

URGENT ACTION

GHADA JAMSHEER TO PLEAD FOR EARLY RELEASE

Bahraini women's rights activist Ghada Jamsheer, a prisoner of conscience serving the remainder of a 10-month prison sentence, is due in court on 7 November. She suffers from ill-health and intends to plead for an earlier release on medical grounds.

Ghada Jamsheer, a human rights defender working on women's rights, was arrested at Bahrain International Airport on 15 August after returning home to Bahrain and taken into custody. She had travelled to the UK for medical treatment as she suffers from rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease that causes chronic inflammation of the joints and other areas of the body. She is being held in Issa Town Detention Centre for Women, south of the capital, Manama, where her health has deteriorated due to the conditions in prison which put her at risk of contracting infections. She is detained along with other prisoners suffering from illness. Ghada Jamsheer is due to appear before the Appeal Court on 7 November when she intends to request to be released on medical grounds and to serve the remainder of her sentence as a community service instead.

Ghada Jamsheer has been on trial since 2014 for 10 separate defamation cases all relating to postings on her Twitter account about alleged corruption at King Hamad University Hospital, on al-Muharraq island, north-east of Manama. On 22 June 2016, an appeal court upheld a total of 10 months in prison against her relating to four separate defamation cases, of which she had already served three months between September and December 2014.

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

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to release Ghada Jamsheer immediately and unconditionally as she is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to ensure that she receives any medical attention she requires;
- Urging them to repeal or amend all legislation that criminalizes the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and ensure that defamation is treated only as a matter of civil litigation.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 15 DECEMBER 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: via web

<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. 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 first update of UA 280/14. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/044/2014/en/>

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ghada Jamsheer is the president of the Women's Petition Committee (WPC), a network of Bahraini women human rights defenders campaigning for the codification of Bahrain's family laws and the reform of Shari'a family courts.

Ghada Jamsheer has been subjected to different forms of harassment and intimidation, including through the criminal justice system. In 2005, she faced three separate criminal charges for allegedly criticizing a number of family court judges. In February 2005, the Women's Petition Committee called publicly for the dismissal of Bahrain's Public Prosecutor because he was formerly a State Security Court judge. The Committee also called for reform of the Public Prosecution, the family court, the introduction of a family law, and for Bahrain to withdraw its reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In April 2005, Ghada Jamsheer was charged with "insulting the judiciary" in relation to various petitions and articles issued by the Women's Petition Committee between October 2002 and June 2003. These mostly called for reform of the family court system, for family law judges to be adequately trained in law, but also accused the judiciary of corruption. In June 2005 these charges were dropped.

On 9 September 2014 Ghada Jamsheer was summoned to appear the next day at the Criminal Investigations Directorate's department for combatting cybercrime for interrogation in relation to her postings on her Twitter account. On 15 September 2014 the Public Prosecution charged her with "defamation on Twitter" and ordered her arrest and detention. In all, 10 separate defamation cases were brought against her; all relating to postings on her Twitter account about alleged corruption at King Hamad University Hospital, on al-Muharraq island, north-east of Manama. She was released on 16 December that year.

Further information on UA: 280/14 Index: MDE 11/5091/2016 Issue Date: 3 November 2016