

URGENT ACTION

A YEAR IN PRISON FOR 'INSULTING THE KING'

Ahmad Mshaima' has been sentenced to one year in prison for publicly insulting the King of Bahrain. He is also being tried in another case, charged with illegal gathering.

Ahmad Hassan 'Ali Mshaima' was sentenced on 9 December by a Lower Criminal Court to one year in prison for publicly insulting the King of Bahrain, under article 214 of the Bahraini Penal code, which criminalizes insulting the ruler of the country. He had been charged after reading a poem on 1 November during a religious festival commemorating Ashura in al-Muharraq island, north-east of Manama, which cites growing injustice in Bahrain and describes the ruler as an unjust ruler who breaks promises and sheds blood.

His lawyers complained that they had not been able to attend his interrogation at the Public Prosecution Office on 14 November, the day after he was arrested, as they were told he was not there. During the interrogation Ahmed Mshaima' acknowledged that he had read the poem and this "confession" was the main evidence used to convict him. He was not allowed to attend his first court hearing. His second hearing took place on 4 December and his lawyers were not given access to a CD containing information on the full poem he had read.

Ahmad Mshaima' has been sentenced under an article in the Penal Code that criminalizes the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression. He is also being tried in another case brought against him in December 2013 because of his participation in a public gathering on 14 February 2013. He was charged with "illegal gathering with an intent to commit crimes and disturb public security". The verdict in this case will be announced at the end of this month. In the next few days he will be transferred from Dry Dock to Jaw prison, which is for convicted prisoners.

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

- Urge the authorities to quash the sentence imposed on Ahmed Mshaima and release him immediately and unconditionally, as he has been sentenced solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to drop any pending charges against him, if he has been charged solely for exercising his right to freedom of assembly.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 JANUARY 2015 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 third update of UA 5/14. Further information:
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/046/2014/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Mshaima's father, Hassan Mshaima', is serving a life sentence in Jaw Prison, southeastern Bahrain, as one of 13 jailed opposition activists. In 2013, Hassan Mshaima' was denied adequate medical care and family visits for refusing to wear the prison uniform. See UA 139/11, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/025/2013/en> and follow-up.

Ahmad Mshaima' was arrested on 28 December 2013 and charged with "illegal gathering with an intent to commit crimes and disturb public security" following protests on 14 February that year to mark the second anniversary of the start of the uprising. His trial in this case started before the Lower Criminal Court in Manama on 13 March 2014. He denied all charges. He was released on bail on 25 June while his trial was ongoing and rearrested on 13 November in relation to the new charges brought against him.

He had told his family when they visited him after his arrest in December that he had been tortured when he was interrogated during the first hours he had been detained. This had included being beaten, kicked in the legs, forced to insult his father and his religion, and coerced into signing documents.

Name: Ahmad Hassan 'Ali Mshaima'

Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 5/14 Index: MDE 11/050/2014 Issue Date: 11 December 2014

