

## URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

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**BHR 007 / 0511 / OBS 083**

Acts of harassment and Intimidation

**Bahrain**

May 27, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Bahrain**.

### Description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the summons of Mr. **Abdulla Alderazi**, Secretary General of the Bahrain Human Rights Society (BHRS), for interrogation by the Military Prosecutor as well as about the travel ban imposed on Mr. **Essa Al-Ghayeb**, BHRS Deputy Secretary General.

According to the information received, on May 22, 2011, Mr. Abdulla Alderazi was summonsed to the Office of the Military Prosecution for an interrogation without being given any explanations. When he got to the military premises, Mr. Alderazi was interrogated for more than two hours during which he was extensively questioned about his human rights activities and his communication with both international and local media outlets, like *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Manar*. Mr. Alderazi was also accused of participating in the peaceful demonstrations movement that took place in February 2011, although he reminded his interrogators that the right to peaceful assembly was protected by the Constitution of Bahrain.

Mr. Alderazi was told that he might be referred to the military court for trial on the charges of "spreading false information about Bahrain" pursuant to Articles 167 and 176 of the Criminal Code of Bahrain, punishable by six months to one year of imprisonment and/or a fine of 100 Bahraini Dinar (187 Euros). He immediately denied these allegations.

In addition, on April 17, 2011, Mr. Alderazi received a letter that "suspended until final decision" him from his work at the University of Bahrain where he was teaching as a lecturer in the English department. To date, he remains without further news about this new measure against him. To that extent, the Observatory recalls that hundreds of Bahraini have recently been dismissed from their positions for their assumed participation in the demonstrations or for their human rights activities. The Observatory further recalls that on September 8, 2010, the Ministry of Development and Social affairs published a ministerial order ordering the dissolution of the Board of Directors of BHRS, the dismissal of its Secretary General and the appointment of an employee of the Ministry to administer the NGO until the holding of a general assembly, pursuant to Article 23 of the Law of Association No. 21 of 1989. On September 19, 2010, the Board of Directors lodged a complaint against the Ministry. The case was referred to the Urgent Matters Commission, which has failed to date to decide on the matter.

Furthermore, on May 26, 2011, Mr. Essa Al-Ghayeb, who was due to participate in a seminar on the death penalty in Kuwait taking place on May 27-28, was prevented by passport control officers from boarding the plane at the Manama International Airport and informed that he was banned from travelling. Indeed, since the entry into force of a state of emergency on March 15, 2011, the authorities may issue travel bans without providing further details nor any means to challenge it.

The Observatory denounces these acts of intimidation and reprisals against Messrs. Abdulla Alderazi and Essa Al-Ghayeb, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights

activities and preventing them from carrying out such activities.

The Observatory recalls that dozens of human rights defenders are currently facing charges or threatened thereof for their alleged support of the social protest demonstrations of February 2011 or face travel bans to prevent them from addressing regional and international fora about human rights violations committed in Bahrain.

More generally, the Observatory is also increasingly concerned about the context of great insecurity that human rights defenders face in Bahrain, in light of the current violent repression of protests. The Observatory once again calls for the immediate end to the harsh repression, which blatantly violates fundamental human rights such as freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

### **Actions requested:**

The Observatory urges the authorities of Bahrain to:

- i. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Messrs. Alderazi and Essa Al-Ghayeb as well as all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- ii. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial and administrative level, against Messrs. Alderazi and Essa Al-Ghayeb as well as against all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- iii. Conform in any circumstances with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular :
  - its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” ;
  - its Article 5.b, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, at the national and international levels, (...) to form, join and participate in non-governmental organizations, associations or groups”;
  - its article A.b, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others (...) freely to publish, impart or disseminate to others views, information and knowledge on all human rights and fundamental freedoms”;
  - and its Article 12.2 which states that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;
- iv. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bahrain.

### **Addresses:**

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Please also write to diplomatic representations of Bahrain in your respective countries.

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Paris-Geneva, May 27, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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