

URGENT ACTION

HEALTH FEARS FOR BAHRAINI TEACHER

There are fears for the health of the former president of the Bahrain Teacher's Association (BTA) Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb following allegations that he was beaten in detention. The next hearing of his appeal and that of former vice-president of the BTA, Jalila al-Salman, is scheduled for 19 February.

Jalila al-Salman's and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's appeal hearing continued on 11 December 2011. Both defendants were present, although Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's health condition is said to have deteriorated since he was moved to Jaw prison in October. There are allegations that he was beaten after the move. Jalila al-Salman is currently free on bail. They were sentenced in September to three and 10 years in prison respectively, for using their positions to call for a strike by teachers, halting the educational process, inciting hatred of the regime, attempting to overthrow the ruling system by force, possessing pamphlets and disseminating fabricated stories and information, among other charges.

During the court hearing their lawyers asked for the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry's report to be included in the case file because of the allegations of torture detailed in it. The lawyers also asked for Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's 'confessions' allegedly obtained under torture not to be used as evidence in the case, and also requested his release on bail based on his health condition. This latter request was rejected and it is not clear if the other two requests will be accepted in the next court hearing. The next hearing has been scheduled on 19 February. Amnesty International believes Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman have not used or advocated violence. They appear to have been targeted solely for their leadership of the BTA and for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

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

- Express concern that Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb may be prisoners of conscience who have been convicted on criminal charges solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including criticism of the Bahraini government, in which case they should be released
- Urge the Bahraini authorities to ensure that their appeal meets international standards for fair trial. This means the court must start a fresh investigation, disregard statements obtained under torture, hear defendants and allow defence lawyers to call and cross-examine witnesses;
- Urge them to immediately set up an independent investigation into their alleged torture or other ill-treatment
- Urge the authorities to protect Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb from any torture or other ill-treatment and ensure he receives any medical treatment required;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 1 FEBRUARY 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: +973 176 64 587

Salutation: Your Majesty

Prime Minister

Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
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

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al
Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs,
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. This is the sixth update of UA 227/11. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/059/2011/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When she was detained earlier this year, on 29 March 2011, Jalila al-Salman's house in Manama was raided by more than 40 security officials. She was then reportedly taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama and ill-treated and verbally abused. She remained there for eight days until she was transferred to a women's detention centre in 'Issa Town, in the outskirts of Manama, the capital of Bahrain,, where she was kept in solitary confinement for 18 days. She was then transferred to a cell with other women within the same facility. Jalila al-Salman was released on bail on 21 August after more than five months in detention. On 25 September the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, sentenced her to three years in prison.

Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb was detained on 6 April after a raid on his uncle's house. Both he and his uncle were arrested; his uncle was released 72 days later. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb's family did not know where he was for 24 days. He spent 64 days in solitary confinement during which he says he was tortured. His family and lawyer were only allowed to see him during the first session of his trial on 7 June. Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb has remained in prison since his arrest. He was sentenced with Jalila al-Salman on 25 September before the National Safety court of First Instance, a military court, to 10 years in prison.

Both were convicted of using their positions to call for a strike by teachers, halting the educational process, inciting hatred of the regime, attempting to overthrow the ruling system by force, possessing pamphlets and disseminating fabricated stories and information, among other charges.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) was established by Royal Decree on 29 June to investigate abuses during the March/February protests and other abuses in the following months. The full report was published on 23 November.

Hundreds of cases were covered in the report, including beatings of protesters by security forces, mass arbitrary arrests of mainly Shi'a opposition activists and widespread torture, with five deaths resulting from torture in custody. In all, at least 46 people have died in connection with the protests, including five security personnel. The report urged the Bahraini government to immediately establish 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 account those responsible for abuses.

Name: Jalila al-Salman (female) and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb (male)

Gender m/f: Both

Further information on UA: 227/11 Index: MDE 11/068/2011 Issue Date: 21 December 2011