

TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

APPEAL FOR ACTION

UPDATE: Prosecution of 20 health professionals, Bahrain, 2011-2013

Appeals for two health professionals still in custody

Two health professionals Dr 'Ali 'Issa Mansoor al-'Ekri and Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim al-Dumestani have been in detention since early October 2012, prior to which they had been free on bail. They are serving prison sentences of five and three years respectively after the Court of Cassation upheld their convictions and sentences on 1 October 2012. Dr 'Ali al-Ekri and Ebrahim al-Dumestani were among dozens of Bahraini health professionals who were arrested in 2011 following widespread anti-government protests which started on 14 February that year. They were accused of direct involvement in the anti-government activities. They were first tried and sentenced by a military court before their case was transferred to a civilian court (see details below).

Amnesty International is calling on the Bahraini authorities to release the two health professionals immediately and unconditionally, as they are detained solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly -- as such are prisoners of conscience.

BACKGROUND

Forty-eight health workers were arrested in March and April 2011 following widespread protests at the al-Farooq Junction (formerly know as Pearl Roundabout) in the capital, Manama. They included paramedics, nurses and doctors, mostly from al-Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama. The 48 people were split into two groups, one of 20 health workers accused of felonies, or more serious offences, and the other group of 28 accused of misdemeanours, or less serious offences. All those accused of misdemeanours were released on bail by the end of June 2011 and were nearly all subsequently convicted and sentenced to short prison terms, typically three months imprisonment. All were eventually acquitted on appeal.

The 20 accused of the more serious offences were tried before the National Safety Court of First Instance, a military court, and sentenced to periods of imprisonment ranging from five to 15 years for, among other charges, "possession of unlicensed weapons", "attempting to occupy by force a public building, "calling for regime change", "seizure of medical equipment" and "public gathering without authorization". All were released on bail. In early October 2011, trials before military courts stopped and since then all trials have been heard before civilian courts. In June 2012, the High Criminal Court of Appeal in Manama upheld the conviction of nine of the health professionals who were tried on charges relating to their role in demonstrations in February and March 2011, but reduced their sentences to prison terms ranging between one month and five years. Most of the nine alleged they were tortured or

otherwise ill-treated during their initial detention in 2011. Another nine were acquitted of all charges. Two others, 'Ali Hassan al-Sadadi and Qassim Mohammad 'Omran, had their appeals rejected because they were not present in court during the appeal process, and consequently their 15-year sentences still stand. A number of doctors have been prevented from practising medicine as a result of their convictions.

During a visit to Bahrain between 19 and 25 January 2013, Amnesty International delegates met seven prisoners of conscience in Jaw Prison, individually and in private, for 20 minutes each. These included Dr. 'Ali Issa Mansoor Al-'Ekri. Each of them said they had been jailed on trumped-up charges or under laws that repress basic rights, and some complained of restrictions on communications and visits or inadequate health care in prison.

On 26 May 2013, the lawyer acting for Ebrahim Al-Dumestani urged the Public Prosecution Office (PPO) to look again into the complaint he filed about torture and ill-treatment during his first period of detention. Ebrahim Al-Dumestani reportedly still suffers from pain in the back.

Two high-ranking police officers -- one man, one woman -- were acquitted on 1 July 2013 by a court of appeal of their alleged involvement in the torture of six of the 20 health professionals.

CASE DETAILS

The following health professionals remain in Jaw prison serving their sentences:

Ebrahim Abdullah Ebrahim Al-Dumestani (m)

Dr. Ali Esa Mansoor Al-'Ekri (m)

The following health professionals were convicted in absentia and sentenced to 15 years imprisonment:

'Ali Hassan Al-Sadadi (m), dentist

Dr. Qassim Mohammad 'Omran (m), respiratory medicine specialist

According to information received by Amnesty International both are outside Bahrain.

Amnesty International is continuing to investigate reports that a number of doctors have been banned from practising medicine as a result of their convictions.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Please write to the addresses below

- o Introducing yourself as a health professional concerned with human rights
- O Mentioning any previous appeals you have made to the Bahraini authorities about the detained health professionals
- O Urging that Dr 'Ali Issa Mansoor Al-'Ekri and nurse Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim Al-Dumestani be released immediately and unconditionally as they are imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly and as such are prisoners of conscience;
- O Urging the Bahraini authorities to independently investigate Ebrahim Abdullah Ebrahim Al-Dumestani's allegations of torture and to ensure that anyone found responsible for abuses is brought to justice;
- O Asking the authorities to provide you with a list of health professionals who have been banned from professional practice as a result of their prosecution in 2011-2012.

ADDRESSES

[see over]

King

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Salutation: Your Majesty

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Please send copies to:

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