



Bahrain

14 March 2011

Protect threatened human rights defenders

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) expresses its deep concern as death threats are being circulating on-line against four Bahraini human rights defenders, Messrs. Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and FIDH Deputy Secretary General, Mohammed Al-Maskati, President of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR), Naji Fateel, member of BYSHR Board of directors, and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, former regional coordinator of Frontline and former President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, who have been supporting, monitoring and informing on the social protest movement which started mid-February 2011 in the country.

Since the evening of March 10, 2011, a call for the killing of three human rights defenders Messrs. Mohammed Al-Maskati, Naji Fateel and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, has been posted by unknown sources who accused the above-mentioned defenders of treason, is circulating through blackberry messenger, forums, Twitter and Facebook. Their personal information, mobile numbers, Central Population Registration (CPR) numbers, photos, home addresses, car descriptions, have been published. Since then, the three human rights defenders have been receiving numerous phone calls from unidentified individuals insulting and threatening them. Mr. Nabeel Rajab has also been regularly receiving death threats through social networks like Facebook and Twitter since the social protest movement started on February 14, 2011.

One of the messages circulating in particular on Facebook read: "These are the instigators of disorder who have organised the movements of sabotage and who are insisting on going to the Royal Court on Friday. The heads of the agitation and disorder in our beloved Bahrain need to be killed and liquidated. Follows the information on the traitors: (...)".

FIDH regrets that human rights defenders in Bahrain continue to be assimilated to political opponents. These acts of intimidation, defamation and harassment take place in the context of a wave of protests calling for a new constitution, the release of political prisoners, the end of discriminations and other political reforms in Bahrain since mid-February 2011.

FIDH expresses its deepest concern about the above-mentioned acts of harassment, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities. FIDH recalls that over the past years several defamation campaigns against human rights defenders have been either orchestrated or tolerated by the authorities.

FIDH calls on the authorities to carry out a thorough, independent and impartial investigation into these acts, the result of which must be made public, in order to bring all those responsible before a competent, independent and impartial tribunal and apply penal, civil and/or administrative sanctions as provided by law. Furthermore, FIDH urges

the authorities to express publicly its support for the work carried out by Bahraini human rights defenders and to take measures to ensure their physical integrity.

<http://www.fidh.org/Protect-threatened-human-rights-defenders,9322>