

URGENT ACTION

FREED NABEEL RAJAB FACING COURT HEARINGS

Prominent Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab was released on bail on 27 June. However, he is still facing prosecution in three pending cases relating to his peaceful exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and assembly. He has been summoned to appear in court on 5 and 9 July, and on 26 September 2012.

Nabeel Rajab was released on bail, guaranteed by his home ownership documents, by Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court on 27 June 2012. He had been detained in al-Hoora detention centre in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, since 6 June in relation to an investigation into a complaint brought against him by several people from the al-Muharraq area, north of Bahrain. Following this complaint he was charged with defamation on 14 June. The verdict in this trial is due to be delivered on 9 July 2012.

On 28 June Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court convicted Nabeel Rajab in a separate case on the charge of "insulting a national institution" (the Ministry of Interior) in his tweets. The court converted Nabeel Rajab's earlier bail payment on 28 May of 300 Bahraini Dinars (around US\$800) to a fine, but lifted a travel ban imposed earlier. However Nabeel Rajab is not sure whether he is free to travel.

Nabeel Rajab is now facing prosecution in three separate cases.

Nabeel Rajab has thanked Amnesty International for its support and stated: "You do not really realise the impact your work has on people's lives. It is so important that you carry on with your efforts".

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

- Welcoming the release on bail of Nabeel Rajab;
- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to drop all the charges against Nabeel Rajab since they relate to his legitimate exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly 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 states during the Universal Periodic Review in May 2012.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 10 AUGUST 2012 TO:

King

Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
PO 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:

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 fourth update of UA 128/12. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/038/2012/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bahraini human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, organized a protest in Manama 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 arrival at Manama airport on 5 May 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."

Nabeel Rajab is still facing three trials. In the first case he is charged with participating in an "illegal gathering" and calling for a march in Manama to demonstrate against the government on 6 February 2012 without prior notification and for participating in an "illegal gathering" and "disturbing public order". The next hearing for this case is scheduled for 26 September 2012. In the second case, he is facing a charge of "illegal gathering" brought against him on 6 June. On 21 June Branch 3 of the Lower Criminal Court postponed its hearing of this case to 5 July in order to obtain video footage allegedly showing Nabeel Rajab during this demonstration. The third case relates to the defamation charge relating to the complaint lodged by the individuals from al-Muharraq.

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 11/042/2012 Issue Date: 29 June 2012

