

# URGENT ACTION

## BAHRAINI PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE IN DETENTION

**On 24 May, the Bahraini Court of Appeal halved the prison sentence of Dr. Taha al-Dirazi from six to three months. He was immediately arrested to begin serving the sentence. Dr Taha al-Dirazi was convicted of “illegal gathering” for participating in a peaceful protest in Duraz village on 19 July 2016. He is a prisoner of conscience.**

On 24 May, neurosurgeon **Dr. Taha al-Dirazi** had his six-month jail sentence reduced to three months in prison by the Third High Criminal Court of Appeal in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. Following the verdict, Dr. Taha al-Dirazi was immediately arrested and transferred to Jaw Prison to begin serving his sentence. He was convicted of “illegal gathering” for his participation on 19 July 2016 in the sit-in in the village of Duraz, west of Manama. The protest had started on 20 June 2016 following the authorities’ decision to revoke the citizenship of the Bahraini Shia’s spiritual leader Sheikh Issa Qassem.

Dr. Taha al-Dirazi was initially sentenced by the Third Lower Criminal Court in Manama on 9 February to six months in prison and had to pay 100 Bahraini Dinar bail (US\$ 265) to halt the implementation of the sentence pending appeal.

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

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Taha al-Dirazi as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of assembly;
- Urging them to uphold the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and repeal or amend laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of these rights, including Article 216 of the Penal Code.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 22 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 (keep trying)

**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 bin Abdullah 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](mailto: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

Since June 2016, the Bahraini authorities have intensified their crackdown on perceived critics of the government.

Peaceful protests in the village of Duraz, west of Manama, began on 20 June 2016 when the Ministry of Interior announced that it had revoked the nationality of Bahrain's Shi'a's spiritual leader, Sheikh Issa Qassem, effectively rendering him stateless as he has no other nationality.

On 21 May, Sheikh Issa Qassem was sentenced to one year in prison on charges of "money laundering and raising public funds without obtaining a licence", with the sentence being suspended for three years. This charge is in connection with his receipt of *khums*, a religious obligation for Shi'a Muslims to donate a fifth of their yearly profits to their spiritual leader or his representative, who, in turn, distributes it to the poor. This has been a custom practiced by the Shi'a community in Bahrain for centuries. Sheikh Issa Qassem is also the spiritual leader of the Al Wefaq opposition party that was dissolved in July 2016.

On 23 May, the Bahraini security forces used excessive force against protesters in the village of Duraz, the majority of whom were peaceful, as part of an ongoing crackdown on the village which had been targeted by the authorities for the 11 months since June 2016. Five people were reported killed, including a child, with eight needing intensive care and hundreds injured as security forces fired shotguns and tear gas at protestors. During these violent clashes, the houses surrounding that of Sheikh Issa Qassem were raided and the people inside arrested. In total 286 arrests were made. For further information, please see Amnesty International's Press release, 23 May 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/05/bahrain-at-least-one-dead-and-hundreds-injured-as-government-violently-cracks-down-on-opposition/>.

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