

TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

APPEAL FOR ACTION

RE: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS HELD INCOMMUNICADO

UPDATE: On 26 April 2011 Amnesty International reported that more than 30 health professionals, including doctors and nurses, had been arrested in Bahrain. The numbers of those detained has risen since, including at least three doctors arrested in the last two weeks. Now, 47 health professionals detained in Bahrain since mid-March have been formally charged and are likely to face trial soon before a military court. A further eight female doctors detained since mid-March were released on 4 May.

During a press conference on 3 May, the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs and the Acting Minister of Health announced that 47 health professionals -- 24 doctors and 23 nurses -- had been formally charged on 3 May by the Military Prosecutor and were now facing trial before a military court.

The 47, who are all from the majority Shi'a population, face a trial before the National Safety Court of First Instance, which is a military court. None of them has been visited by their families or relatives because family visits are not allowed by the authorities. Access to lawyers has been very limited.

According to the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs the charges against the 47 health professionals include the following:

- refusal to provide assistance to a person in need,
- embezzlement of public funds,
- assault that resulted in death,
- unauthorized possession of weapons and ammunition,
- refusal to perform duties and putting people's lives and health at risk,
- illegal detention,
- abuse of authority to suspend and stall laws and regulations,
- attempt to occupy buildings by force,
- incitement to the forceful overthrow of a political regime,
- incitement to the hatred of the regime,
- incitement to the hatred of a segment of society,
- dissemination of false news and malicious rumours that could harm the public interest and
- participation in unauthorized rallies and meetings.

The information Amnesty International has obtained on the charges indicates that they are generally vague and that some of them appear to be trumped up. Amnesty International fears that many of the detained health workers are being punished for their role during the protests when they treated injured protesters and spoke out against the government crackdown, including to foreign media.

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL



Amnesty International also fears they might be at risk of torture or other ill-treatment. These fears are heightened by the fact that many protesters were reportedly tortured following arrest and that four detainees died recently in suspicious circumstances.

The authorities have not released the names of the 47 health professionals who have been charged and Amnesty International has so far not been able to obtain information on their identities by other means. However, the organization is aware that the following doctors have been detained for at least several weeks and may be among those who have been charged:

Dr Ali al-Ekri, Dr Mahmood Ashgar, Dr Ghassan Dhaif, Dr Basim Dhaif, Dr Nader Dewani, Dr Abdulhalek al-'Oraibi, Dr Nabeel Hameed, Dr 'Arif Rajab, Dr 'Abdul-Shaheed Fadhel, Dr Sadeq Ja'far, Dr Sa'eed al-Samahji, Dr Sadeq 'Abdullah and Dr Fatima Haji.

Between 29 April and 4 May three more doctors were detained: Dr Hassan al-Tublani, Dr Raja Kadhem and Dr Majeed Khalaf. Amnesty International is not aware whether they have been charged or not.

On 4 May the following eight female doctors were released from prison, apparently without charge: Dr Nada Dhaif, Dr Khulood al-Derazi, Dr Zahra al-Sammak, Dr Nehad al-Shirawi, Dr Khulood al-Sayaad, Dr Nayera Sarhan, Dr Dunia al-Hashimi and Dr Nedhal Khalifa.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:

- Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;
- Urging the authorities to ensure immediate protection for all health workers attending victims of violence and full protection of the right to all appropriate medical care of those suffering injuries;
- Express concern that the charges announced against the Shi'a doctors and other medical staff may have been politically motivated and that they are being punished for treating injured Shi'a protesters and supporting protests in February and March 2011;
- Ensure that all detainees are granted access to lawyers of their own choosing, their relatives and any medical treatment that they may require, and that their places of detention are immediately disclosed;
- Urging that doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health and medical workers are able to carry out without discrimination their professional responsibilities to provide emergency and other medical care to those who have sustained injuries, and to document and report on their injuries, without interference or fear of reprisal.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25/06/2011 TO:

Minister of Social Development,
Health and Human Rights
Dr Fatima bint Mohammed Al
Balooshi
Ministry of Social Development
PO Box 32868, Isa Town,
Bahrain
Fax: +973 17101955
Salutation: Your Excellency

King Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al
Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama,
Bahrain
Fax: + 73 17664587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Commander-in-Chief of the
Bahrain Defence Force
Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin
Ahmed Al Khalifa
Bahrain Defence Force
Riffa Road
Bahrain
e-mail: dgcbdf@gmail.com
Fax: +973 17663923
Salutation: Your Excellency

IF YOU RECEIVE NO REPLY WITHIN SIX WEEKS OF SENDING YOUR LETTER, PLEASE SEND A FOLLOW-UP LETTER SEEKING A RESPONSE. PLEASE SEND COPIES OF ANY LETTERS YOU RECEIVE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, ATTENTION OF THE HEALTH TEAM, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 0DW OR E-MAIL: health@amnesty.org

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

