

URGENT ACTION

WOMAN ACTIVIST SENTENCED AGAIN IN BAHRAIN

Bahraini activist Zainab Al-Khawaja was sentenced to a further four months in prison by a Criminal Court in relation to two new cases brought against her for “destroying government property”.

On 27 January **Zainab Al-Khawaja**, dual Bahraini and Danish national, was sentenced by the Lower Criminal Court in Manama, the capital, to a further four months' imprisonment on charge of “destroying government property”. After neither she nor her lawyer attended trial, Zainab Al-Khawaja was sentenced namely for ripping pictures of the King belonging to the Ministry of Interior, on 4 and 6 May 2012. The trial of another case against her is also due to begin on 5 February. She is charged with “insulting a police officer” because she verbally defended another prisoner who was insulted and humiliated by a prison guard on 22 June 2013 in 'Issa Town detention centre for women, south of Manama, where both women are held.

Since 27 February 2013 Zainab Al-Khawaja has been serving several short prison sentences in five other cases and was due to be released on 20 February 2014. The sentences issued against her by lower criminal courts are final because she refused to appeal before higher courts believing that Bahrain's judiciary is controlled by the government. She has also refused to pay bail for her release. Zainab Al-Khawaja has been boycotting court hearings and refusing to appear before the Public Prosecution. However, on 27 January she was informed of the court session half an hour before it was due to take place and she informed her lawyer shortly afterward but he was unable to attend.

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

- Expressing concern that Zainab Al-Khawaja is a prisoner of conscience held solely for peacefully exercising her rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, and urging the authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally;
- Urging them to quash her prison sentences, drop all the charges and overturn all her convictions;
- Urging them to respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression and assembly 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 14 MARCH 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 eighth update of UA: 232/12. Further information:
<http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/020/2013/en>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Zainab Al-Khawaja is the daughter of activist 'Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, a prisoner of conscience. She has been arrested and released several times since December 2011. She was last arrested on 27 February 2013. That day the Appeal Court had upheld a one-month prison sentence, issued on 10 December 2012 by the Lower Criminal Court, for "entering a restricted area" (al-Farooq Junction, formerly Pearl Roundabout). Zainab Al-Khawaja had already served eight days of this sentence before being released pending appeal. The Appeal Court further upheld a two-month prison sentence for "destroying government property", as she had torn up a picture of Bahrain's king while detained in May 2012, however she had already served this sentence. On 28 February 2013 Zainab Al-Khawaja was sentenced to three months' imprisonment by the Appeal Court in Manama, for "insulting an officer" in a military hospital, overturning the verdict of a lower criminal court which had acquitted her on 2 May 2012. On 9 May 2013 the Appeal Court upheld a three months sentence for "illegal gathering and rioting" as she had staged a one-person protest in al-'Aali, north east of Manama, on 26 November 2011, to stop the police from attacking mourners grieving for a man who was allegedly killed by the police. On 22 May 2013 a lower criminal court sentenced her and fellow activist Ma'suma Sayyid Sharaf to, respectively, three months' imprisonment and bail payment of 100 Bahraini Dinars (approximately US\$265); and six months' imprisonment and bail payment of BD200 (approximately US\$530). Both had been convicted of "illegal gathering", "inciting hatred against the regime" and a further charge related to their alleged assault on police officers during arrest in December 2011. Finally, on 25 June 2013 she was sentenced to two months in prison for "insulting a policewoman" while being detained.

At the launch of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) report in November 2011, the government publicly committed itself to implementing its recommendations. The report recounted the government's response to the mass protests and documented wide-ranging human rights abuses that took place in 2011. Among its key recommendations, the report called on the government to bring to account those responsible for human rights violations, including torture and excessive use of force, and carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture.

Over two years have passed since the BICI report and the government has failed to implement the report's key recommendations. Prisoners of conscience, including some arrested during the protests, remain behind bars and the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly continue to be suppressed and more people have been jailed simply for daring to express their views, whether via Twitter or on peaceful marches. The establishment of BICI and its report was considered to be a groundbreaking initiative, but the promise of meaningful reform has been betrayed by the government's unwillingness to implement key recommendations around accountability; this includes its failure to carry out independent, effective and transparent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and excessive use of force, and to prosecute all those who gave the orders to commit human rights abuses. For further information see the report *Reform shelved, repression unleashed* (Index: MDE 11/062/2012), November 2012, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/062/2012/en>.

Bahrain's parliament held an extraordinary session on 28 July 2013, after which it submitted 22 recommendations to the King, Shaikh Hamad Bin 'Issa Al Khalifa. The recommendations toughen punishments laid out in the 2006 anti-terrorism law. A few days later the King issued several decrees further curtailing the right to freedom of expression, including banning all protests, sit-ins and public gatherings in Manama indefinitely and giving the security forces additional sweeping powers. A joint statement signed by 47 countries at the UN Human Rights Council on 9 September expressed serious concern about the ongoing human rights violations in Bahrain.

Name: Zainab Al-Khawaja

Gender m/f: f

Further information on UA: 232/12 Index: MDE 11/007/2014 Issue Date: 31 January 2014