

URGENT APPEAL –THE OBSERVATORY

BHR 001 / 0704 / OBS 054

Defamation of an NGO

Kingdom of Bahrain

July 8, 2004

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

Brief description of the situation:

The Observatory has been informed by a reliable source of the ongoing harassment of the Bahrain Human Rights Center, based in Manama.

On June 30, 2004, in an interview with Al Arabiya TV Channel, the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs in Bahrain openly threatened to shut down the **Bahrain Center for Human Rights** (BCHR) because of “its political activities.” The Minister, Dr. Majeed Al Alawi, called BCHR a political opposition body that has adopted a political agenda. Furthermore, Dr. Alawi criticized the organization’s use of demonstrations as well as article and letter writing to defend and protect human rights in Bahrain.

These accusations follow earlier threats from the Minister of Labor and Social Affairs to withdraw the Center’s operating license if it continued its political activities, as they contradicted Law No. 21 of 1989 on Societies. According to the information received, such threats were issued in letters to BCHR in October 2003 and May 2004.

The Observatory is extremely concerned about these threats and accusations, which challenge the credibility of the Center and the important work that it carries out, especially concerning the issues of migrant workers, discrimination, torture and legal actions intended to violate the freedoms of expression and association Bahrain.

Action requested:

Please write to the authorities of the Kingdom Bahrain urging them to:

- i. put an immediate end to any form of harassment or threat of closure to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights;
- ii. reform the Societies law of 1989 in order to conform with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1998, in particular 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,” and article 5(b), stating 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;”
- iii. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the Declaration and all other international human rights standards.

Addresses:

- Dr. Majeed Al ALAWI, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, P.O.Box: 32333, Isa Town, Kingdom of Bahrain; Tel : +973 687800 - Fax: +973 686954

- Mr. Khalid BIN ALI AL KHALIFA, Undersecretary of Justice, PO Box 450- Manama, Tel: +973 17522338- Fax: +973 175 36 343
- Dr. Yusuf ABDUL KARIM, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Po Box 547, Manama, Tél: +973 226766- Fax: +973 227 861
- Mr. Ahmed Mahdi AL-HADDAD, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Manama; Tel: +973 211935- Fax:+973 214 440
- Dr Faisal Al MOUSAWY, Chairman of Shura Council,Po Box 2991, Manama; tel: +973 17716500- Fax: +973 17715715
- Dr Faisal FOULAD, Shura Council, Po Box 2991, Manama; tel: +973 17330424- Fax: +973 17335910
- Mr. Adel Bin Abdul Rahman AL MAAWDA, Dep Chairman of the Council of Representatives, PO Box 54040, Manama, tel: +973 748458- Fax: +97317644130

Paris – Geneva, July 8, 2004

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

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

The Observatory was the winner of the 1998 Human Rights Prize of the French Republic.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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