

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED QATARI ACTIVISTS ON HUNGER STRIKE

Two detained Qatari activists started a hunger strike on 8 April in protest against their continued detention without charge. On 5 April they were told without further explanation that their detention had been extended for another two weeks.

On 5 April, the General Prosecutor's office informed **Muhammad Issa al-Baker**, 40, and **Mansour bin Rashed al-Matroushi**, 34, that their detention without charge has been extended for another two weeks. They were provided with no reason for the extension and are yet to be charged with any crime or presented with an arrest warrant. On 8 April the activists decided to go on a hunger strike in protest against their prolonged and unfair detention.

Activists who tried to contact them on 11 April were told that Muhammad Issa al-Baker had become too ill to speak on the phone or to walk. He has been visited by doctors who reportedly found that he suffers from low blood pressure and diabetes and that his condition has now become critical since he has been refusing to eat. They suggested that he should urgently be fed by a feeding tube, which he refused.

Muhammad Issa al-Baker and Mansour bin Rashed al-Matroushi were arrested at a checkpoint manned by plain-clothes security force personnel on 22 March. They were taken to Doha's central police headquarters. The police acknowledged to the men's families that they were detaining them, but did not provide reasons for doing so. The arrest seems to have been prompted by a letter written by a large number of activists, which was delivered by the two men to the French embassy. According to the authorities, the letter, dated 3 March 2013, contains threats against the French embassy and citizens should France go ahead with its military intervention in Mali. However, according to the activists it was merely a protest letter warning the French authorities that a military intervention in Mali would increase hatred and violence. On 7 March, the French embassy notified the police authorities of the letter.

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

- √ Calling on the Qatari authorities to ensure Muhammad Issa al-Baker and Mansour bin Rashed al-Matroushi have adequate access to qualified health professionals providing health care in accordance with medical ethics;
- √ Calling for the two men to be released without delay unless they are charged with an internationally recognizable crime and promptly tried in proceedings which fully comply with international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 MAY 2013 TO:

Minister of Interior

Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalid Al Thani

Ministry of the Interior

PO Box 920

Doha, State of Qatar

Fax: +974 4432 2927

Email: info@moi.gov.qa

Salutation: Your Excellency

Attorney General

Dr Ali bin Fetais Al Marri

PO Box 705

Doha, State of Qatar

Fax: +974 4484 3211

Email: info@pp.gov.qa

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Head of state (Amir of Qatar)

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani

PO Box 923

Doha, State of Qatar

Fax: +974 4436 1212

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. This is the third update of UA 71/13. Further information:

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE22/005/2013/en>, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE22/006/2013/en> and <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE22/007/2013/en>

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Freedom of expression is strictly controlled in Qatar, and the press often exercises self-censorship. The right to freedom of expression is further threatened by the 2004 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Convention for the Suppression of Terrorism, the provisions of which risk criminalizing legitimate activities. The Qatari government acceded to this convention in May 2008.

Since 2011, the State Security, which runs its own detention facilities, has detained a number of people, some of them for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. Most of those detained by State Security have reported torture and other ill-treatment during periods of detention prior to charge or trial, particularly during periods of incommunicado detention. Activists in Qatar have lately raised concerns that there has been a pattern of State Security personnel, generally operating in plain clothes, not identifying themselves when carrying out arrests and holding detainees in police detention centres and not in facilities run by them. The aim appears to be to deny responsibility for carrying out particular arrests and detentions and thereby to deflect criticism about their working practices.

Qatari poet Mohammed al-Ajami (also known as Mohammed Ibn al-Dheeb) was arrested by State Security on 16 November 2011 in Doha, and charged with "inciting to overthrow the ruling system" and "insulting the Amir". He had presented himself to State Security when summoned, and immediately been arrested. He was detained incommunicado for months before he was allowed family visits. Local activists believe that the real reason for his arrest was his 2011 work "the Jasmine Poem", which he wrote during the wave of protests throughout the Arab world that began in December 2010. The poem criticized Gulf states and reads: "We are all Tunisia in the face of the repressive elite". In November 2012, the Criminal Court in Doha sentenced him to life in prison. Some observers were not allowed to enter the court, and Mohammed al-Ajami himself was not present at the sentencing. On 25 February 2013, the Court of Appeal in Doha reduced his sentence to 15 years' imprisonment.

Names: Muhammad Issa al-Baker, Mansour bin Rashed al-Matroushi
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 71/13 Index: MDE 22/008/2013 Issue Date: 12 April 2013