



## PRESS RELEASE

9 June 2014

### Renewed call for release of jailed Bahraini journalists before Human Rights Council's 26<sup>th</sup> Session

Ahead of the United Nations Human Rights Council's 26<sup>th</sup> Session, ten free speech and human rights organisations have made a renewed call for the release of Bahraini journalists Hussain Hubail and Qassim Zain Aldeen.

Hussain Hubail, an award-winning photographer, and cameraman Qassim Zain Aldeen have been held in detention since the summer of 2013, whilst blogger Mohammed Hassan was released on bail. During his detention, Mr Hubail has faced interrogation and torture at the Bahraini Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID). Mr Hubail has been refused medical treatment for his heart condition. Mr Zain Aldeen has been hospitalised following beatings he received in prison from police officials. Mr Hassan fled to the United Kingdom upon his release on bail, and is facing revival of charges against him, torture and an unfair trial if he is returned to Bahrain.

Both Mr Hassan and Mr Hubail are charged with calling for illegal gatherings, inciting hatred against the regime, inciting people to ignore the law and misuse of social media. Mr Zain Aldeen is charged with participating in an illegal gathering and vandalism in prison. All three have been critical in their reporting on the Bahraini government, covering protests and demonstrations against the authorities for both local and international media and publishing on human rights issues. Their arrest and

detention is part of a broader campaign of repression of journalists, bloggers and human rights defenders carried out by the authorities of Bahrain and violates international human rights law.

Last week, the Media Legal Defence Initiative, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights, the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada, PEN International and Reporters Without Borders issued a renewed call for action to the UN Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression and on torture as well as the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. The organisations requested these UN experts to intervene urgently to secure the immediate release of the journalists and insist that they are not subjected to further torture or ill-treatment.

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Note to editors:

- Mr Hubail is a freelance photographer who was awarded a prize by independent newspaper *Al-Wasat* in May 2013 for his photograph of protestors running through a cloud of tear gas. He was arrested on 31 July 2013 and taken to the CID for interrogation where he was subjected to torture. He is currently awaiting an appeal on his five year sentence. Mr Hubail's lawyer has made numerous bail applications on the basis of Mr Hubail's health condition, but this continues to be refused while his trial is being postponed.
- Mr Zain Aldeen is a freelance cameraman whose work covers opposition protests in Bahrain. He was arrested on 2 August 2013 and subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Mr Zain Aldeen was sentenced to six months in prison on 15 January 2014 in relation to separate charges for participating in an illegal gathering and vandalism in prison.
- Mr Hassan is a well-known independent blogger who has been writing about human rights and the political situation in Bahrain since 2007. Mr Hassan was arrested on 31 July 2013

and subjected to torture and ill-treatment. Mr Hassan was released on bail at the beginning of October 2013, and fled Bahrain at the end of February 2014 to seek asylum in the United Kingdom. At the moment it is unclear whether asylum will be granted.

- The arrest and detention of all three men was the subject of an Urgent Appeal dated 6 August 2013 made by the Media Legal Defence Initiative, English PEN and Article 19 to the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which was copied to the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. It was also the subject of a Letter of Allegation dated 15 December 2013 on behalf of the abovementioned coalition of NGOs.