



# INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

## **ICSFT DEPLORES BAHRAIN'S INCREASING PATTERN OF EXTREME REPRISAL AGAINST DISSIDENTS**



ICSFT remains to be seriously concerned about the situation in Bahrain and condemns in the strongest terms the widespread attacks, atrocities, killings, violations and abuses of human rights perpetrated by the government.

We are particularly concerned by the ongoing discrimination perpetrated by the Bahraini government against the country's majority Shia population and dissidents calling for political and human rights reform. This discrimination affects nearly every aspect of life, ranging across religious, social, political and cultural rights, and is marked by the government's targeting of Shia leaders and clerics. The government has moved to suppress Shia religious, social, and cultural symbols and figures by targeting Shia leaders and clerics; arresting, detaining, and sometimes deporting them. This disturbing trend has continued with the

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ongoing harassment and detention of prominent Shia religious figures, and targeted religious commemorations around the Ashura holiday.

Leading religious figures have faced particularly harsh treatment including, scholars Sheikh Mohammed al-Miqdad, Sheikh Abduljalil al-Miqdad, and Sheikh Saeed al-Noori who were sentenced to life in prison for their activism in 2011 protests. Sheikh Hussein al-Najati was denaturalized and deported in 2015, and Sheikh Isa Qassim, one of the most prominent Shia leader in Bahrain, was also arbitrarily denaturalized. The government has sentenced many other Shia human rights and political activists to prison for their activism and outspoken criticism of the government. As illustration, Sheikh Ali Salman of Al-Wefaq, Mohamed Habib al-Miqdad, and Hassan Mushaima.

Recently the ongoing reprisals that Bahraini human rights defenders and their families face was highlighted by the Secretary-General's report on reprisals. The cases of Ebtesam al-Saegh, Sayed Ahmed AlWadaei, Nabeel Rajab, and Nedal al-Salman were highlighted in the report. The report also noted that more than 20 Bahraini human rights defenders and activists have been subjected to arbitrary travel bans when attempting to travel to Geneva to engage with this Council.

The government uses travel bans, threats of physical and sexual violence against activists and their loved ones, and the detention of family members as forms of intimidation and reprisal. This widespread and systematic human rights abuses by the government of Bahrain is a crime against humanity and the international community has the responsibility to end impunity and stand for the people of Bahrain now.

Nabeel Rajab's pending appeal is another illustration of the regimes systemic targeting of human rights defenders and journalists. On December 31, 2018, the Court of Cassation in Bahrain may issue its verdict in the appeal of the five-year prison sentence handed to him for peaceful comments posted and retweeted on his Twitter account about the killing of civilians in the Yemen conflict by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, and allegations of torture in Jau prison.

