

URGENT ACTION

ARRESTED DEFENDER AT RISK OF TORTURE

Bahraini human rights defender Ebtisam al-Saegh was arrested on 3 July after her home was raided by masked security officers. Amnesty understands that she is being held at Issa Town detention centre for women, on the outskirts of Manama. She is a prisoner of conscience at risk of torture and other ill-treatment, including sexual assault.

Ebtisam al-Saegh, 48, 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. Three armed men stayed outside the house while seven officers, including two female officers dressed in Abaya (cloak) and Niqab (a cloth covering the face), entered the home. 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 that day she had tweeted about the National Security Agency (NSA)'s ill-treatment of women and held the King of Bahrain responsible for their actions. Ebtisam al-Saegh had previously been detained and interrogated for around seven hours on 26 May and subjected to torture, including sexual assault, at the NSA building in al-Muharraq, an island north east of Manama.

On 4 July, Ebtisam al-Saegh was returned to prison after being interrogated at an unknown location. At 9pm she called her family and told them that she was being held in solitary confinement and requested that they bring her clothing and money. She also said that she was under tremendous pressure to confess, having been informed her interrogation would continue the next day and until she confessed. Ebtisam al-Saegh suffers from irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and told her family that she had been feeling very nauseous and had not eaten properly. On 5 July, her family brought clothes to the prison but the prison authorities refused to take them, stating that they could only do so when she was present in the prison. The family has filed a complaint to the Ombudsman of the Ministry of Interior. In the early hours of 6 July, Ebtisam al-Saegh's home was raided again by masked men and all mobile phones in the house were seized. They told her daughter that they knew she had been giving out information about her mother who had not cooperated with them as she had not told them of possessing another mobile phone.

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

- Calling on the authorities to release her immediately and unconditionally as she is detained solely because of 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 lawyer, family and any medical attention she may require;
- Urging them to order a prompt, impartial, independent and effective investigation into her torture allegations and bring anyone responsible to justice in proceedings that respect international fair trial standards.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 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.

**AMNESTY
 INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ebtisam al-Saegh is a Bahraini human rights defender working with the Bahraini NGO, Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR). On 25 May she was summoned by phone by the National Security Agency (NSA) to present herself to their building in al-Muharraq the following afternoon. When she arrived, she was immediately blindfolded, and in the subsequent hours, she was sexually assaulted, beaten all over her body, kicked in the stomach and kept standing for most of the seven hours she was being interrogated. During her interrogation, Ebtisam al-Saegh was questioned 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. She was also told to stop all her human rights activities or she would be further targeted. Ebtisam al-Saegh was released from the NSA at around 11pm in 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 may have also been tortured or otherwise ill-treated between 24 and 28 May. Some have since tweeted that they are stopping their activities.

On 4 July, before her arrest Ebtisam al-Saegh had been tweeting about the abuse of female detainees in Issa Town detention centre for women. According to information received, when Ebtisam al-Saegh was brought to the prison, all other detainees were locked in their cells until about 10:30 am. The lock down has also been imposed later in the day and phone calls rationed.

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/>).

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.

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