

URGENT ACTION

ZAINAB AL-KHAWAJA RELEASED, LEFT BAHRAIN

Zainab al-Khawaja and her son were released from prison in Bahrain on humanitarian grounds on 31 May. She left Bahrain for Denmark on 7 June after receiving information that she could face new charges if she remained in Bahrain.

Dual Bahraini and Danish national **Zainab al-Khawaja**, was released from the women's detention centre in 'Issa Town, Bahrain, on 31 May. She was a prisoner of conscience. The Public Prosecution issued a statement on the day of her release announcing that her sentence would be suspended on humanitarian grounds.

On 7 June Zainab al-Khawaja left Bahrain and travelled to Denmark after receiving a message from the Danish consulate stating that a Bahraini official told diplomats that she would be arrested again and would face new charges if she remained in the country. The information she received indicated that she would have a much longer sentence and that she would this time be separated from her son.

During a press conference with US Secretary of State John Kerry on 7 April, the Bahraini Minister of Foreign Affairs said that Zainab Al-Khawaja would be released. On 9 May a spokesperson from the same Ministry announced that, as foreign nationals, Zainab Al-Khawaja and another female prisoner would be released on humanitarian grounds because of their children, who were in the women's detention centre with them.

Zainab Al-Khawaja had been arrested on 14 March 2016 to serve a total of three years and one month in prison on various convictions. On 27 January 2014 she had been sentenced to two months in prison for each of two charges of "destroying government property" when she ripped up framed pictures of the King belonging to the Ministry of Interior while detained at a police station in 'Issa Town on 4 and 6 May 2012 respectively. On 4 December 2014 she was sentenced to three years in prison and payment of a fine of 3,000 BD (about US\$8,000) for ripping a photo of the King while in court. This sentence was reduced on appeal to one year in prison on 21 October 2015. On 9 December 2014 she was sentenced to one year in prison for "insulting a public official" after she spoke out in defence of a fellow prisoner who had been insulted and humiliated by a prison guard in women's detention centre in 'Issa Town on 22 June 2013. On 2 June 2015 Zainab al-Khawaja was also sentenced to 9 months imprisonment for "entering a restricted area" and "insulting a public official" when she tried to visit her father, prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, in Jaw prison in August 2014, when he was on hunger strike and she was seven months pregnant.

Zainab Al-Khawaja has been arrested and released several times since December 2011 on an array of charges including "destroying government property", "insulting a policewoman", "illegal gathering and rioting" and "inciting hatred against the regime".

No further action is requested from the UA Network. Many thanks to all who sent appeals.

This is the sixth update of UA 306/14. Further information: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/3701/2016/en/>

Further information on UA: 306/14 Index: MDE 11/4286/2016 Issue Date: 17 June 2016

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**

