

29 August 2014

HM Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa  
King of Bahrain  
Rifaa Palace  
Manama, Bahrain

Your Majesty,

We, the undersigned Bahraini and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), would like to call your attention to the case of Ahmed Humaidan—an award-winning Bahraini photojournalist sentenced to 10 years in prison in connection with his work documenting the ongoing unrest in Bahrain. These types of charges and prison sentences are active forms of intimidation and repression against journalists and the press, and directly conflict with Bahrain's international commitments to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and to Bahrain's accepted recommendations of the country's 2012 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) [115.147, 115.155, and 115.158]. We call on your government to immediately and unconditionally release and dismiss all charges against Ahmed Humaidan and to fulfill Bahrain's commitments to uphold international standards of press freedom.

In December 2012, Bahraini courts tried Ahmed Humaidan along with over 30 individuals on charges relating to an attack on a Sitra police station which took place earlier that year. Following repeated home raids against his family, plain-clothes security agents abducted Humaidan from a shopping mall on the night of 29 December 2012 and took him to the Central Investigation Department (CID), where he was interrogated without the presence of a lawyer. Ahmed has maintained that he was not involved in any violence and that he wasn't present during the police station attack and if he does that would be only in his capacity as a photojournalist documenting the ongoing unrest. Humaidan is an internationally recognized, award-winning photographer who has captured a number of iconic images from Bahrain since 2011.

The 10-year prison sentence handed down against Humaidan, as well as similar sentences against other Bahraini media professionals, is a form of intimidation, repression and abuse of the Bahraini media community, and serves to undermine press freedom in Bahrain. Additionally, the type of abuse Humaidan and his family endured through numerous home raids before his arrest and the manner of Humaidan's arrest and his forced disappearance for 19 hours before being allowed to contact his family likewise serve as a comprehensive form of intimidation and abuse of journalists.

As a signatory to the ICCPR, Bahrain has committed to uphold international standards of free expression, including the ability of media professionals to document and publish their work. This obligation is rooted in Article 19.2 of the Covenant, which states that, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all

kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.” Similarly, a number of the 158 recommendations that the Government of Bahrain accepted as part of Bahrain’s 2012 Second Cycle UPR referenced ending intimidation, repression and censorship against journalists and the press in Bahrain.

Recognizing these obligations and commitments made by Bahrain, we therefore call on your government to immediately and unconditionally release Ahmed Humaidan and to dismiss all charges against him. We likewise call on the Government of Bahrain to recommit to upholding press freedom and freedom of expression in Bahrain, and to take immediate steps to end all intimidation, arrest, abuse, prosecution and detention of journalists and media professions on charges relating to their work.

Sincerely,

**Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain**

**REPORTERS SANS FRONTIÈRES**

**Bahrain 19**

**Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy**

**Committee to Protect Journalists - Sherif Mansour - MENA Program Coordinator**

**Canadian Journalists for free expression**

**Bahrain Center for Human Rights**

**Bahrain Salam for Human Rights**

**Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada**

**Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights**

**Bahrain Press Association**