

URGENT ACTION

SENTENCE AGAINST WOMEN PROTESTERS UPHELD

The five-year sentence handed down to two women protesters for attempting to enter the Formula 1 circuit during a protest at the 2013 Bahrain Grand Prix was upheld on 31 August 2014 by the High Court of Appeal.

Nafeesa al-'Asfoor and **Rayhana al-Mousawi** were sentenced to five years in prison on 29 April 2014 by the Fourth High Criminal Court for "possession of explosives" and "planning to commit terrorist acts" under the anti-terrorism law, after they attempted to enter the Formula 1 circuit during a protest at the Bahrain Grand Prix last year. They have denied the charges. On 31 August the High Court of Appeal upheld their sentences.

There is no new information into their formal complaints to the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) and the Ombudsman of the Ministry of Interior, to have their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment investigated. In October 2013 the SIU conducted an initial interview of both of them as victims of torture but no results have been made public yet and no one is known to have been brought to justice in connection with their torture allegations.

In a separate trial, on 29 May 2014 the High Court of Appeal reduced the five years' imprisonment sentence against Rayhana al-Mousawi to three years. On 29 September 2013 Branch 4 of the High Criminal Court had sentenced her to five years in prison on charges of "belonging to and sharing activities with a terrorist organization [the 14 February Coalition]".

During Amnesty International's visit to Bahrain between 3 and 9 May 2014, delegates met Rayhana al-Mousawi in the 'Issa Town Detention Centre for Women. She said that she had been tortured.

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

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to ensure there is a prompt, independent and impartial investigation into Nafeesa al-'Asfoor and Rayhana al-Mousawi's allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging the authorities to quash Nafeesa al-'Asfoor and Rayhana al-Mousawi's convictions and sentences as it appears that evidence used in their trial was based on statements marred by allegations of torture;
- Urging the authorities to order a retrial of both women in proceedings that meet international standards of fair trial.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 OCTOBER 2014:

King

Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
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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
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Twitter: @moi_Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama
Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 1284
Email: minister@justice.gov.bh
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

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 second update of UA 232/13. Further <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/012/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In the run up to the April 2013 Formula 1 Grand Prix in Bahrain, clashes between protesters and the security forces increased and continued during the event, resulting in dozens of arrests. Afterwards, on 24 April, the Bahraini government cancelled a planned visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, Juan Mendez, for the second time in two years.

Rayhana al-Mousawi and 49 men were convicted on 29 September 2013 for their involvement in the “14 February Coalition” and received sentences of up to 15 years in prison. Rayhana al-Mousawi was sentenced to five years’ imprisonment “for belonging to and sharing activities with a terrorist organization [the 14 February Coalition]”. Amnesty International raised concerns about the unfairness of the trial. Please see this press release: *Bahrain: 50 Shi’a activists sentenced amid torture allegations*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/bahrain-50-shi-activists-sentenced-amid-torture-allegations-2013-09-30> and Urgent Action 114/13 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/047/2013/en>.

Their trial fell far short of international standards for fair trial. Many in the group alleged they were tortured, sometimes with electric shocks, to force them to “confess”. The court relied on their “confession” instead of ordering an investigation into their torture allegations. Defendants were also arrested without warrants. Some were violently taken from their homes, apparently after the security forces smashed down their front doors. Lawyers complained to the court that they had not been allowed to visit their clients. The court refused to allow defence lawyers to call witnesses, and some prosecution witnesses were apparently not heard, depriving the defence of the right to cross-examine witnesses. Some defendants, who were already serving prison sentences or were being held pending investigation in other cases, were brought before the court unaware that they faced new charges. They did not have the assistance of lawyers at this trial.

One of the defendants, ‘Abd ‘Ali Khair, was apparently sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment just for forwarding an email containing a statement by the “14 February Coalition”.

In March 2014 the Bahraini government listed the “14 February Coalition”, together with two other groups, as a terrorist organization after a bomb blast killed three policemen.

The “14 February Coalition” emerged as a movement of several Bahraini youth groups, named after the date when Bahrain's uprising began in 2011, and is said to be led by anonymous people who organise protests mainly via social media websites.

More than three years since the uprising in Bahrain and the subsequent fanfare of reform, prisoners of conscience (including many arrested during the protests) remain behind bars and the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly are still being suppressed. In recent months more people have been jailed simply for daring to express their views, whether via Twitter or during peaceful marches. Bahraini courts have appeared more concerned with toeing the government’s line than offering effective remedy to Bahrainis and upholding the rule of law.

Name: Nafeesa al-‘Asfoor, Rayhana al-Mousawi

Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 232/13 Index: MDE 11/028/2014 Issue Date: 12 September 2014