URGENT ACTION

DOCTOR JAILED FOR "INSULTING THE KING"

Dr Sa'eed Mothaher Habib al-Samahiji was arrested on 1 July to serve a one-year sentence for "insulting the King of Bahrain". He is a prisoner of conscience.

Dr Sa'eed Mothaher Habib al-Samahiji was convicted of "publicly insulting the King of Bahrain" and sentenced on 11 December 2013 by Branch 3 of the Lower Criminal Court in the capital, Manama, to one year in prison and a 200 Bahraini Dinars (approx. US$530) bail to stop the immediate implementation of the sentence pending the appeal. He was convicted under articles 92/2 and 214 of Bahrain's Penal Code. Under Article 214, "A prison sentence shall be the penalty for any person who offends the emir of the country [the King], the national flag or emblem": this violates the right to freedom of expression. On 3 April 2014 the High Court of Appeal upheld his sentence. On 1 July he was arrested to serve his sentence in Jaw prison, around 30 km south of Manama. Amnesty International has reviewed court documents and believes he is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Dr Sa'eed al-Samahiji, an ophthalmologist, gave a short speech that was filmed on 1 September 2013 after taking part in the funeral of 22-year-old demonstrator Sadeq Sabt, who had died in Salmaniya Medical Complex a month after being run over by a police car during a demonstration on 30 July 2013. Dr Sa'eed al-Samahiji and a group of doctors had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment in 2011 for involvement in protests. He told Amnesty International that during his arrest in 2011 he had been beaten on the head, legs and kidneys and he still had problems due to this torture.

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

- Expressing concern that Dr Sa'eed Mothaher Habib al-Samahiji is a prisoner of conscience, held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression, and urging the Bahraini authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, in line with Bahrain's obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 20 AUGUST 2014 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 (keep trying)
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 bin Abdullah 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 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.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Dr Sa'eed Mothaher Habib al-Samahiji, an ophthalmologist, was part of a group of health professionals from the Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama who were arrested in March and April 2011. Some of them had been vocal in giving interviews to foreign journalists and accusing the government of abuses against protesters. All were held incommunicado for several weeks. In most cases their families did not know their whereabouts for most of this time and were only allowed to see them during the first session of their trial before the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, which started on 6 June 2011. They were sentenced in September 2011 by this court to between five and 15 years in prison. In June 2012, the High Criminal Court of Appeal reduced the sentences of nine of them, including Dr Sa'eed al-Samahiji, to between one month and five years in prison and acquitted the others. On 1 October 2012 Bahrain’s Court of Cassation in Manama rejected appeals by the nine doctors and nurses against their convictions and upheld their sentences. Dr Sa’eed al-Samahiji was released on 24 April 2013 after completing his prison sentence. Of the group, Dr ‘Ali ‘Esa Mansoor al-‘Ekri, a consultant surgeon, is still serving a five-year prison sentence in Jaw prison.

After reviewing legal documents and evidence, Amnesty International found no evidence that any of them had used or advocated violence in their role in 2011 pro-reform demonstrations. The organization considered them prisoners of conscience, jailed only for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Name: Dr Sa’eed Mothaher Habib al-Samahiji
Gender m/f: m

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