

URGENT ACTION

MARYAM AL-KHAWAJA FREE ON BAIL, AWAITING TRIAL

Maryam Al-Khawaja was released on bail on 18 September. Her trial before the High Criminal Court has been scheduled for 1 October on a charge of “assaulting police officers”.

Maryam Al-Khawaja was released on bail on orders of the High Criminal Court on 18 September. The court also issued her with a travel ban. Before leaving 'Issa Town Detention Centre for Women, Maryam Al-Khawaja told the security authorities that she would carry on with her human rights activities.

Maryam Al-Khawaja had appeared on 16 September before a Lower Criminal Court judge, who extended her detention for a second time and referred her case to the High Criminal Court. Her trial on a charge of “assaulting police officers” at Bahrain International Airport in the capital, Manama, will begin on 1 October.

Maryam Al-Khawaja was reunited with her father and the rest of her family in Jaw Prison on 15 September after she had been on hunger strike for five days in protest at not being allowed to visit him.

Amnesty International believes Maryam Al-Khawaja is being targeted for relentlessly exposing the human rights violations taking place in Bahrain since 2011 and that the charge of assaulting police officers appears unreasonable.

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

- Calling on the authorities to drop the charge against Maryam Al-Khawaja since it is motivated by the legitimate exercise of her right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression and ensure that all human rights organizations and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 OCTOBER 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. This is the second update of UA 225/14. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/026/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Maryam Al-Khawaja is the co-director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights. Her father, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, is a prisoner of conscience and one of the 13 opposition activists. Since the beginning of the uprising in Bahrain in 2011 she has been highlighting human rights violations in the country and vigorously campaigning for the release of her father and others. She is a dual Danish and Bahraini citizen and has been living abroad for several years. During the detention of Nabeel Rajab, the director of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), she took the role of Acting Director of the organization. Between 1 and 23 November 2013 BCHR organized a campaign called "End Impunity in Bahrain". During the campaign the BCHR published the names of people it deemed responsible for, or involved in, ongoing human rights violations in the country.

She was arrested on 30 August upon arrival at Bahrain International Airport in Manama. She was searched by police officers and apparently refused to hand over her mobile phone. The police told her there was a court case against her. That night Maryam Al-Khawaja was interrogated by the Public Prosecutor, in the presence of her lawyer, in connection with this airport incident. She refused to answer the Public Prosecutor's questions because she was not allowed to speak to her lawyer before or during the interrogation. She was charged with "assaulting police officers while performing their duties" and was detained for seven days pending investigation. She was held at the 'Issa Town Detention Centre for Women, south of Manama.

On 4 September the Public Prosecution replied to a letter sent by Amnesty International which sought clarification of the reasons for the arrest of Maryam Al-Khawaja and her current legal status. Their response said that Maryam Al-Khawaja had arrived at Bahrain airport holding a Danish passport without a visa. It added that she humiliated and assaulted police officers when she was told she needed a visa. On 7 September the Public Prosecution stated in another response to Amnesty International that Maryam Al-Khawaja had been accused of committing the "felony" of assaulting police officers, and provided the of the two police officers' medical reports. These stated that the police officers had respectively suffered "post-traumatic pain to both sides and right foot" and "post-traumatic pain to the right side and back, the right thumb and abrasion to the left hand". Maryam Al-Khawaja and her lawyer denied this assault had taken place. In fact the lawyer filed a complaint on her behalf before the Public Prosecution on 7 September accusing the police of assaulting her at the airport.

A group of UN independent human rights experts urged Bahrain's government on 5 September to release Maryam Al-Khawaja, saying: "The detention of Ms Al-Khawaja is another patent measure of retaliation against individuals who advocate for human rights in the country." Please see: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=14992&LangID=E>.

Maryam Al-Khawaja had flown to Bahrain to visit her father, who had started a hunger strike on 25 August in protest at his arbitrary arrest and detention. Amnesty International has adopted him as a prisoner of conscience and called for his immediate and unconditional release after he was sentenced to life in prison during an unfair trial in connection with his role in the 2011 anti-government protests in Bahrain. The organization believes he has been imprisoned solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression and assembly. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded in May 2012 that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's detention was arbitrary and called for his immediate release. Please see UA 166/14, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/023/2014/en>.

Maryam Al-Khawaja's sister, Zainab Al-Khawaja, was arrested several times between 2011 and 2014 and served a series of short prison sentences for an array of charges. They included "destroying government property", "insulting a police officer", "illegal gathering", "rioting" and "inciting hatred against the regime". Amnesty International adopted her as a prisoner of conscience as the organization believed that she had only been imprisoned for exercising her right to freedom of expression and assembly.

Name: Maryam Al-Khawaja
Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 225/14 Index: MDE 11/029/2014 Issue Date: 19 September 2014