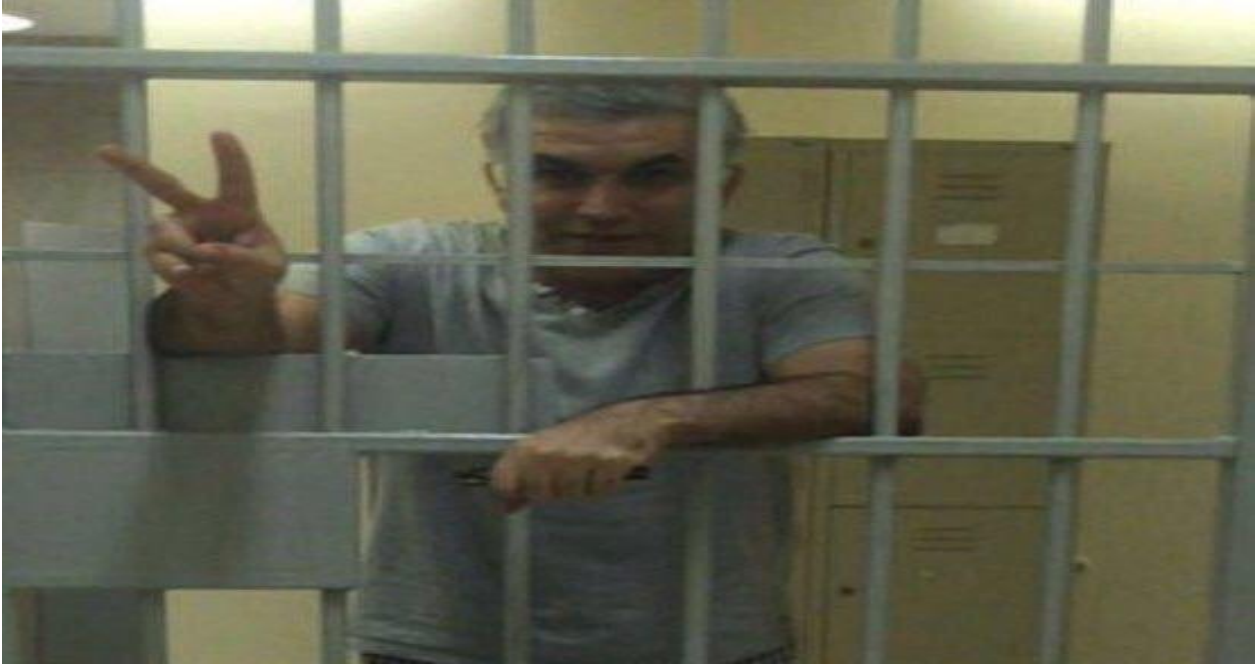
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*Nabeel Rajab*

Rights groups are expressing concern that “the authorities intend to increase Rajab’s prison sentence unopposed, by setting December 31 as the date for a hearing and possible issuing of a verdict, while most Bahrainis and people around the globe will be focused on year-end celebrations.” These rights groups argue that this is not an unfounded concern, “as opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman was arrested on December 28, 2014 and subsequently convicted and sentenced to four years in jail following an unfair trial. And last month, in yet another case brought against him on spying charges, the Court of Appeal overturned his initial acquittal and sentenced him instead to life in prison.”

At its 81<sup>st</sup> session, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Rajab’s “deprivation of liberty constitutes a violation of articles 2 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and articles 2 (1) and 26 of the Covenant – on the grounds of discrimination based on political or other opinion, as well as on his status as a human rights defender”.



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ICSFT firmly believes that freedom of expression and assembly are a key prerequisite if Bahrain is to overcome its current challenges. Unfortunately, the Bahraini government has failed to utilize the recommendations from and support provided by the international community to resolve the situation.

Article 9 of General Assembly Resolution 60/251 calls on Member States of the Council to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights.” However, since mid-2016, Bahrain has taken increasingly repressive measures to silence dissent and imprison political activists and religious leaders. The government has dissolved all opposition political parties, silenced independent media, jailed human rights defenders and political leaders, and criminalized any form of expression and association.

Furthermore, besides to suppressing fundamental freedoms, Bahrain refuses to engage with the Human Rights Council, and continues to be one of the worst offenders in terms of reprisals against civil society for cooperating with the HRC and its mechanisms. No Special Procedures have been allowed into the country since 2006 and the government has refused cooperate constructively with OHCHR. This makes Bahrain unfit to be a Member of the Human Rights Council or any other UN human rights mechanism.

ICSFT urges Bahraini authorities drop all charges and to immediately and unconditionally release all prisoners of conscience, and undertake a prompt, impartial, independent, and effective investigation into his allegations of ill-treatment and bring the perpetrators of these violations to justice The findings justice in fair proceedings.

Pressure from the international community is imperative to ensure the Government of Bahrain ends its campaign of reprisals against human rights defenders, that the right to freedom of expression and freedom of the press is respected. Bahrain has a long standing history at the UN; hence The United Nations and member states must put pressure on the Government of Bahrain to stop the crimes against humanity and the grave violations committed against its people who are demanding freedom and their legitimate rights.

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We urge the government to abide by international laws and standards and create a safe space for all sectors of Bahraini society to contribute to dialogue and national reconciliation in a peaceful and constructive manner.

We call on the Government of Bahrain to head the calls of the international community to respect basic human rights and implement meaningful and substantive political and human rights reform.