

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST REARRESTED

Prominent Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab was arrested again on 6 June for further investigation into a complaint brought against him. Amnesty International considers him to be a prisoner of conscience.

The Public Prosecution ordered on 6 June that **Nabeel Rajab** should be detained for seven days while there is further investigation into a complaint brought against him by several people from the al-Muharraaq area, north of Bahrain. They apparently accuse him of “publicly vilifying the al-Muharraaq people and questioning their patriotism with disgraceful expressions posted via social networking websites.” In one of his tweets dated 2 June Nabeel Rajab addressed the Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, following his visit to the area, and wrote: “Khalifa: Leave the al-Muharraaq alley ways, their shaikhs and their elderly, everyone knows that you have no popularity there; and if it was not for their need for money they would not have come out to welcome you - When will you bow out?” Nabeel Rajab is being investigated under Article 364 of Bahrain's Penal Code which criminalizes the act of publishing accusations on others making them liable of a punishment and he could face up to two years' imprisonment or a fine of up to BD200 (around US\$530). He is now held at the al-Hooraa detention centre in Manama, and has not been granted bail. The same day Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court charged him with a fourth offence relating to illegal gathering.

Nabeel Rajab could therefore be facing a total of five court cases. He had been released on bail on 28 May in relation to two cases in one of which he is charged with calling on people to join him in illegal marches, and in the other with participating in an “illegal gathering” and “disturbing public order”. The court hearing into these two cases is scheduled for 17 June. He is also due to appear in court on 24 June for a hearing in connection with a third case in which he is charged with “insulting a national institution” on Twitter. Specific dates for the court case on the new charge of illegal gathering are yet to be set and once formal charges are brought up against him on the issue of insulting the Prime Minister he might face a fifth court case.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab immediately and unconditionally, as has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Calling on them to drop all the charges against Nabeel Rajab since they are related to his legitimately exercising his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression and association and ensure that all human rights organizations and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without political interference and hindrance, as recommended by several estates during the Universal Periodic Review in May 2012.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 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
Twitter: @moi_Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Public Prosecutor
Mr '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 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 128/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/036/2012/en>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST REARRESTED

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bahraini human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, organized a protest calling for the release of political prisoners on 6 February 2012. During the protest, he was assaulted by riot police who punched him several times in the face, head and back. He said: "I fell on the ground but they continued to beat me – they even stamped on me and kicked me."

On 26 April Nabeel Rajab received a summons for questioning by the Public Prosecutor's Office in connection with a complaint made against him by the Ministry of Interior. He did not go because he was about to travel abroad. He was arrested on 5 May at Manama airport upon his return to Bahrain. Nabeel Rajab was charged with "insulting a national institution" (the Ministry of Interior) in his tweets. He told the prosecutor that all tweets published in his account were his own, but he refused to answer other questions. On 16 May, he appeared before a lower criminal court in Manama and apparently told the court that the charge was vindictive, explaining that the decision to arrest and try him was political: "I only practised my right to free expression. I did not commit a crime. The decision to arrest me and put me on trial was a political decision."

The Bahraini authorities have publicly stated their intention to introduce reforms and learn lessons from events in February and March 2011, when they cracked down on anti-government protesters. In November 2011, the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), set up by the king, Shaikh 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; to bring to account those responsible for abuses; to release all prisoners of conscience and to conduct investigations into allegations of torture.

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. Despite the authorities' claims to the contrary, abuses continue to be committed against those who oppose the Al Khalifa family's rule. 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 divisions in the country.

Name: Nabeel Rajab

Gender m/f: M

Further information on UA: 128/12 Index: MDE 11/038/2012 Issue Date: 8 June 2012

