



American Teen on Trial in Bahrain Calls for Human Rights Protections for all Child Prisoners



An American teen imprisoned in Bahrain is calling for human rights protections for all Bahraini children who are subjected to detainment and imprisonment in the country. On May 6 2014, 17-year-old American citizen Abdulla Jaffar Abdulla will be tried in a Bahraini court on political charges. Abdulla is not the first American or the first minor to be detained under political charges in Bahrain. Last year, Taqi al-Maidan, who was born in Connecticut, was sentenced to 10 years in prison for throwing a stone at a police vehicle despite a lack of evidence or witnesses and allegations of torture and abuse. Security forces in Bahrain has a history of arresting children, some as young as 10 years old, for being on the street during a protest.

Abdulla was detained on March 10th 2014 by Bahrain security forces while grocery shopping a block away from his grandfather's home. According to his family, the police accused him of attending an illegal protest and beat him repeatedly on his face before taking him into their police vehicle. Security forces subsequently took Abdulla to Juffair police station, where they allegedly threatened to beat him with a plastic hose if he did not confess. Suffering from the previous assault and fearing being subjected to further beatings, Abdulla falsely confessed.

The public prosecutor ordered Abdulla be detained for 45 days pending trial, and he was moved to Dry Dock Detention Center. However, when his family went to see him, they were told that he was not there and that there were no records concerning his detention. At this point, his family contacted the U.S. Embassy in Manama where staff was able to confirm that Abdulla was indeed detained at Dry Dock.

The Ministry of Interior first allowed Abdulla's family to visit him on 17 March, 7 days after he was first detained. The family took permission from the public prosecution to get Abdulla his school books but was not allowed to bring more than two. During the family visit, Abdulla appeared exhausted and "didn't seem himself." His family also reports that he had visible marks of abuse on his body, and his nose appeared to be broken. It is believed that Abdulla has yet to receive medical treatment for these injuries.

Abdulla is known as a sweet and sensitive boy with a love for animals. He was personally affected by the 2011 protests when a close friend of his was killed by the security forces' use of tear gas. Despite the harsh treatment he has suffered, he has told his family: "I want to help the other children in prison."

As such, ADHRB calls for:

- The U.S. government and Bahraini government to investigate any allegations of torture and abuse of Abdulla Jaffar, and to ensure that he is given proper medical treatment for his injuries and any pre-existing ailments.
- A representative from the U.S. Embassy Manama to attend Abdulla Jaffar's trial on May 6th to ensure no miscarriage of justice occurs.
- The Bahraini government to ensure the protection of human rights and due process rights of all minors currently imprisoned in Bahrain.