi al Khawaja**, who came into court in a wheelchair as a result of his health condition and was accompanied by a doctor and two nurses, told the court how he had been subjected to torture including sexual assault during the first weeks of detention. Abdulhadi al Khawaja was transferred from the Military Hospital back to Jaw prison on 14 May because he agreed to increase the amount of liquids he was drinking. He is sharing a cell with his brother and he is receiving care from two nurses and a doctor. Another man, '**Abdelwahab Hussain**, also told the court how he had been tortured in 2011 and that a statement he signed had been extracted under torture. He also explained how he had been beaten when he refused to record an apology to the King and how some of the 14 were beaten on 22 June 2011 on their way from the National Safety Court to the prison.

The next hearing will take place on 29 May, when the rest of the 13 are expected to give their statements to the court. The defence is also expected to give to the court a list of witnesses. During the last hearing the defence lawyers asked the court to drop all charges related to their clients' legitimate exercise of their right to freedom of expression; provide copies of forensic reports on detainees conducted by the BICI forensic experts; and disregard statements from the Public Prosecution witnesses alleged to have tortured the 13. They also asked again that their clients should be released on bail, but this was not granted.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Urge the authorities to release all 13 opposition activists immediately and unconditionally, since they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to order an immediate independent investigation into their allegations of torture, publish the results and bring anyone responsible for abuses to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 5 JULY 2012 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 1766 4587

Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 3033
+973 1753 2839

Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17536343, +973 17531284

Email, via website:

<http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default76a7.html?action=category&ID=159>

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

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the eighth update of UA 139/11. Further information:

Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/027/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The 14 opposition activists were arrested between 17 March and 9 April 2011. Most were arrested in the middle of the night by groups of security officers who raided their houses and took them to an unknown location, where they were held incommunicado for weeks. Many of the 14 alleged they were tortured during their first few days of detention when they were being interrogated by officers from the National Security Agency (NSA). None of the 14 was allowed to see their lawyers during NSA interrogations just after they were arrested. Some saw their lawyers during questioning by the military prosecutor ahead of the trial, while others were only allowed to see them during the first court hearing in May 2011, which was the first time any of the activists had seen their families since their arrest.

On 22 June, Bahrain's National Safety Court, a military court, announced its verdict and sentenced them to between two years and life in prison on charges including "setting up terror groups to topple the royal regime and change the constitution". Seven of the 14 activists were sentenced to life imprisonment: Hassan Mshaima', 'Abdelwahab Hussain, 'Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad and Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri. Four people, Mohammad Hassan Jawwad, Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il, Abdullah al-Mahroos and 'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher, were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Two people, Ebrahim Sharif and Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja, brother of 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, were given five-year prison terms while Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh received a prison sentence of two years.

An Amnesty International observer was present at one of the appeal sessions, on 6 September 2011. The observer concluded that no evidence was presented in court proving that the 14 had committed a crime and used or advocated violence. On 28 September 2011, in a session that lasted only a few minutes, the National Safety Court of Appeal, a military appeal court, upheld all the convictions and sentences imposed on the 14.

For more information on this case and others see the report '*Flawed Reforms: Bahrain fails to achieve Justice for protesters*' (MDE 11/014/2012): <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/014/2012/en>

Name: Hassan Mshaima', 'Abdelwahab Hussain, 'Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad, Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri, Mohammad Hassan Jawwad, Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il, Abdullah al-Mahroos, 'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher, Ebrahim Sharif, Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja

Gender m/f: All male

Further information on UA: 139/11 Index: MDE 11/034/2012 Issue Date: 24 May 2012