

URGENT ACTION

TEACHERS ARRESTED FOR STRIKING IN BAHRAIN

The former president and vice-president of the Bahrain Teachers' Association (BTA) have been detained since the end of March. They are now facing trial and Amnesty International believes they are likely to be prisoners of conscience.

Jalila al-Salman and **Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb**, together with several other board members of the BTA, were arrested in March and April 2011. While their colleagues were released, they were brought to trial before the National Safety Court of First Instance (a military court) on 15 June on charges which include "inciting hatred towards the regime", "calling to overthrow and change the regime by force", "calling on parents not to send their children to school" and "calling on teachers to stop working and participate in strikes and demonstrations". After further hearings on 22 and 29 June - their trial was transferred to a civilian court and postponed until further notice.

Jalila al-Salman's house in Manama was raided on 29 March by more than 40 security officers. She was reportedly taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama where she remained for about a week during which she was reportedly beaten, including with objects, and held in solitary confinement. She is believed to have been transferred to the custody of the military and held there for around two months, before being transferred again to a detention centre in 'Issa Town in Bahrain, where she is currently held. Jalila al-Salman's family were not aware of her whereabouts until soon after her transfer to the detention centre in 'Issa Town and have only been allowed to see her there on two occasions. The second of these visits was on 16 July, and was under very strict surveillance.

Amnesty International has reviewed statements issued by the BTA. One of them, published on 13 March, called on teachers and employees of the Ministry of Education to go on strike, and on parents not to take their children to school during large-scale demonstrations in Bahrain. Amnesty International has also listened to speeches delivered by Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb that made similar appeals. It has, however, seen no evidence that either of them advocated violence of any kind in these or other activities. Consequently, although the organization does not have the full details of the evidence presented so far in the trial, it believes that they are likely to be prisoners of conscience detained solely for exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly as leading members of the BTA.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Expressing concern that Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Deeb are being detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly as leading members of the BTA and calling for their immediate and unconditional release if this is the case;
- Urging the authorities to protect them from torture or other ill-treatment and immediately set up a full, impartial and independent investigation into the alleged ill-treatment of Jalila al-Salman, to make its results public, and bring to justice anyone responsible.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 2 SEPTEMBER 2011 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: +973 176 64 587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 33 033
Salutation: Your Highness

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Sheikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khlaifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs,
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 175 31 284
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After the February-March 2011 unrest in Bahrain, the Minister of Human Rights and Social Development dissolved the board of the BTA and other associations and substituted the board members by government-appointed members. Local human rights organizations have reported that many teachers and members of the BTA have been subjected to torture, detention and harassment for their participation in peaceful protests. All teachers have reportedly been released except the two mentioned above.

Hundreds of people have been detained in Bahrain in connection with anti-government protests since mid-March when Bahraini armed and security forces crushed the protests. Scores of detainees, including medical doctors and prominent opposition activists, were brought before military courts for leading the protests and in some cases for calling for regime change. On 29 June the King of Bahrain issued a decree transferring all cases being examined by military courts to ordinary civilian courts.

Name: Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb

Gender m/f: Jalila al-Salman - female

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb - male

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