

URGENT ACTION

IBRAHIM KARIMI SENTENCED TO PRISON

Ibrahim Karimi has been sentenced to two years and one month in prison on charges including “publicly insulting the King” which he has denied. He is a prisoner of conscience. He will be at immediate risk of expulsion after he completes his sentence as his nationality was arbitrarily revoked.

Ibrahim Karimi was sentenced on 31 March to two years’ imprisonment and a fine of 2,000 Bahraini Dinar (BD) (approximately US\$5,300), by the Fifth Lower Criminal Court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. He was convicted of “publicly inciting hatred and contempt against the regime”, “publicly insulting the King” and “publicly insulting Saudi Arabia and its King” on a Twitter account (FreejKarimi) which he denied owning. Ibrahim Karimi said he was forced to “confess” to the charges relating to comments posted on this Twitter account but retracted his “confession” during his trial and denied all charges relating to this Twitter account. Amnesty International considers Ibrahim Karimi’s prison sentence related to these charges relate solely to his right to freedom of expression, and does not believe he used or advocated violence. He is a prisoner of conscience.

Ibrahim Karimi was also sentenced to one month's imprisonment and fined 100 BD (approximately US\$265) for “possession of an electric-shock device without authorization from the Ministry of Interior”. He was transferred to Jaw prison, south-eastern Bahrain to serve his prison sentence. His lawyer has lodged an appeal against the verdicts relating to all the charges and his appeal will start on 4 May.

In a separate case, the Court of Appeal in Manama upheld Ibrahim Karimi’s deportation order on 8 March. The Ministry of Interior had arbitrarily revoked Ibrahim Karimi’s nationality, along with 30 others, on 7 November 2012, for causing “damage to state security”, under Article 10 (c) of the Bahrain Citizenship Law. Ibrahim Karimi does not have another nationality and he has been effectively rendered stateless. He will be at immediate risk of expulsion from Bahrain once he completes his prison sentence.

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

- Urging the authorities to quash all convictions against Ibrahim Karimi that arise from his peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression;
- Urging them to rescind the decision to strip Ibrahim Karimi of his nationality, and not to proceed with his expulsion;
- Urging them to investigate his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment promptly, and protect him from further torture or ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31 MAY 2016 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

Ministry of Interior
Shaikh Rashid bin ‘Abdullah Al Khalifa
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama
Bahrain
Fax: +973 1723 2661
Email: info@interior.gov.bh
Twitter: @moi_Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:
Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs
Shaikh Khaled bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 1753 1284
Email (via website):
<http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default76a7.html?acton=category&ID=159>
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Al

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, Email: information@bahrainembassy.co.uk

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the second update of UA 215/15. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE11/3579/2016/en/>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ibrahim Karimi was arrested by plainclothes police officers on 26 September 2015, at his home in the village of al-Dair. According to his family, the police officers did not present an arrest warrant, searched his house and car, and took mobile phones that belonged to him and other members of his family, and an electric-shock device the size of a pen. They then took him to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) where he was interrogated without a lawyer present, about comments posted on a Twitter account (FreejKarimi) criticizing the Saudi Arabian authorities as “unqualified” over how they had dealt with a stampede in September 2015 that caused the deaths of hundreds of people during Hajj, the Muslim religious pilgrimage to Mecca. He denied being the owner of that account. During his interrogation at the CID Ibrahim Karimi said he was kept in solitary confinement, deprived of sleep and made to stand. He told his lawyer that he signed the "confession" after his interrogators insulted him and threatened that his son would be arrested if he did not confess. He also told interrogators that he was the owner of the electric-shock device and later plead guilty to this charge during his trial. His family told Amnesty International that he had bought the device in Dubai in 2001 for his wife to use for her own protection. The device has been illegal in Bahrain since 2008.

Following his interrogation at the CID, Ibrahim Karimi was transferred to Dry Dock prison, north-east of Manama. He told his family that prison officers in Dry Dock prison threatened that they would make an example of him to the other prisoners and make him disappear. His trial began on 31 January and during the penultimate hearing on 17 March, the court did not allow defence witnesses to be summoned.

Ibrahim Karimi lost his appeal against an order to deport him on 8 March. His nationality was arbitrarily revoked by the Ministry of Interior on 7 November 2012, along with 30 others, because they had caused “damage to state security”, under Article 10 (Paragraph C) of the Bahrain Citizenship Law. The 31 included activists living abroad, a lawyer, a number of people active in politics within Bahrain, a number of Shi’a clerics and others with no political or religious affiliation. The 31 people were never officially notified of this decision, and learned about it from the media the day it was announced. Most of those living in Bahrain, including Ibrahim Karimi, do not have another nationality and have been effectively rendered stateless.

The government forced one of the 31, Shaikh Hussain al-Najati, to leave Bahrain on 23 April 2014. On 28 October 2014, a lower court ordered those who are still in Bahrain who only have Bahraini nationality to be deported. Their lawyers lodged an appeal the next day, and the deportation order has been halted until the court issues its verdict. Since 2012, the Ministry of Interior and the courts have arbitrarily revoked the nationality of hundreds of people.

Under the Bahrain Citizenship Law and its amendments, Article 10 stipulates that nationality can be revoked (Paragraph A) if a person engages in the military service of a foreign country; (Paragraph B) if he helps or engages in the service of an enemy country; or (Paragraph C) if he causes harm to state security. There is no further definition or detail of what could amount to “harm to state security”. This Paragraph – used to revoke the nationality of the 31 – is therefore framed too broadly, allowing for its use to punish the legitimate and peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly

Name: Ibrahim Karimi
Gender m/f: m

Further information on UA: 215/15 Index: MDE 11/3860/2016 Issue Date: 19 April 2016