

URGENT ACTION

DETAINED DEFENDER INTERROGATED CONTINUOUSLY

Bahraini human rights defender, Ebtisam al-Saegh, has been under continuous and lengthy interrogation since her arrest on 3 July when she also started a hunger strike. She is at high risk of torture or other ill-treatment and requires urgent medical attention. Ebtisam al-Saegh is a prisoner of conscience who must be released immediately and unconditionally.

According to reliable reports, detained human rights defender **Ebtisam al-Saegh's** interrogation on 12 July lasted 18 hours. Authorities believed to be from the National Security Agency (NSA) took her for interrogation at an unknown location at 9am that day and did not return her to her solitary cell until 3am the next day. On 13 July at noon they again took her for interrogation.

On 11 July Ebtisam al-Saegh called her family from Isa Town detention centre for women, on the outskirts of Manama, the capital, where she is held between interrogation sessions. Amnesty International understands she is being interrogated for between 12 to 13 hours daily and that she is not able to talk about the content of her questioning.

Ebtisam al-Saegh began a hunger strike on 3 July in protest at her arrest, her lack of access to her family and the fact that her lawyer has not been allowed to attend her interrogation despite her requests to this effect. She is also protesting the type of food she is being given, which is inappropriate in view of her irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) condition. On 10 July in the evening, during interrogation, Ebtisam al-Saegh's health deteriorated and she suffered from irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia), numbness in the left hand, a drop in her sugar levels and blood pressure, and bloating of the stomach due to her IBS condition. She was taken to the Ministry of Interior hospital in al-Qalaa for treatment. Medical staff performed an electrocardiogram (ECG) and gave her intravenous fluids including glucose to raise her sugar levels, before discharging her. She was then again taken away for the continuation of her interrogation.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release Ebtisam al-Saegh immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and her human rights work;
- Urging them to ensure that she is not tortured or otherwise ill-treated, and is promptly provided with regular access to her family, a lawyer of her choosing and any medical attention she may require;
- Urging them to order a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into her allegations that she was tortured during her detention in May, make the results public and bring anyone responsible to justice in proceedings that respect international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 25 AUGUST 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. This is the first update of UA 165/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6673/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ebtisam al-Saegh, 48, is a Bahraini human rights defender working with the Bahraini NGO Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR). She was arrested on 3 July at 11:45pm after around 25 masked officers in civilian clothing, who claimed to belong to the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID), raided her house in Jid Ali, south of Manama, the capital of Bahrain. They did not present a warrant for her arrest. When Ebtisam al-Saegh asked about the reason for her arrest and where she was being taken, they told her: "You don't need to talk, you will know as soon as you reach there". The officers confiscated her mobile phone and her national ID card and led her away. She was allowed to take her medication with her. Amnesty International believes that her arrest relates to her human rights work. Earlier, on the same day of her arrest, Ebtisam al-Saegh had tweeted about the National Security Agency (NSA)'s ill-treatment of women and about the abuse of female detainees in Isa Town detention centre for women, and she held the King of Bahrain responsible for their actions. According to information received, when Ebtisam al-Saegh was brought to the prison, all other detainees were locked in their cells until about 10:30am. The lock down has also been imposed later in the day and phone calls rationed.

A few weeks earlier, on 26 May, National Security Agency (NSA) authorities had interrogated Ebtisam al-Saegh at their building in al-Muharraq. She told Amnesty International that when she arrived there, they immediately blindfolded her, and in the subsequent hours, sexually assaulted her, beat her all over her body, kicked her in the stomach and kept her standing for most of the seven hours she was being interrogated. During her interrogation, they questioned Ebtisam al-Saegh about Duraz, where security forces attacked an ongoing protest on 23 May killing five people, and about other human rights defenders she knew, as well as about her participation at the UN Human rights Council in Geneva in March, where she spoke out about violations in Bahrain. They also told her to stop all her human rights activities or else, she would be further targeted. The NSA released Ebtisam al-Saegh from their building at around 11pm in a state of shock. She was transferred to hospital where she received treatment for a nervous breakdown. For further information see Amnesty International's public statement: *Woman Human Rights Defender tortured and sexually assaulted as Bahrain renews campaign to silence peaceful critics* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6392/2017/en/>).

Amnesty International has received reports of other human rights and political activists who were summoned to the NSA and reported being tortured or otherwise ill-treated between 24 and 28 May. Some have since tweeted that they are stopping their activities. 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.

Since June 2016, the Bahraini authorities have intensified their crackdown on perceived critics of the government. Dozens of human rights defenders and political activists were prevented and banned by the Bahraini authorities from travelling to Geneva, Switzerland, to take part in the United Nations Human Rights Council sessions. More recently, at the end of April 2017, ahead of Bahrain's UN human rights review session in Geneva on 1 May, at least 32 perceived government critics were summoned for questioning by the Public Prosecution and the majority of them 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* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/4484/2016/en/>) and *32 dissidents rounded up within days in clampdown ahead of UN human rights session* (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/04/bahrain-32-dissidents-rounded-up-within-days-in-clampdown-ahead-of-un-human-rights-session/>).

Further information on UA: 165/17 Index: MDE 11/6743/2017 Issue Date: 14 July 2017