

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bahrain-scandalous-verdict-sends-rights-10-07-2012,43005.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Bahrain

Call to free campaigner

Rights activist Nabeel Rajab victimised by justice authorities

2 August 2012

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On 5th August, a Bahrain court will hear an appeal by the activist Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, against the conviction and three-month jail sentence imposed on him last month for posting messages on Twitter that were alleged to be libellous.

At the same hearing, the court will consider another case against him for participating in illegal demonstrations, originally due to be heard on 26 September.

Pending the appeal verdict in a few days' time, Reporters Without Borders deplores the authorities' harassment of Rajab and expresses concern about the position of human rights campaigners in Bahrain.

"We urge the Bahraini justice authorities to drop the charges against Nabeel Rajab and call for his immediate release," the press freedom organization said. It condemned the crackdown on dissident voices and called on the international community to step up the pressure on the kingdom.

Rajab was found guilty of libelling the citizens of the town of Muharraq. In [his tweets](#) he accused the prime minister – who was visiting the town – of corruption and called on him to resign, saying the people had welcomed him only because they had been offered subsidies.

10.07.2012 - Scandalous verdict sends rights activist back to prison

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Reporters Without Borders strongly condemns the latest conviction and three-month sentence imposed on the activist **Nabeel Rajab**, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, for posting messages on Twitter on 2 June that were alleged to be libellous.

The eagerness with which the authorities have pursued Nabeel Rajab, whose only crime was to express himself freely, is yet another affront to human rights activists," the press freedom organization said. "The international community must step up its pressure on the kingdom, which is pursuing its crackdown against dissident voices with impunity.

"We urge Bahrain's judicial authorities to concentrate its efforts on the cases of torture and serious human rights violations of the past few months and to call the perpetrators to account."

The Fifth Lower Criminal court yesterday found Rajab guilty of libelling the citizens of the town of Muharraq. In his tweets he accused the prime minister – who was visiting the town – of corruption and called on him to resign, saying the people had only welcomed him because they had received subsidies.

A few hours later, hooded police officers entered his home after surrounding it, and took him away by force (click [here](#) for video).

Rajab was detained for three weeks in June while [the case against him was investigated](#). According a [statement by the public prosecutor](#), the decision to remand him in custody was made after the citizens of Muharraq accused him of “publicly vilifying Muharraq citizens and questioning their patriotism with disgraceful expressions posted via social networking websites”.

The verdict is particularly harsh. The [BCHR](#) website quoted Rajab’s lawyer Mohammed al-Jishi as saying the most severe penalty in libel cases was usually a fine. According to the [Reuters](#) news agency, al-Jishi said the judge had specified that the time Rajab had already spent in jail would count towards the sentence. Al-Jish has lodged an appeal, which will be heard on 18 July in the Higher Appeal Court.

At the end of June, the final verdict was given in a case concerning a commentary he had posted on Twitter, in which he was alleged to have “insulted the statutory bodies”. He was ordered to pay a fine of 300 dinars (about 650 euros) and a travel ban against him was lifted. Despite this, he was prevented from leaving Bahrain on 6 July on a scheduled trip to a number of countries, including France, for meetings.

Proceedings are still pending against Rajab in two cases linked to participation in illegal demonstrations.



Nabeel Rajab
@NABEELRAJAB

Abonnements

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