

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/bahrein-wave-of-arbitrary-arrests-of-02-10-2014,47050.html>

Middle East/North Africa - Bahrain

More arrests

## Wave of arbitrary arrests of dissident information providers

2 October 2014

International community urged to apply pressure as climate worsens again

Freelance journalist, blogger and activist **Ahmed Radhi** was freed on 29 September after being held arbitrarily for four days but the Bahraini authorities struck again on 1 October, arresting leading human rights activist **Nabeel Rajab** for allegedly insulting the government security forces in tweets two days before.

Reporters Without Borders condemns this systematic persecution of human right defenders and the renewed deterioration in the climate for freedom of information in Bahrain.

When questioned at interior ministry headquarters, Rajab [acknowledged having posted a tweet](#) in which he said that many of the men joining Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL or ISIS) came from Bahrain's security institutions, which were an ideological hothouse. The case has been referred to the prosecutor's office.

Rajab, who heads the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, was [acquitted](#) of posting defamatory tweets in 2012 despite serving two thirds of his sentence – two months – and remained in detention until May 2014 in connection with three other cases.

More than 30 plainclothes security men with no warrant [raided Radhi's home](#) in the Manama suburb of Sanabi on the night of 25 September. They searched and ransacked the premises, seized all of his electronic equipment and then left with him.

After 24 hours, he was able to tell his family he was being held at the Criminal Investigation Directorate. According to our sources, he was forced to undress at CID headquarters, photographed naked, and interrogated about his activities and his links with the media.

*"We call on the judicial authorities to drop the charges against Rajab, Radhi and all other news and information providers who have been arrested arbitrarily,"* said Reporters Without Borders deputy programme director Virginie Dangles. *"We also urge the Bahraini authorities to stop putting direct pressure on anyone daring to transmit opinions or information at variance with those authorized."*

Radhi, who was freed on bail on 29 September, works for the Lebanese newspaper [Al-Ahed](#) and the Bahraini independent newspaper [Manama Post](#). The reason for his arrest is still unknown but may have been linked to comments on Twitter and in the media criticizing the regime in the run-up to parliamentary elections.

He was [denied entry to the United Arab Emirates](#) on arrival in Dubai on 29 July.

He was [previously arrested in May 2012](#) on charges of illegal assembly and disturbing public order. His arrest was prompted by statements on *BBC Arabic* and *Lulu TV*, an opposition station based in London, in which he criticized Bahrain's proposed unification with Saudi Arabia. Tortured physically and psychologically in an attempt to extract a confession, he was freed after four months without having been tried.

### Other arbitrary arrests

Writer, blogger and women's rights activist **Ghada Jamsheer** was [arrested](#) on a defamation charge on 15 September for tweeting about alleged corruption at King Hamad University Hospital. Her arrest was the result of a complaint by Salman Attiyat Allah Al-Khalifa, a hospital official who is a member of the royal family.

Jamsheer was previously summoned to CID headquarters for questioning on 9 September. According to the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, she is [banned from appearing in the Bahraini](#)

[media and her website has been blocked since 2009](#). She was due to have been tried yesterday.

**Maryam Al-Khawaja**, the joint head of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, was arrested on arrival at Manama airport on 10 August for allegedly [attacking a policewoman at the airport](#) – a charge she categorically denies. Freed on 18 September, she is due to be tried before a criminal court on 5 November.

According to the [account of her arrest posted online](#), she was taken to a room in the airport where three other policewomen gave her a [severe beating and then arrested her](#). At her lawyer's request, a Manama court lifted a ban on her leaving the country when she appeared for a hearing yesterday.

### **Sentences upheld**

Reporters Without Borders urges the international community to put pressure on the Bahraini authorities about the grave deterioration in respect for freedom of information. In August, Reporters Without Borders issued a [report on the plight of 12 detained bloggers, photographers and video reporters and appealed for their release](#).

Since then, another photographer and cameraman, **Hussam Suroor**, was arrested on 4 September and was sentenced to 10 years in prison on 30 September for allegedly attacking an official, participating in demonstrations and possessing flammable products.

**Mansoor Al-Jamri**, a 19-year-old activist and photographer who was [arrested](#) on 9 January and was released in early September pending trial, was sentenced in absentia on 24 September to six months in prison for allegedly attacking members of the security forces.

The five-year jail sentences that were passed in April on news photographer **Hussain Hubail**, cyber-activist **Jassim Al-Nouaimi** and seven other Shiite activists were upheld by a Manama court on appeal on 21 September.

All nine were [convicted](#) of using "illegal means in the media and social networks" to disseminate information about calls for protests and for the government's overthrow during the Tamarod demonstrations in July 2013 ([LINK](#)).

In a letter sent on 17 September from the prison where they are currently being held, they describe how they were tortured before and during interrogation to extract confessions. They began a hunger strike on 9 September but called it off on 24 September on health grounds.

Photographer **Ahmed Humeidan** began a hunger strike on 2 September in protest against an appeal court's decision on 31 August to uphold [his 10-year jail sentence](#). He called it off on 21 September.

Bahrain is ranked 163rd out of 180 countries in the 2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index.

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