

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bahrain-authorities-cracking-down-hard-on-28-01-2013,43958.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Bahrain

Unjust charges

Authorities cracking down hard on news providers again

28 January 2013

[Read in Arabic \(بالعربية\)](#)

Reporters Without Borders voices renewed concern about news providers in Bahrain, in particular, **Ahmed Humaidan**, a photographer detained since 29 December, and **Sayed Yousef Al-Muhafda**, a human rights activist who will go on [trial tomorrow on charges of circulating false news](#).

"We are sounding the alarm about the recent arrests of journalists and human rights activists in Bahrain and we condemn the government's nearly two-year-old policy of harsh repression," Reporters Without Borders said. "The authorities clearly want to obstruct journalists and prevent the flow of information about demonstrations and their suppression by the security forces."

Vice-president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and head of its documentation department, [Al-Muhafda](#) was [arrested](#) on 17 December and was held for a month before finally being released on 17 January pending trial.

He is charged with deliberately disseminating false news on Twitter with the aim of inciting violence because, on 17 December, he posted a [photo](#) taken on 14 December of a young injured demonstrator together with the Tweet: "#Bahrain I can confirm one shotgun injury now in #Manama."

In a [letter](#) to Bahrain's attorney general, Human Rights Watch explains that the security forces used force to disperse a group of about 30 demonstrators at around 9:15 p.m. on 14 December in the Manama district of Al-Makharqa, in the course of which a demonstrator sustained a gunshot injury to the leg.

Shortly afterwards, a photo of the injured leg was posted on several online forums. The same photo was posted on Bahrain Online on 17 December with the caption "picture of the injury of one of the youth in Manama with shot gun."

Al-Muhafda posted the photo on his Twitter account on 14 December. It was posted again on his account on 17 December, while he was attending a demonstration at which the security forces did not open fire.

Reporters Without Borders calls on the judicial authorities to change the charges against Al-Muhafda and, in particular, to drop the claim that he acted with the deliberate aim of inciting violence. The purpose of these charges is to severely punish his commitment to the free flow of information about human rights in Bahrain.

Humaidan, 25, who has received 143 international awards for his photography, has been held since his arrest on 29 December after a month of continual harassment by the security forces.

Around 15 plain-clothes police officers took him by force to a detention centre where, handcuffed and blindfolded, he was interrogated for two days and then placed in solitary confinement for the next five days. His family was not able to visit him until 6 January, when he said he had been subjected to psychological torture and death threats.

Charged with attacking a police station in Sitra on 8 April 2012, although he was there just to take photos of the use of violence by the security forces, he was initially due to have been tried on 15 January but his trial has been postponed until 12 February.

Reporters Without Borders calls for his immediate release and the withdrawal of all the charges against him.

More than 30 international human rights organizations including Reporters Without Borders sent a [joint letter](#) to US President Barack Obama on 18 January urging him to press the Bahraini authorities to release all the human rights defenders and activists they are holding.

You can download those documents on our website :

- , (PDF - 281.4 kb)
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