

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI OPPOSITION MEMBER AT RISK OF TORTURE

On 5 May, Nizar al-Qari, a member of the opposition party al-Wefaq, was arrested and taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID), where he alleges he was deprived of sleep and handcuffed behind his back for long periods of his detention. On 8 May, he was charged with “illegal gathering in Duraz” and taken back to the CID where he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

On 5 May, at around 3pm, **Nizar al-Qari**, a member of al-Wefaq National Islamic Society’s Consultative (Shura) Council was arrested by officers dressed in civilian clothing at his father in law’s house in Rifa’a, southwest of the capital Manama. The officers presented a summons for Nizar al-Qari that did not state any reasons for the arrest. That night at 12.30am, Nizar al-Qari called his family and said that he was held at the CID but had not yet been questioned. He did not have access to his lawyer during his detention at the CID. On 8 May, his lawyer was at the Public Prosecution Office and saw Nizar al-Qari’s name on a list but was not allowed to attend his interrogation. Following Nizar al-Qari’s interrogation, his lawyer was able to see him for five minutes in a meeting during which Nizar al-Qari told him that during his detention he was deprived of sleep and handcuffed behind his back for long periods of time. He told his lawyer that he was charged with “illegal gathering in Duraz”, his detention was extended by 30 days and that he was to be transferred to Dry Dock Prison in Manama. However, Nizar al-Qari was instead taken back to the CID, where he is currently being held. Amnesty International fears that he may have been tortured and remains at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

On 8 May, Nizar al-Qari called his family and said he was being investigated at the CID about “something bigger”. He also asked them to bring him clothes and his medication as he suffers from asthma, high blood pressure and heart palpitations. His family brought his medication and clothes to the CID but do not know if he received it, as he renewed the request on 10 and 14 May. On 10 May, at 9.40pm, Nizar al-Qari called his family again for two minutes. His family said that he was crying throughout the call and said that he can’t speak. On 14 May, he called his family again for nine minutes. The family heard a voice next to Nizar al-Qari telling him what to say. He repeatedly said that he was innocent and told his family to “bury me next to my sister”. When his family asked him why he was saying that and if he was being tortured, the line went dead.

Please write immediately in English, Arabic or your own language:

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to immediately disclose Nizar al-Qari’s legal status, and give him immediate and regular access to his family and lawyer;
- Urging them to investigate Nizar al-Qari’s allegations of torture or other ill-treatment and to ensure Nizar al-Qari is not further tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and is given prompt access to his medication and any medical attention he may require;
- Calling on them to release him unless he is charged with an internationally recognizable criminal offence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 JUNE 2017 TO:

King

Shaikh Hamad bin ‘Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa’a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1766 4587

Salutation: **Your Majesty**

Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin ‘Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Interior
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1723 2661
Twitter: @moi_Bahrain

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

And copies to:

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 1284

Email: <http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/>
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_A

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. His Excellency Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 30 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8QB, Tel: 0207 201 9170, Fax 020 7201 9183, Email: information@bahrainembassy.co.uk or through the online contact form at <http://www.bahrainembassy.co.uk/>; Salutation: Your Excellency **Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 8 May, following Nizar al-Qari's arrest, officers raided and searched Nazar al-Qari's father in law's house at 1.30am and then went to his wife's apartment and took a number of electronic items including laptops and flash memory drives.

This is not the first time members of al-Wefaq were questioned or charged following meetings with US Embassy staff or US Diplomats. In July 2014, Khalil al Marzooq, Assistant Secretary General of al-Wefaq and its Secretary General Sheikh Ali Salman were questioned and charged with "meeting foreign government officials without notifying the Bahraini government and without the presence of a Bahraini official". This happened after they attended meetings with the US Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, who was himself expelled from Bahrain following this meeting.

There has been an intensified crackdown against opposition parties in Bahrain and Bahraini dissidents including political activists since June 2016, following the forced dissolution of al-Wefaq in July 2016 and the rounding up of 32 dissidents including human rights defenders and political activists in April 2017, the majority of whom were charged with "illegal gathering in Duraz". For further information, see Amnesty International's public statements: Bahrain ramps up assault on human rights by dissolving leading political group, 19 July 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/4484/2016/en/> ; 32 dissidents rounded up within days in clampdown ahead of UN human rights session, 25 April 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/bahrain-32-dissidents-rounded-up-within-days-in-clampdown-ahead-of-un-human-rights-session/>

Amnesty International has documented arbitrary arrests and detentions and torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, particularly while held in the CID, where detainees allege they are forced to sign "confessions" for use as evidence against them or to implicate others at trial. Documented methods include beatings, forcing detainees to remain standing for long periods, sleep deprivation and keeping detainees naked.

Nizar al-Qari's family have submitted complaints to the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) and the Ombudsman of the Ministry of Interior but have not been informed of any investigation conducted.

The Bahraini government created various human rights institutions in 2012 to investigate alleged human rights violations and ensure accountability, in particular the Ombudsman of the Ministry of Interior and the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) within the Public Prosecution Office. The Ombudsman and the SIU have the authority and resources to conduct prompt and effective investigations into alleged human rights violations by state agents, acting in response to complaints or at their own volition. The Ombudsman's office has generally been effective in referring complaints of torture and other serious human rights violations for investigation by the SIU. However, in some cases it failed to take prompt action to protect detainees from torture and other ill-treatment, or to effectively investigate their allegations. See also Amnesty International's November 2016 report: Window-dressing or pioneers of change? An assessment of Bahrain's human rights oversight bodies, 21 November 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/5080/2016/en/>.

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