

URGENT ACTION

ACTIVIST PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE WAS TORTURED

Bahraini human rights activist Naji Fateel was tortured and otherwise ill-treated before he was transferred to Dry Dock Prison on 5 May 2013. He is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for his human rights activities and should be released immediately.

Naji Fateel, 39, was taken to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) after he was arrested on 2 May. According to the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, of which he is a board member, Naji Fateel was tortured and otherwise ill-treated during interrogation: he passed out at least twice, and was taken to the Ministry of the Interior's hospital. Naji Fateel was reportedly given electric shocks to his genitals, his left leg and back; subjected to waterboarding – an allegation Amnesty International has not been able to independently verify, beaten and kicked on his left leg on which he had recently had surgery, his back and head; hung in the air by one arm from the ceiling and threatened with rape. He was made to stand for several hours at a time, forbidden from sitting or resting and deprived of sleep. Naji Fateel was taken to the Public Prosecution Offices (PPO) on 3 May and he refused to be interrogated without his lawyer. He was later returned to the CID where he was reportedly further tortured. At dawn the next day he signed documents at the PPO which he had not been allowed to read. That evening he phoned his family and told them he was being held at the CID. He was transferred to Dry Dock prison on 5 May. On 9 May the PPO ordered his detention for 60 days pending investigation on charge of "establishing an organization for the purpose of calling for obstructing the enforcement of the provisions of the Constitution".

Naji Fateel had been arrested at dawn on 2 May without a warrant at his home in the village of Bani Jamra, northwestern Bahrain. His lawyer asked the Public Prosecutor's Office for information about his client, but was told they had no information about him and were not aware of any charges against him.

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

- Express concern that Naji Fateel is a prisoner of conscience held solely for his peacefully work as a human rights defender, and urging the Bahraini authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally;
- Urge the authorities to protect him from torture and other ill-treatment;
- Urge the authorities to order an immediate and independent investigation into his allegations of torture and bring anyone found responsible for abuses to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 JUNE 2013 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 1766 4587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior
 Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah Al Khalifa
 Ministry of Interior
 P.O. Box 13, al-Manama,
 Bahrain
 Fax: +973 1723 2661
 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 check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 114/13. Further information:

<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/013/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Naji Fateel is a board member of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR) a blogger and prolific twitter user, reporting on human rights violations. During marches and protests in villages he has given speeches about human rights and encouraged people to document and monitor violations.

Naji Fateel has been arrested and tortured several times. He suffers from back injuries sustained during torture in 2007 and walks with the help of a stick. On 14 February 2012 - the first anniversary of mass protests in Bahrain – he was arrested after being caught in teargas fired by police to break up crowds of people marching towards the al-Farouq Junction in Manama (formerly the Pearl Roundabout), where protestors intended to gather. He was released on bail on 17 April 2012.

Since 2011 Naji Fateel has been harassed and intimidated and has received death threats (please see: *Bahraini activists receive threats after anonymous death call*, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/bahraini-activists-receive-threats-after-anonymous-death-call-2011-03-11> and previous Urgent Actions: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/016/2012/en>, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/011/2012/en>).

Among the recommendations accepted by Bahrain in the Universal Periodic Review of 2012 are those calling on the government to abandon restrictions on human rights defenders. Since then, however, human rights defenders and other activists in Bahrain have continued to be harassed, arrested and even imprisoned for their human rights activities.

Two years after the uprising in Bahrain, and beneath the fanfare of reform, prisoners of conscience, including some arrested during the protests, remain behind bars and the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly continue to be suppressed. In recent months, not only have prisoners of conscience not been released, but more people have been jailed simply for daring to express their views, whether via Twitter or on 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.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), appointed by Royal Order on 29 June 2011, was charged with investigating and reporting on human rights violations committed in connection with the 2011 protests. At the launch of the BICI report in November 2011, the government publicly committed itself to implementing the recommendations set out in the report. The report recounted the government's response to the mass protests and documented wide-ranging human rights abuses. Among its key recommendations, the report called on the government to bring to account those responsible for human rights violations, including torture and excessive use of force, and carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture. However, many of the government's pledges remain unfulfilled. The establishment of BICI and its report was considered to be a groundbreaking initiative, but, 18 months on, the promise of meaningful reform has been betrayed by the government's unwillingness to implement key recommendations around accountability; this includes its failure to carry out independent, effective and transparent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and excessive use of force, and to prosecute all those who gave the orders to commit human rights abuses. For further information see the report *Reform shelved, repression unleashed* (Index: MDE 11/062/2012), November 2012, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/062/2012/en>.

Name: Naji Fateel
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 114/13 Index: MDE 11/014/2013 Issue Date: 9 May 2013