

URGENT ACTION

NABEEL RAJAB FACES NEW CHARGE

Bahraini human rights defender Nabeel Rajab's trial began on 12 July on charges of "spreading false rumours in times of war" and "insulting public authorities" in relation to tweets he published in 2015. On the first day of the trial a new charge of "insulting a foreign country" was also levelled against him. His case has been adjourned to 2 August.

Nabeel Rajab's new trial before the High Criminal Court opened on 12 July and an additional charge of "insulting a foreign country" was levelled against him. On 26 June he was notified that he would be facing a trial on charges of "spreading false rumours in time of war" and "insulting public authorities [the Ministry of Interior]", over comments posted on Twitter and retweeting comments relating to the war in Yemen and to allegations of torture in Jaw prison after a prison riot in March 2015. Nabeel Rajab denied all the charges. His lawyers said that when he was arrested and interrogated in April 2015, no mention was made in relation to the additional charge of "insulting a foreign country", under Article 215 of Bahrain's Penal Code, which carries up to two years in prison. The court refused their request for his release on bail on medical grounds and for his travel ban, imposed since 13 July 2015, to be lifted. The trial was adjourned to 2 August. On 13 and 14 July the Public Prosecution and the court denied a request to temporarily release Nabeel Rajab in order for him to attend his uncle's funeral.

In court, Nabeel Rajab's lawyers said that he has lost eight kilograms since his arrest and has had several medical problems including most recently irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) making it difficult for him to breathe or speak. He has been detained in filthy conditions. On 27 June he was transferred by ambulance to the Coronary Care Unit at the Bahrain Defense Forces Hospital and was returned to West Rifa' police station the next day.

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

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab immediately and unconditionally and drop all charges against him as he is detained solely because of the peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that he receives any medical attention he requires;
- Calling on them to lift his travel ban;
- Urging them to uphold the right to freedom of expression and repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including Article 216 of the Penal Code.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 26 AUGUST 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 (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
 Email: info@interior.gov.bh
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
 Email:
<http://www.moj.gov.bh/en/default76a7.html?action=category&ID=159>
 Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

His Excellency Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 30 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8QB
 Fax 020 7201 9183 Email information@bahrainembassy.co.uk Salutation Your Excellency

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the tenth update of UA 249/14. Further information:
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/4346/2016/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Nabeel Rajab is the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. He has already served a two-year sentence in Jaw prison, for taking part in an “illegal gathering”, “disturbing public order” and “calling for and taking part in demonstrations” in the capital, Manama, “without prior notification” between January and March 2012. He had been sentenced to three years in prison on 16 August 2012, which was reduced on appeal to two years in prison on 11 December 2012. He was released in May 2014, but a travel ban was imposed on him in November that year.

On 20 January 2015 he was sentenced to six months in prison for “publicly insulting official institutions” under Article 216 of Bahrain’s Penal Code. His appeal was rejected on 14 May that year by the High Criminal Court of Appeal. Nabeel Rajab was arrested at his home on 2 April and taken to the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) where he was questioned about comments he allegedly tweeted or retweeted about the Yemen war and incidents in Jaw prison after a prison strike on 10 March. Shortly after his arrest, the Ministry of Interior said that he had been arrested for posting a “message that could incite people and disrupt peace” and “defaming a statutory body”. He was charged under Articles 216 and 133 of Bahrain’s Penal Code and his detention was renewed several times by the Public Prosecution until 14 May, when he was ordered to serve his six-month sentence. He was released in the evening of 13 July 2015, after a royal pardon was issued for medical reasons. His November 2014 travel ban was lifted in August 2015, only for his lawyers to learn that a new one had been imposed on him on 13 July 2015.

Nabeel Rajab was re-arrested at his home in the village of Bani Jamra, west of the capital Manama, on 13 June 2016 by 15 policemen in civilian clothing after the neighbourhood was surrounded by riot police at about 5am. They showed him a warrant to search his house, for his arrest and for his transfer to the CID, without giving any reason. His phone and computer were confiscated and he was taken to the East Rifa’ police station, south of Manama, from where he was allowed to call his family. On 14 June he was taken to the Public Prosecution Office where he was charged, in the presence of his lawyers, with “spreading false information and rumours with the aim of discrediting the State” and ordered to be detained for seven days pending investigation. When his family visited him at about 9pm, he told them he was being held in solitary confinement, unlike other detainees in the station who share cells. On 21 June Nabeel Rajab’s detention was extended for another eight days and on 26 June he was notified that he would be facing a new trial before the High Criminal Court on 12 July over comments and retweets posted on Twitter March 2015. He was transferred to West Rifa’ police station on 23 June. After suffering from an irregular heartbeat on 27 June he was taken by ambulance to the Ministry of Interior Hospital in al-Qalaa and then to the Coronary Care Unit at the Bahrain Defense Forces Hospital. A day earlier he had complained to his wife that he had high blood pressure and ringing in his ears. He was returned to prison on 29 June.

The Bahraini authorities have intensified their crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, association and movement. Since 12 June 2016 at least 19 people have been prevented from leaving Bahrain. They include a group of five activists, among them a former prisoner of conscience, who were on their way to attend the UN Human Rights Council’s 32nd session in Geneva. The country’s main opposition group al-Wefaq National Islamic Society was suspended on 14 June and its spiritual leader Ayatollah Isa Qassem stripped of his nationality on 20 June.

For further information please see: *Bahrain: Authorities must halt repression after week of intensified clampdown on human rights* (AI Index: MDE 11/4312/2016, 22 June 2016, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/4312/2016/en/>)

Name: Nabeel Rajab

Gender m/f: m

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