

ADHRB Denounces Decision by Bahrain Court to Uphold Sentences for 13 Bahraini Opposition Activists

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) denounced a [decision](#) by Bahrain's High Court of Appeals today that upholds the convictions and sentences of 13 pro-democracy activists, who were originally convicted of charges related to anti-government protests by sham military courts in June 2011.

In a session lasting only [three minutes](#), the High Court of Appeals denied the activists' appeals and upheld their sentences, which range from five years to life in prison. The activists say they [plan to appeal](#) the decision. Seven other activists who had been convicted *in absentia* also had their sentences, which range from 15 years to life in prison, upheld. The court's decision [sparked protests](#) in Manama, Bahrain's capital, and was roundly criticized by [human rights groups](#), as well as by Denmark's Foreign Minister [Villy Soevndal](#) and Australian MP [Chris Hayes](#).

"These sentences confirm what human rights organizations have been saying all along regarding the Government of Bahrain's failure to make much-needed democratic reforms," said ADHRB's Director, Husain Abdulla. "There is no such thing as a fair trial for critics of the government in Bahrain, and there is no such thing as accountability for torture and other human rights abuse in Bahrain."

According to the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI)—an investigative commission sanctioned by the Government of Bahrain—National Security Agency officers tortured, abused, and sexually assaulted many of the 13 activists during interrogation sessions early on in their detention in order to extract forced confessions. Evidence obtained through torture was reportedly used at trial, in contravention of international law. All of the men have also claimed that they were denied access to their lawyers during those interrogations. To date, these allegations have gone uninvestigated.

ADHRB calls on the US Government to strongly condemn the court's decision, and to pressure the Government of Bahrain to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners. ADHRB also calls on Susan Rice, US Permanent Representative to the United Nations, to steadfastly oppose Bahrain's [attempt to seek a seat](#) on the UN Human Rights Council [Advisory Committee](#). That body is responsible for providing human rights expertise to the Council—a task the Government of Bahrain is clearly unfit to perform.