

EXTERNAL

AI Index: MDE 11/06/97

UA 93/97

Arbitrary detention / Fear of torture

3 April 1997

**BAHRAIN**Ahlam al-Sayyid Mahdi, aged 19, university student  
Amal Ahmad Rabi', aged 19, university student  
Maryam Ahmad Bilway, aged 18  
Laila 'Abd al-Nabi Rabi', aged 16, secondary school student

The four young women named above were among a number of people arrested after participating in a demonstration which took place in the village of Sitra on 26 March 1997. They have been held incommunicado without charge since their arrest, and are believed to be detained at a police station in Madinat 'Issa.

There are fears that they may be tortured or ill-treated while in custody.

Five other women were also reported to have been arrested on the same day following a similar demonstration in al-'Ikr, but it is not known whether they remain in detention.

The demonstrations were held on the anniversary of the execution on 26 March 1996 of 'Issa Ahmad Qambar, the first person to be convicted and sentenced to death by the State Security Court in connection with the current political unrest in Bahrain. According to information received by Amnesty International, riot police surrounded the areas where the demonstrations were being held, backed up by a helicopter from which the demonstrators' movements could be observed. The four women named above were arrested in a house in Sitra where they had taken refuge after riot police broke up the demonstration.

#### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Scores of women and young girls have been among those arrested by riot police and security forces in connection with mass protests in Bahrain calling for the restoration of democratic rights and the release of political prisoners.

In most cases they have been held incommunicado without charge for periods ranging from several days to two months. Some were reported to have been ill-treated while in custody. For example, in March 1996, similar demonstrations were held following the execution of 'Issa Ahmad Qambar. Around 25 women and high school students were among those arrested on that occasion and held at Madinat 'Issa. Three of them were reportedly stripped to their underclothes by female security officers and were kept standing for up to four hours at a time during interrogation. Two of them were deprived of the use of sanitary facilities or food for a period, while the high school students were reportedly threatened with rape by male officers.

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

- expressing concern about the arrest of the four women and seeking clarification of the reasons and legal basis for their continued detention;
- seeking assurances that they are being humanely treated and urging that they be granted immediate access to their relatives and lawyers;
- urging that they be immediately released unless they are promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and brought to trial in accordance with international standards.

#### **APPEALS TO:**

His Excellency  
Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa  
Prime Minister

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PO Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain  
**Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN**  
**Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain**  
**Faxes: +973 533033**  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

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: Interior Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain**  
**Faxes: +973 276765 or 290526**  
**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 17 May 1997.