

MDE 11/041/2014
23 October 2014

Further information on UA 240/14 BAHRAIN - ACTIVIST SENTENCED FOR COMMENTS ON TWITTER

BAHRAIN

Bahraini activist Nader Abdulemam has been sentenced to six months in prison for “insulting” a figure of worship. Amnesty International believes he has been targeted for exercising his right to freedom of expression.

Nader Abdulemam, aged 41, was sentenced to six months in prison by the Third Lower Criminal Court on 22 October for “publicly insulting a religious figure of worship” after posting comments on Twitter about Khalid bin al-Waleed, a companion of the prophet Muhammad and a renowned Islamic commander.

Nader Abdulemam was charged under article 310/2 of the Bahraini Penal Code which criminalizes “publicly insulting a symbol or person considered sacred to members of a particular religious sect”. Laws which prohibit criticism or ridicule of a religion or belief system are incompatible with the right to freedom of expression, which is protected under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bahrain is a state party.

Nader Abdulemam has been transferred from Dry Dock prison to Jaw prison, south of Manama, the capital of Bahrain, in order to serve his sentence. As he was arrested on 27 August he should be due for release on 27 February 2015, however Nader Abdulemam is also awaiting other trials on charges of ‘illegal gathering’ for taking part in demonstrations in Manama. The government introduced new decrees in 2013 banning demonstrations in the capital.

Please write immediately in English or Arabic:

- * Urging the authorities to quash the conviction against Nader Abdulemam, as it arises solely from his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- * Urging them to release him immediately, as he appears to have been detained only on charges that are contrary to the right to freedom of expression;
- * Reminding them that any new charges brought against him solely for exercising his legitimate right to freedom of assembly should be dropped.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 DECEMBER 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: @moj_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.

BAHRAINS AMBASSAD
30 BELGRAVE SQUARE
GB-LONDON SW1 X 8QB, UNITED KINGDOM
FAX + 44 207-20 191 83
E-post: information@bahrainembassy.co.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

This is the first update of UA: 240/14. Further information:
www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/031/2014/en

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has expressed concern to the Bahraini government for many years regarding laws that prohibit the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression. Several people have been sentenced under Article 214 of the Penal Code which, together with Articles 215 and 216, criminalizes “offending the King, the national flag or emblem, a foreign country or international organization, the National Assembly or other constitutional institutions, the army, law courts, government authorities or government agencies”. These Articles violate the right to freedom of expression since they impose restrictions that are not permissible under international law and criminalize the exercise of human rights.

Name: Nader Abdulemam
Gender m/f: m