

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bahrain-jail-terms-upheld-for-shiite-29-09-2011,41074.html>

Middle East & North Africa - Bahrain

Rigged prosecution

Jail terms upheld for Shiite opposition members, trials of photographers begin

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Reporters Without Borders condemns a special court's decision on appeal on 27 September to uphold the prison sentences that were passed on 22 June on 14 members of the Shiite opposition including the blogger **Abdeljalil Al-Singace**, who was sentenced to life imprisonment.

They were convicted of creating and running a terrorist group designed to change the constitution and the system of monarchy by force, being in contact with a foreign terrorist group that acts in the interests of a foreign country and carries out hostile actions against Bahrain, and raising funds for this group.

The appeal court's ruling did not concern the seven other activists who were tried in absentia, because they could only appeal after turning themselves in to the authorities.

"We condemn this rigged prosecution before a court that ceased to be competent when the state of emergency was lifted on 1 June and we reiterate our call for the release of all prisoners of conscience in Bahrain," Reporters Without Borders said. "There has been no improvement in media freedom. The government is using the trials of its opponents in order to silence all dissenting voices."

The list of abuses against bloggers and journalists continues to get longer. The authorities again obstructed the free flow of information by [refusing](#) to allow an *Al-Jazeera* crew to come to Bahrain to cover the partial parliamentary elections that were held on 24 September.

They also [prevented](#) Abduljalil Khalil, a former parliamentary representative of the opposition party *Al-Wefaq*, from giving interviews to the *BBC*, *Al-Masar* and *Al-Hiwar* by disconnecting his phone calls on the day of the elections.

Four photographers who were previously tried before military courts – **Mohamed Al-Aradi**, **Zuhair Aoun Al-Shama'a**, **Mojtaba Salmat** and **Mohammed Al-Sheikh** – have meanwhile been summoned before civilian courts. None of them had access to a lawyer during interrogation or during the first trial.

Al-Aradi and Al-Shama'a are to be tried on 20 and 22 November respectively for covering a demonstration that was authorized and for "inciting hatred of the government by posting photos on the Internet." Salmat is to be tried on 14 November for taking photos for foreign TV stations and for participating in unauthorized demonstrations.

Al-Sheikh is to be tried on 23 October on charges of [photographing](#) banned [demonstrations](#) and inciting hatred of the government by disseminating [photos](#), [online](#) that caused harm to Bahrain. He is also accused of sending the photos to foreign news agencies.

Reporters Without Borders calls for the immediate release of these photographers and the withdrawal of all the charges against them. The press freedom organization wrote to Dr. Salah Ali Mohamed Abdulrahman, the head of the foreign affairs commission, on 20 September calling for the release of all dissidents. No reply has so far been received.

On 19 September, Reporters Without Borders also wrote to Cherif Bassiouni, the head of an

independent commission of inquiry appointed by King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa, about the abuses against journalists and the many media freedom violations since the start of the anti-government protests last February.
