

URGENT ACTION

VERDICT EXPECTED FOR 13 OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS

The final verdict in the trial of 13 opposition activists will be announced on 14 August. Defence witnesses have not had the chance to give their statements yet. Amnesty International considers all 13 to be prisoners of conscience and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

The final verdict in the trial of 13 prominent opposition activists in Bahrain, originally sentenced in 2011 by a military court to between two years and life in prison will be announced on 14 August. The verdict relates to appeal hearings after the Court of Cassation decided in April 2012 to refer the case to a civilian court for a further appeal. This appeal before the Criminal Court of Appeal started on 22 May 2012. After a judge's recent decision to move all future hearings of the 13 men behind closed doors, where they would be filmed, the defendants responded by asking their lawyers not to represent them in court any longer. The court appointed them new lawyers and in the last hearing on 24 July the judge announced he would pronounce his final verdict even if the defendants kept on refusing to attend the hearings.

The verdict is now due to be announced in public on 14 August, even though the new defence lawyers appointed by the court have not had a chance to bring in defence witnesses to testify in court or to submit their final arguments to the court.

Several of the defendants have spoken out in previous court hearings to describe their alleged torture and other ill-treatment in detention, which included sexual assault and other acts of torture to coerce "confessions". Amnesty International is unaware of any independent investigation of these allegations, or of anyone having been brought to justice for alleged abuses.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- Urge the Bahraini authorities to release all 13 opposition activists immediately and unconditionally, since they are prisoners of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly;
- Urge them to quash the 13 men's convictions and sentences;
- Urge them to order an immediate and independent investigation into their allegations of torture, publish the methods and findings and bring anyone responsible for abuses to justice.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 SEPTEMBER 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 1766 4587

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 1753 3033
+973 1753 2839

Salutation: Your Highness

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, via website:
<http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default76a7.html?action=category&ID=159>

Salutation: Your Excellency

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 ninth update of UA 139/11. Further information: www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/034/2012/en

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Fourteen opposition activists were arrested between 17 March and 9 April 2011. Most were arrested in the middle of the night by groups of security officers who raided their houses and took them to an unknown location, where they were held incommunicado for weeks. Many of the 14 have alleged they were tortured during their first few days of detention when they were being interrogated by officers from the National Security Agency (NSA). None of the 14 was allowed to see their lawyers during NSA interrogations just after they were arrested. Some saw their lawyers during questioning by the military prosecutor ahead of the trial, while others were only allowed to see them during the first court hearing in May 2011, which was the first time any of the activists had seen their families since their arrest.

On 22 June, Bahrain's National Safety Court, a military court, announced its verdict and sentenced them to between two years and life in prison on charges including "setting up terror groups to topple the royal regime and change the constitution". Seven of the 14 activists were sentenced to life imprisonment: Hassan Mshaima', 'Abdelwahab Hussain, 'Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad and Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri. Four people, Mohammad Hassan Jawwad, Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il, Abdullah al-Mahroos and 'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher, were sentenced to 15 years in prison. Two people, Ebrahim Sharif and Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja, brother of 'Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, were given five-year prison terms while Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh received a prison sentence of two years.

An Amnesty International observer was present at one of the appeal sessions, on 6 September 2011. The observer concluded that no evidence was presented in court proving that the 14 had committed a crime and used or advocated violence. On 28 September 2011, in a session that lasted only a few minutes, the National Safety Court of Appeal, a military appeal court, upheld all the convictions and sentences imposed on the 14.

On 30 April 2012, the Court of Cassation in Manama ordered the 14 opposition activists to appear before a civilian court for an appeal trial. On the same day the Court of Cassation reduced the two-year sentence of one of them, Al-Hur Yousef al-Somaikh, to six months and he was released on 30 April because he had already served his sentence. However, the other 13 remain behind bars in al Jaw prison. Their appeal before a civilian court of appeal started on 22 May 2012.

For more information on this case and others see the report '*Flawed Reforms: Bahrain fails to achieve Justice for protesters*' (MDE 11/014/2012): <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/014/2012/en>

Name: Hassan Mshaima', 'Abdelwahab Hussain, 'Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, Abdel-Jalil al-Miqdad, Sa'eed Mirza al-Nuri, Mohammad Hassan Jawwad, Mohammad 'Ali Ridha Isma'il, Abdullah al-Mahroos, 'Abdul-Hadi 'Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher, Ebrahim Sharif, Salah 'Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja
Gender m/f: All male

Further information on UA: 139/11 Index: MDE 11/048/2012 Issue Date: 7 August 2012