

URGENT ACTION

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISTS RISK TORTURE IN BAHRAIN

Mohammad Hassan Sayef, a 26-year-old blogger and translator and Hussain Habib, a 23-year-old cameraman, were arrested separately on 31 July. They are held incommunicado and are at risk of torture. They may be prisoners of conscience.

Mohammad Hassan Sayef, was arrested from his parents' house in Sitra in the early hours of 31 July 2013 by plain clothed security officers without an arrest warrant. He was taken to the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) in al-'Adliya in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, where he is believed to still be held incommunicado and is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment. His family and their legal representative have not been allowed to visit him.

Hussain Habib was arrested at Bahrain International Airport as he was due to board a flight to Dubai on 31 July. He was taken to the Criminal Investigation Directorate building for interrogation. He is believed to still be detained there incommunicado.

The exact reasons for the arrest of the two men above are not known, but they may be linked to their use of social media networks. The government is cracking down on people disseminating information about the human rights situation in Bahrain through social media such as Twitter and Facebook. Both have used these networks extensively. On 28 July Bahrain's Parliament submitted 22 recommendations to the King toughening punishments laid out in the 2006 anti-terrorism law. The King has welcomed the recommendations and has already issued two decrees to this effect. One of the recommendations is to make sending false information on Bahrain through social media networks a crime punishable by imprisonment.

Please write immediately in your own language:

- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mohammad Hassan Sayef and Hussain Habib if they are held solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression;
- Urging the Bahraini authorities to immediately disclose the whereabouts of the two men and to allow them to meet with their families, legal representatives of their own choosing and to grant them any medical care needed;
- Urging that they are protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 13 SEPTEMBER 2013 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: 011 973 1766 4587
Salutation: Your Majesty

Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah Al Khalifa
Ministry of Interior
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama,
Bahrain
Fax: 011 973 1723 2661
Twitter: @moi_Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs

Shaikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama,
Bahrain
Fax: 011 973 1753 1284
Email: minister@justice.gov.bh
Twitter: @Khaled_Bin_Ali

Also send copies to:

Ambassador Houda Ezra Ebrahim Nonoo
Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain
3502 International Drive, NW, Washington DC 20008
Tel: 1 202 342 1111 | Fax: 1 202 362 2192 | Email: ambsecretary@bahrainembassy.org; ambassador@bahrainembassy.org

Please check with the AIUSA Urgent Action Network office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

More than two years after the uprising in Bahrain, and beneath the fanfare of subsequent reform, prisoners of conscience, including some arrested during the protests, remain behind bars and the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly continue to be suppressed. In recent months, not only have prisoners of conscience not been released, but more people have been jailed simply for daring to express their views, whether via Twitter or on peaceful marches. Bahraini courts have appeared more concerned with toeing the government's line than offering effective remedy to Bahrainis and upholding the rule of law.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), appointed by Royal Order on 29 June 2011, was charged with investigating and reporting on human rights violations committed in connection with the 2011 protests. At the launch of the BICI report in November 2011, the government publicly committed itself to implementing the recommendations set out in the report. The report recounted the government's response to the mass protests and documented wide-ranging human rights abuses. Among its key recommendations, the report called on the government to bring to account those responsible for human rights violations, including torture and excessive use of force, and carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture.

However, many of the government's pledges remain unfulfilled. The establishment of BICI and its report was considered to be a groundbreaking initiative, but, more than 18 months on, the promise of meaningful reform has been betrayed by the government's unwillingness to implement key recommendations around accountability; this includes its failure to carry out independent, effective and transparent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and excessive use of force, and to prosecute all those who gave the orders to commit human rights abuses. For further information see: Bahrain: Reform shelved, repression unleashed (Index: MDE 11/062/2012, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/062/2012/en>).

In response to recent increase in violence and in anticipation of planned large demonstrations by the opposition, on 28 July Bahrain's parliament held an extraordinary session and then submitted 22 recommendations to Shaikh Hamad Bin 'Issa Al Khalifa, the King of Bahrain. The recommendations toughen punishments laid out in the 2006 anti-terrorism law. On 29 July the King welcomed the recommendations and ordered his Prime Minister to ensure that they are implemented urgently by the government. Bahrain's constitution (Article 38) gives the King the power to issue decrees that have the force of law when parliament is in recess. In these circumstances the government prepares the draft amendments and the King ratifies them.

The recommendations include the banning of all sit-ins, public gatherings and demonstrations in the capital Manama indefinitely, giving the security forces additional sweeping powers to "protect society from all terrorist acts and incitement to such acts"; increasing punishment for anyone propagating false information about Bahrain in social media networks; taking legal action against certain political associations which incite and support violent and terrorist acts; taking all possible measures to impose peace and security, even if it means imposing a state of national safety (state of emergency); and the imposition of harsher sentences on anyone involved in acts of "terrorism" and violence and anyone inciting others to use violence; the revocation of Bahraini nationality from anyone committing terrorist acts or incitement to such activities,

Name: Mohammad Hassan Sayef; Hussain Habib (m)

Issues: Prisoners of conscience, Incommunicado detention, Risk of ill-treatment and torture

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