

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER CHARGED

Bahraini human rights defender Ebtisam al-Saegh was charged on 18 July by the Terrorism Crime Prosecution with using her human rights work as a cover to provide Alkarama Foundation with information and fake news about the situation in Bahrain. She has been detained for a further six months pending completion of the investigation. She is a prisoner of conscience.

Human rights defender **Ebtisam al-Saegh** was charged on 18 July, in presence of a lawyer, by the Terrorism Crimes Prosecution with “using human rights work as a cover to communicate and cooperate with Alkarama Foundation to provide them with information and fake news about the situation in Bahrain to undermine its status abroad”. She was remanded in custody for a further six months pending completion of the investigation.

On 15 July, prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience, Nabeel Rajab, told his family that he had seen Ebtisam al-Saegh on a stretcher at the Ministry of Interior medical facility in al-Qalaa in Manama, the capital, and asked them whether she had been involved in a car accident. He was unaware of her arrest. The next day, Ebtisam al-Saegh’s husband received a call from Isa Town detention centre for women, on the outskirts of Manama, requesting him to bring in fresh clothes for her. He was able to visit her for a few minutes. She was sat in a wheelchair.

Ebtisam al-Saegh was arrested on 3 July after tweeting about the abuse of female detainees in Isa Town detention centre for women. She has been on hunger strike since then in protest including at her arrest, her lack of access to her family and the fact that her lawyer is not allowed to attend her interrogation despite multiple requests. Her interrogation has been taking place at an undisclosed location outside the detention facilities. When not interrogated, she is being held in solitary confinement at the Isa Town detention centre for women. In May, she was tortured, including sexually assaulted. Amnesty International believes that her arrest relates to her human rights work.

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 1 SEPTEMBER 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
 Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

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 second update of UA 165/17. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6743/2017/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ebtisam al-Saegh, 48, is a Bahraini human rights defender who works 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. They did not present a warrant for her arrest. The officers confiscated her mobile phone and her national ID card and led her away. She was allowed to take her medication with her. Earlier that day, Ebtisam al-Saegh had tweeted about the National Security Agency (NSA)'s ill-treatment of women, the abuse of female detainees in Isa Town detention centre for women, and held the King of Bahrain responsible for their actions.

On 10 July in the evening, during interrogation, Ebtisam al-Saegh's health deteriorated. She suffered from irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia), numbness in the left hand, a drop in her blood sugar levels and blood pressure, and bloating of the stomach due to her IBS condition. She was taken for treatment to the Ministry of Interior hospital in al-Qalaa. Medical staff performed an electrocardiogram (ECG) and gave her intravenous fluids including glucose to raise her blood sugar levels, before discharging her. She was then again taken away for the continuation of her interrogation. Amnesty International understands that Ebtisam al-Saegh has been interrogated by authorities believed to be from the NSA for between 12 to 13 hours daily at an unknown location. She was returned after every interrogation session to Isa Town detention centre for women where she is held in solitary confinement.

A few weeks earlier, on 26 May, National Security Agency (NSA) authorities had interrogated Ebtisam al-Saegh at their building in al-Muharraaq. 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, 31 May 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6392/2017/en/>

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, 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".

Alkarama Foundation is a non-governmental organisation based in Switzerland, defending individuals subjected to human rights violations in the Arab world. In November 2014, the United Arab Emirates published a list of organizations and groups it designated as terrorist, among them the foundation.

Further information on UA: 165/17 Index: MDE 11/6770/2017 Issue Date: 21 July 2017