

URGENT ACTION

BAHRAINI PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE IN DETENTION

On 24 May, the Bahraini Court of Appeal halved the prison sentence of Dr. Taha al-Dirazi from six to three months. He was immediately arrested to begin serving the sentence. Dr Taha al-Dirazi was convicted of “illegal gathering” for participating in a peaceful protest in Duraz village on 19 July 2016. He is a prisoner of conscience.

On 24 May, neurosurgeon **Dr. Taha al-Dirazi** had his six-month jail sentence reduced to three months in prison by the Third High Criminal Court of Appeal in Manama, the capital of Bahrain. Following the verdict, Dr. Taha al-Dirazi was immediately arrested and transferred to Jaw Prison to begin serving his sentence. He was convicted of “illegal gathering” for his participation on 19 July 2016 in the sit-in in the village of Duraz, west of Manama. The protest had started on 20 June 2016 following the authorities’ decision to revoke the citizenship of the Bahraini Shia’s spiritual leader Sheikh Issa Qassem.

Dr. Taha al-Dirazi was initially sentenced by the Third Lower Criminal Court in Manama on 9 February to six months in prison and had to pay 100 Bahraini Dinar bail (US\$ 265) to halt the implementation of the sentence pending appeal.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Calling on the Bahraini authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Dr. Taha al-Dirazi as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of assembly;
- Urging them to uphold the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and repeal or amend laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of these rights, including Article 216 of the Penal Code.

Contact these two officials by 22 August, 2017:

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

Ambassador Shaikh Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Khalifa
 Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain
 3502 International Dr. NW, Washington DC 20008
 Phone: 1 202 342 1111 | Fax: 1 202 362 2192
 Email: ambsecretary@bahrainembassy.org
 Twitter: @bahdiplomatic
Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 170.17*

Here's why it is so important to report your actions: we record the actions taken on each case—letters, emails, calls and tweets—and use that information in our advocacy.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since June 2016, the Bahraini authorities have intensified their crackdown on perceived critics of the government.

Peaceful protests in the village of Duraz, west of Manama, began on 20 June 2016 when the Ministry of Interior announced that it had revoked the nationality of Bahrain's Shi'a's spiritual leader, Sheikh Issa Qassem, effectively rendering him stateless as he has no other nationality.

On 21 May, Sheikh Issa Qassem was sentenced to one year in prison on charges of "money laundering and raising public funds without obtaining a licence", with the sentence being suspended for three years. This charge is in connection with his receipt of *khums*, a religious obligation for Shi'a Muslims to donate a fifth of their yearly profits to their spiritual leader or his representative, who, in turn, distributes it to the poor. This has been a custom practiced by the Shi'a community in Bahrain for centuries. Sheikh Issa Qassem is also the spiritual leader of the Al Wefaq opposition party that was dissolved in July 2016.

On 23 May, the Bahraini security forces used excessive force against protesters in the village of Duraz, the majority of whom were peaceful, as part of an ongoing crackdown on the village which had been targeted by the authorities for the 11 months since June 2016. Five people were reported killed, including a child, with eight needing intensive care and hundreds injured as security forces fired shotguns and tear gas at protestors. During these violent clashes, the houses surrounding that of Sheikh Issa Qassem were raided and the people inside arrested. In total 286 arrests were made. For further information, please see Amnesty International's Press release, 23 May 2017: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/05/bahrain-at-least-one-dead-and-hundreds-injured-as-government-violently-cracks-down-on-opposition/>.

Name: Dr. Taha al-Dirazi
Gender m/f: m