

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED SHI'A MUSLIMS AT RISK IN BAHRAIN

A group of 23 opposition activists, clerics and human rights defenders have been accused in Bahrain of plotting to overthrow the government. Twenty-one of them, all men and all Shi'a Muslims, have been detained in what appears to be a clampdown before parliamentary elections on 23 October 2010. The men are held incommunicado and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.

According to media reports a group of 23 Shi'a Muslim activists, including human rights defenders, political activists and Shi'a clerics, were charged in late August with forming an illegal organization, aiming to overthrow the predominantly Sunni Muslim Bahraini government and dissolve the Constitution, inciting people to "overthrow and change the political system of the country", fundraising and planning terrorist acts and other offences under Bahrain's 2006 anti-terrorism law. Twenty-one of them are held incommunicado in an unknown location. The remaining two live in London and have been charged in their absence. Abdul Jalil al-Singace, spokesperson for the Human Rights Bureau of the unauthorized opposition al-Haq organization and the first to be detained, was taken into custody on 13 August. Among those held are a number of leading members of human rights NGOs: Muhammad Saeed, a board member of the banned group the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Abdulghani al-Khanjar, head of the Committee for Defence of Martyrs and Torture Victims (which has not been officially authorized by the Bahraini authorities), Shi'a clerics Abdulhadi al-Mokhoder and Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad, and Ali Abdulemam, a blogger. The two men charged in their absence are Hassain Meshaima', al-Haq's secretary general, and Sa'eed al-Shehabi, secretary general of the opposition-supporting group, the Bahrain Freedom Islamic Movement.

Several of those detained are reported to have complained to the Public Prosecutor between 27 and 31 August that they had been tortured in detention in the days following their arrests, but no investigation is known to have been instituted. On 28 August Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad told the Public Prosecutor that he had been suspended by the wrists for several hours and punched by officials. His lawyer, who has not been allowed to represent his client before the Public Prosecutor, told Amnesty International that Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad had injuries on his body which may have been caused by torture. The Bahraini authorities have not revealed where the 21 are detained, and their lawyers have only seen them when they have appeared before the Public Prosecutor.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or Arabic:

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to disclose the whereabouts of the 21 men detained and allow them immediate access to their families and to their lawyers, whom they should be permitted to consult confidentially;
- Calling on the Bahrain authorities to carry out without delay a prompt and thorough independent investigation into the allegations of torture and other ill-treatment made by Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad and other detainees;
- Urging that any officials or others found responsible for torturing or otherwise ill-treating detainees be brought to justice in conformity with international human rights law.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 19 OCTOBER 2010 TO:

His Excellency
Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
P.O. Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: + 973 17533033
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin
Mohamed Al Khalifa
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
P.O. Box 547, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17212603
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Khaled bin Ali al-Khalifa
Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Ministry of Justice and Islamic affairs
P. O. Box 450, Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17536343
Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy headed by the King, Sheikh Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa. The head of government is the Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa. He presides over a cabinet of 20 members, 80 percent of whom belong to the Sunni Muslim royal family.

Bahrain has two legislative bodies: the Chamber of Deputies, elected by universal suffrage and the Shura Council, appointed by the King. In 2006, parliamentary elections for the Chamber of Deputies took place, with the opposition Shi'a Islamist group, al Wifaq, winning 17 out of 40 seats in a new chamber dominated by Shia and Sunni Islamist groups. The 2006 elections took place amid reports of human rights violations.

Since 2006, riots against the government have taken place in predominantly Shi'a villages. Police are alleged to have used excessive use on some occasions in the context of these riots and other disturbances,

The next parliamentary elections are scheduled to take place on 23 October 2010.

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