



**Bahrain**

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16 April 2011

## Crackdown on human rights defenders continues

### Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources that well-known lawyer Mohamed Issa Al Tajer was arrested on April 16th, 2011 at 00.30 am, in his house.

At around 11 pm on Friday April 15th, a group of more than 20 plainclothes men, obviously belonging to security forces, entered the house where Mr Al Tajer was present with his wife and young children. After thoroughly searching the house, the office, and taking computers and mobile phones, the men, all masked and armed, arrested Mr Al Tajer and took him to an unknown destination.

According to his wife, Al Tajer was not beaten up or mistreated in the house ; nevertheless, his young children were traumatized by this episode ; Mrs Al Tajer, a medical doctor, fears she might be arrested herself, like many other doctors in Bahrain, for having provided injured protesters with medical assistance.

According to the information received, the Observatory believes the authorities are increasing pressure on those who provide legal and medical assistance to protesters. The Observatory condemns this crackdown which merely seems to aim at sanctioning their peaceful and legitimate activities in favor of ensuring the respect of protesters' basic rights.

The Observatory recalls that around 600 people, including human rights defenders, political leaders, trade unionists, doctors and paramedics and clerics have been arrested. The whereabouts of a significant number of them, including prominent defender Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, remain unknown and independent access to them, including by their lawyers, is not guaranteed for the majority of these detainees. Concerns about the safety of those arrested are high, in particular after four people arrested during the protests died in custody between April 3 and 12, 2011.

The Observatory urges the Bahraini authorities to take the necessary measures to guarantee the protection of all human rights defenders in Bahrain and, more generally, to comply with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Bahrain, including the International International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

### Actions requested:

The Observatory urges the authorities of Bahrain to: i. immediately disclose the whereabouts of Mohamed Issa Al Tajer, Abdulhadi Al Khawaja and provide access to the detainees for their lawyers and families ;

ii. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mohamed Issa Al Tajer, Abdulhadi Al Khawaja, and all

human rights defenders in Bahrain;

iii. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial and administrative level, against Mohamed Issa Al Tajer, Abdulhadi Al Khawaja and against all human rights defenders in Bahrain;

iv. Conform in any circumstances with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular : its Article 1, which states that "everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels"; its Article 6 (c) which states that: everyone has the right, individually and in association with others to study, discuss, form and hold opinions on the observance, both in law and in practice, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and, through these and other appropriate means, to draw public attention to those matters; its article 9.3 which provides that : everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, inter alia [...] to attend public hearings, proceedings and trials so as to form an opinion on their compliance with national law and applicable international obligations and commitments; and to offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms; its Article 10 which provides that "No one shall participate, by act or by failure to act where required, in violating human rights and fundamental freedoms and no one shall be subjected to punishment or adverse action of any kind for refusing to do so"; and its Article 12.2 which states that "the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration".

v. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bahrain.

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Please also write to diplomatic representations of Bahrain in your respective countries.

<http://www.fidh.org/Crackdown-on-human-rights-defenders-continues>