



# INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

## ICSFT DEPLORES BAHRAIN'S DECISION TO UPHOLD LIFE SENTENCE AGAINST SHEIKH ALI SALMAN AND HIS AIDES



*Sheikh Ali Salman, the leader of opposition party Al Wafaq and prominent Shia cleric*

ICSFT condemns in the strongest terms the decision of Bahrain's Supreme Court to uphold a life sentence for Shia opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman over fabricated and politically motivated charges of spying for neighboring Qatar<sup>1</sup>. Sheikh Ali Salman is currently serving a four-year sentence in a separate case – “inciting hatred” in the kingdom. Sheikh Ali Salman's aides Ali al-Aswad and Hassan Sultan, who are former MPs and currently reside outside Bahrain and had been sentenced to life in absentia, also lost their right to appeal. The verdicts issued this Monday are final and cannot be appealed.

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<sup>1</sup> “In June 2017, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates severed their diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism. The four countries also imposed a land, sea, and air blockade on Qatar.” Qatar has categorically denied accusations of conspiring with Salman against Bahrain.



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Several human rights groups and UN human rights organs have declared this trial is flawed and in violation of the international standards on free and fair trials. The judiciary system in Bahrain is a tool in the hands of the ruling regime, and the ruling is a perfect illustration of the magnitude of lack of due process and independent judiciary in the kingdom. This is next level low to freedom of expression in Bahrain. The life sentence of Sheikh Ali Salman once again confirms the lack of transparency and independence of Bahrain's judiciary system.

Sheikh Ali Salman's conviction is in contravention of international legal protections, including his right not to be deprived arbitrarily of liberty as set forth in Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Bahrain is a signatory. As well in violation of his right to freedom of expression under Article 19 and his right to freedom of association under Article 22 of the ICCPR.

Sheikh Ali Salman addressed this verdict by saying, "I will endure all hardship for the sake of Allah and the people."

"Today's verdict is yet another nail in the coffin for the right to freedom of expression in Bahrain and exposes the country's justice system as a complete farce. The decision to uphold Sheikh Ali Salman's conviction and life prison sentence following an unfair trial highlights the authorities' determination to silence critical voices," said Samah Hadid, Amnesty International's Middle East director of campaigns.

Sheikh Ali Salman has been in jail since late 2014 for a serious of false accusations, including

- Insulting government officials
- Inciting unrest through his speeches targeting the authorities during a 2011 uprising
- Attempting to overthrow the regime
- Collaborating with foreign powers

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The only thing Sheikh Ali Salman is guilty of is seeking political and human rights reform in the country through peaceful means.

The regime has gone to great lengths to crack down dissent. Dozens of people have lost their lives and hundreds of others sustained injuries, gotten arrested, are on exile as a result of the Aal-e Khalifah regime's crackdown.

As of recent, an independent human rights group says it has documented "the arrest of more than 5,000 prisoners of conscience in addition to 200 victims of excessive use of force, murder and torture kingdom", as regime presses ahead with its heavy clampdown on political dissidents and pro-democracy groups.

## **ICSFT calls on the Government of Bahrain to:**

- Reverse this decision against Sheikh Salman and his aides, and release him immediately and unconditionally. In addition we call on Bahrain to rescind the decision to dissolve Wafaq and Wa'ad, the two opposition political groups, and ensure the right to freedom of expression and association in the country;
- Cease targeting Sheikh Salman and other political activists in Bahrain and guarantee their freedom of expression and association;
- Ensure that political societies and rights groups are able to conduct their work in a safe and enabling environment, without fear of reprisal.