

JOINT LETTER – THE OBSERVATORY

His Majesty Sheikh Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa,
King of Bahrain
Fax: +973 176 64 587

CC. His Excellency Lieutenant General Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
Email: info@interior.gov.bh

His Excellency Sheikh Khaled Bin Ahmad Al Khalifa
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Fax: 00973 17 21 05 75; ofd@mofa.gov.bh

And Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations in Geneva
Fax: + 41 22 758 96 50; Email: info@bahrain-mission.ch

Re: Joint appeal signed by 60 organisations around the world to release human rights defenders Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja who both require adequate medical care

25 April 2017

Your Majesty,

We, the undersigned NGOs, express grave concern over the deteriorating health of Bahraini human rights defenders **Nabeel Rajab** and **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, both arbitrarily detained in poor conditions and denied access to proper medical care.

Nabeel Rajab, 53, who suffers from poor health conditions which have worsened because of his detention, underwent surgery for bleeding ulcers on April 5, 2017 at Manama's military hospital. Only two days after the surgery, Mr. Rajab was sent back to West Riffa police station where he is being detained in solitary confinement most of the time. In addition, Mr. Rajab's family was denied the right to visit him while in the hospital. Finally, on April 8, 2017, Mr. Rajab was rushed to the police hospital in an ambulance because of an infected wound that followed an operation. His family reported that he "was forced to stay with dirty clothes with blood all over it and denied any hygienic products for two days" despite "a deep and open wound which causes severe pain and needs constant care".

Mr. Rajab, is the co-founder and President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), Founding Director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), Deputy Secretary General of FIDH and a member of the Middle East advisory committee at Human Rights Watch.

Arbitrarily detained since June 13, 2016, Nabeel Rajab is facing a series of politically motivated charges which could incur up to 18 years in prison for promoting human rights in the media, including social media. When considering a similar case in 2013, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UN WGAD) found that Mr. Rajab's detention was arbitrary, adding that the "domestic laws of Bahrain (...) seem to deny persons the basic right to freedom of opinion, expression"¹. The next hearings are scheduled on May 16 and 17, 2017.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, 56, began a hunger strike, drinking only water, on April 12, 2017, to protest the worsening conditions faced by detainees as well as the ongoing arbitrary arrests and detentions of human rights defenders in the country. It is feared that another hunger

¹ Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Opinion A/HRC/WGAD/2013/12 No. 12/2013, July 25, 2013, available at: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/159/40/PDF/G1315940.pdf?OpenElement>.

strike puts Mr. Al-Khawaja's life at risk as he is already in poor health conditions because of previous long-lasting hunger strikes, as well as from the effects of torture. On April 20, 2017, Mr. Al-Khawaja began to take necessary liquids to avoid losing consciousness and being transferred to hospital, where he feared he would be force-fed, as in past hunger strikes. He suffers from exhaustion, general weakness, and dizziness. He thus requires urgent medical intervention.

Mr. Al-Khawaja, co-founder of the GCHR and the BCHR, was sentenced to life in prison in June 2011 for politically motivated charges. On September 4, 2012, the High Court of Appeals upheld the sentence against him. The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) concluded that Mr. Al-Khawaja was subjected to torture and inhumane treatment during his arrest and detention. He was severely beaten, resulting in a broken jaw, and later spent two months in solitary confinement where he was subjected to severe acts of torture. He continues to be denied adequate medical attention and suffers from severe complications because of his ill-treatment in detention.

The two human rights defenders are widely recognized for their human rights work at international, regional and national levels. They have already spent a significant amount of time in prison as retaliation for their human rights work and should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Therefore we, the undersigned organisations, call on the Bahraini authorities to:
Ensure Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's physical and psychological integrity under all circumstances;
Immediately and unconditionally release Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja as their detention is arbitrary and only aims at sanctioning their peaceful and legitimate human rights activities; and
Put an end to all forms of inhumane and degrading treatment and harassment, including at the judicial level, against Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja.

Signatories:

- Accion Ecologica (Ecuador)
- Al-Marsad Arab Human Rights Centre in Golan Heights
- Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHR - Jordan)
- Armanshahr / OPEN ASIA (Afghanistan)
- Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH - Peru)
- Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España (APDHE - Spain)
- Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos Bolivia
- Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates (ATFD - Tunisia)
- Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR)
- Bir Duino-Kyrgyzstan
- Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
- Center for Civil Liberties (CCL - Ukraine)
- Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR – United States)
- Center for Human Rights Protection Kylym Shamy (Kyrgyzstan)
- Centre Libanais des droits humains (CLDH – Lebanon)
- Centro de Capacitación Social (CCS - Panama)
- Centro de Derechos y Desarrollo (CEDAL - Peru)
- Centro Ecuaménico de derechos humanos (CEDH - Haiti)
- Centro Nicaraguense de Derechos Humanos (CENIDH - Nicaragua)
- Centro Para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (CALDH - Guatemala)
- Centro de Políticas Públicas y Derechos Humanos (EQUIDAD - Peru)
- Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo (CAJAR - Colombia)
- Comisión de Derechos Humanos de El Salvador (CDHES)

- Comision Ecuémica de Derechos Humanos (CEDHU – Ecuador)
- Comité de Accion Juridica (CAJ - Argentina)
- Comité de Familiares de Detenidos-Desaparecidos en Honduras (COFADEH)
- Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (CPDH - Colombia)
- Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI - India)
- Czech League of Human Rights (Liga Lidských Práv)
- FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
- Finnish League for Human Rights
- Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI - Uganda)
- Fundacion Regional de Asesoria en Derechos Humanos (INREDH - Ecuador)
- Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR)
- Hellenic League for Human Rights (HLHR - Greece)
- Human Rights Centre "Viasna" (Belarus)
- Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
- International Legal Initiative (ILI - Kazakhstan)
- Internet Law Reform Dialogue (iLaw - Thailand)
- Kazakhstan International Bureau for Human Rights and the Rule of Law
- Lao Movement for Human Rights (LMHR)
- Latvian Human Rights Committee
- League for the Defence of Human Rights in Iran (LDDHI)
- Lega Italiana dei Diritti dell'Uomo
- Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (LDH - France)
- Ligue des Droits de l'Homme (LDH - Belgium)
- Ligue des Droits et Libertés (Canada)
- Ligue des Electeurs (Democratic Republic of the Congo)
- Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme (LIDHO – Ivory Coast)
- Ligue Sénégalaise des Droits Humains (LSDH)
- Observatorio Ciudadano de Chile
- Odhikar (Bangladesh)
- Organisation Marocaine des Droits Humains (OMDH - Morocco)
- Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR)
- Palestinian Human Rights Organisation (PHRO)
- Réseau National de Défense des Droits Humains (RNDDH – Haïti)
- Sister's Arab Forum for human rights (SAF - Yemen)
- Syrian Center for Media and Freedom of Expression (SCM)
- Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (VCHR)
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders