

# URGENT ACTION

## ZAINAB AL-KHAWAJA SENTENCED; TRIALS CONTINUE

**Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja's trials are continuing. She and another woman both started a five-day hunger strike on 20 May in protest against their continuing detention. Zainab Al-Khawaja has been sentenced to one month in prison in one of her trials.**

On 24 May, a lower criminal court sentenced **Zainab Al-Khawaja** to 30 days in prison for taking part in an 'illegal gathering' and assaulting an officer but she has already served her sentence because she has spent more than 30 days in prison. On 2 May she had been acquitted of a separate charge for insulting an officer in the military hospital, while on 21 May she was fined 200 dinars (approx US\$ 530) in a separate case for insulting a police officer but she has apparently refused to pay the fine. Zainab al Khawaja is currently at 'Issa Town prison for women and she faces two further trials: the first for obstructing the traffic during a protest and the second, together with **Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf** for "illegal gathering", "inciting hatred against the regime" and a further charge related to the alleged assault of police officers, relating to their arrest in December 2011. On 22 May a lower criminal court postponed the case to 29 May. According to the information received by Amnesty International there is no indication that the two women have used or advocated violence and they both deny the charges.

Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf was first arrested on 15 December 2011 along with Zainab Al-Khawaja after the police dispersed a peaceful protest at a roundabout in the outskirts of Manama, using teargas and sound bombs. Both women were released on 20 December and are facing trial on 29 May together.

Mas'uma Sayyid Sharaf was arrested again on 27 April 2012 together with another two women, after taking part in a protest in front of the Ministry of Interior and they face a separate court hearing on charges of "illegal gathering" and allegedly assaulting three policewomen. The other two women were released a few days later but Mas'uma Sayyid Sharaf is still detained, at the women's detention centre in 'Issa Town.

### Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Expressing concern that Zainab al-Khawaja and Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf are held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and urging the Bahraini authorities to release both women immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to protect the women from torture and other ill-treatment and to ensure they are granted all necessary medical treatment.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 6 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**

#### Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah Al Khalifa  
Ministry of Interior  
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1723 2661  
Email, via website:  
[http://www.interior.gov.bh/complaints\\_en.aspx](http://www.interior.gov.bh/complaints_en.aspx)  
Twitter: @moi\_Bahrain  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### Public Prosecutor

'Ali al-Bu'ainein  
Public Prosecution Office  
P.O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1753 0884  
**Salutation: Dear Mr 'Ali al-Bu'ainein,**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 117/12. Issue date: 24 May 2012.  
Further information: <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/026/2012/en>.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zainab Al-Khawaja's family have said that she started a hunger strike on 20 May 2012 along with her fellow detainee Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf. On 23 May Zainab Al-Khawaja was taken to hospital because her blood sugar level had dropped, but it rose after she began drinking fruit juice. Her family were allowed to visit her in hospital. Both women stopped their hunger strike on 25 May.

Zainab Al-Khawaja is a Bahraini activist and the daughter of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, one of the 14 prominent opposition activists sentenced by a military court to harsh prison terms in June 2011. He has been on hunger strike for more than two months in protest against his detention.

Zainab Al-Khawaja was arrested on 21 April 2012 after sitting down on a highway close to the Financial Harbour in protest at her father's detention and the general human rights situation in Bahrain. She has been sentenced in two cases and acquitted on a third one.

The human rights crisis in Bahrain is not over. Despite the authorities' claims to the contrary, state violence against those who oppose the Al Khalifa family rule continues, and in practice, not much has changed in the country since the brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters in February and March 2011.

The Bahraini authorities have been vociferous about their intention to introduce reforms and learn lessons from events in February and March 2011. In November 2011, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) set up by King Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa, submitted a report of its investigation into human rights violations committed in connection with the anti-government protests. The report concluded that the authorities had committed gross human rights violations with impunity, including excessive use of force against protesters, widespread torture and other ill-treatment of protesters, unfair trials and unlawful killings. The report also urged the government to establish immediately an independent body made up of representatives of civil society, the opposition and the government; to oversee the implementation of the BICI's recommendations; to usher in legislative reforms to ensure laws are in line with international human rights standards; and to bring to justice those responsible for abuses.

So far, however, the government's response has only scratched the surface of these issues. Reforms have been piecemeal, perhaps aiming to appease Bahrain's international partners, and have failed to provide real accountability and justice for the victims. Human rights violations are continuing unabated. The government is refusing to release scores of prisoners who are incarcerated because they called for meaningful political reforms, and is failing to address the Shi'a majority's deeply-seated sense of discrimination and political marginalization, which has exacerbated sectarian divides in the country.

For more information on this case and others see Amnesty International, *Flawed Reforms: Bahrain fails to achieve Justice for protesters*, Index MDE 11/014/2012, 17 April 2012: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/014/2012/en>

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja and Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf

Gender m/f: Female

Further information on UA: 117/12 Index: MDE 11/035/2012 Issue Date: 25 May 2012