

EXTERNAL

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Fear of torture/Legal concern

20 February 1997

BAHRAIN'Ali Hassan Yusuf, writer and poet, aged 40

'Ali Hassan Yusuf, a well known Shi'a Muslim writer and poet, was arrested on 16 February 1997 at his home in Jidd Hafis. He is being held incommunicado and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment. His precise whereabouts are unknown but in the majority of cases detainees are initially held at al-Manama Prison (also known as al-Qal'a Prison) where they undergo interrogation. Amnesty International does not know the exact reasons for his arrest but it is believed to be connected with the recent publication by 'Ali Hassan Yusuf of the second part of a collection of poetry entitled *Isharat*. According to information received 'Ali Hassan Yusuf was summoned for interrogation by the Ministry of Interior on 25 January 1997, shortly after publication of the book, and simultaneously dismissed from his job at the Ministry of Information. The Minister of Information reportedly gave orders for the book to be withdrawn.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Hundreds of detainees, including prisoners of conscience, arrested since anti-government protests erupted in Bahrain in December 1994 are still held without charge or trial under the provisions of a decree law on state security measures issued by the Amir, Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, in 1974.

Numerous other people have been routinely summoned by government officials for questioning. Punitive measures have also been taken by the authorities against a number of individuals, among them civil servants, teachers and university lecturers, by terminating their employment. A recent case is that of Zahra 'Issa al-Zira who, on 20 January 1997, was reportedly asked to resign her job at the Faculty of Education, University of Bahrain, allegedly for making comments about the current political situation in the country.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic or your own language:

- requesting clarification of the reasons and legal basis for the arrest of 'Ali Hassan Yusuf;
- urging that he be released immediately if he is being held solely for the expression of his conscientiously held beliefs;
- seeking assurances that he is being humanely treated and urging that he be granted immediate access to a lawyer, relatives and medical care as necessary.

APPEALS TO:

His Highness
Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Office of His Highness the Amir
PO Box 555
The Amiri Court
Rifa'a Palace, Bahrain

Telexes: 8666 Qasar BN; 8500 Qasar BN
Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +973 668884
Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency

Shaikh Muhammad Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
PO Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +973 276765 or 290526
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
PO Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +937 533033
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 April 1997.