

# URGENT ACTION

## WOMEN AND GIRLS DETAINED IN BAHRAIN

**Sixteen women and four girls, detained on 23 September, are being tried on charges which include ‘illegal gathering’, and “incitement to hatred of the regime”. Some claim they have been tortured in detention and their lawyers have not been allowed to visit them. They may be prisoners of conscience if convicted.**

On 23 September Bahraini security forces arrested 38 women and seven girls in a city centre mall in Manama. They were preparing to take part in a protest march that was heading for the GCC Roundabout (formerly Pearl Roundabout). The women and girls were arrested without arrest warrants and interrogated without the presence of lawyers. Some of them allege that they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated during interrogation. Most of the group were released, but 16 women and four girls were formally charged. The charges include illegal gathering, incitement to hatred of the regime and assaulting security officers. Two of the women have been released on bail and 14 remain in prison in ‘Issa Town, south of Manama. The four girls were released on bail.

The trials of all 16 women and four girls began on 3 October before a lower criminal court and a juvenile court respectively. A second session followed on 6 October, and a third on 10 October. The defendants were only allowed to meet their lawyers in court. Their lawyers have requested to visit them in prison but have received no answer. A lawyer told Amnesty International that several requests to bring defence witnesses to the court had been rejected.

Amnesty International is not aware of any evidence that the accused used or advocated violence. They may all be prisoners of conscience if convicted solely on the basis of the legitimate exercise of their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. As such Amnesty International would call for their immediate and unconditional release.

### **Please write immediately in English or Arabic:**

- Express concern that the defendants may be prisoners of conscience imprisoned solely for legitimately exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and call for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience being held in Bahrain
- Urge the authorities to immediately set up an independent investigation into the alleged torture or other ill-treatment of some of the defendants, to make its results public, and bring to justice anyone responsible for torture
- Allow defendants unhindered access to their lawyers.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 NOVEMBER 2011 TO:**

#### King

Shaikh Hamad bin ‘Issa Al Khalifa  
Office of His Majesty the King  
P.O. Box 555  
Rifa’a Palace, Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1766 4587

**Salutation: Your Majesty**

#### Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khaled bin Ali Al Khalifa  
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs  
P. O. Box 450, Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 17531284

**Salutation: Your Excellency**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

Name: group of women and girls

Gender m/f: Female

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