

URGENT ACTION

RELEASED ON MEDICAL GROUNDS BUT STILL ON TRIAL
Bahraini women's rights activist Ghada Jamsheer was released from prison on 12 December on medical grounds. The court has ordered to serve the remaining four months of her combined 10 month sentence as a community service. She still faces trial in other cases.

On 12 December, **Ghada Jamsheer**, a human rights defender working on women's rights, was released from Issa Town Detention Centre for Women, south of the capital Manama, following a successful appeal – on medical grounds – to serve the remaining four months of her current sentences as community service. Her health had deteriorated because of poor conditions of detention, which also heightened her risk of contracting infections due to her rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease that causes chronic inflammation of the joints and other areas of the body. The authorities have yet to inform her about the nature of the community service or its start date.

Ghada Jamsheer has been on trial since 2014, including 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 prison sentences, totalling 10 months, against her relating to four separate defamation cases, of which she had already served three months in pre-trial detention between September and December 2014. She was arrested on 15 August 2016 at Bahrain International Airport to serve the remainder of these sentences.

Ghada Jamsheer is also due before the Appeal Court on 22 December for another case in which she was sentenced to one month in prison for “insulting” a policewoman while in detention in 2014, a charge which she resolutely denies. Amnesty International believes this charge to be fabricated and, if she is detained again following this appeal hearing, she will be a prisoner of conscience.

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

- Urging the Bahraini authorities to drop all charges and overturn any remaining sentences against Ghada Jamsheer that relate to the peaceful exercise of her right to freedom of expression and association;
- 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 27 JANUARY 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
 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 second update of UA 280/14. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/MDE11/5091/2016/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 bail on 16 December of that year, pending appeal of her combined 10 month prison sentence on four separate charges of defamation.

Further information on UA: 280/14 Index: MDE 11/5355/2016 Issue Date: 16 December 2016