



Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

1001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 205 • Washington, D.C. 20036 • (202) 621-6141 • www.adhrb.org • @ADHRB

ADHRB Condemns Arbitrary Detention of Maryam al-Khawaja

2 September 2014 – WASHINGTON, D.C. – Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) condemn the arbitrary detention of prominent Bahraini human rights defender Maryam al-Khawaja. Maryam, who [will stand trial on 6 September](#) for allegedly attacking a lieutenant and a policewoman, was [arrested at the Manama airport](#) on Friday 29 August by Bahraini authorities after traveling to the country to visit her father, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja.

Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, also a prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience in Bahrain, has been arbitrarily detained since 2011 after receiving a [life sentence based on politically motivated charges](#). In protest of the Bahraini government's ongoing use of arbitrary detention to quash dissent, Abdulhadi began a [hunger strike](#) on 25 August 2014. As a result of his hunger strike, Abdulhadi lost consciousness on 27 August, leading to his daughter's decision to travel to Bahrain. Maryam has been living in exile since she left during the protest movement of 2011, and was [barred from boarding](#) a British Airways flight to Bahrain in 2013. Maryam's sister, [Zainab al-Khawaja, was released on bail after authorities](#) detained her on 27 August while attempting to visit her father. Zainab is seven months pregnant.

In 2011, the government cracked down on a massive popular protest movement in Bahrain, arresting thousands, injuring hundreds, and killing dozens. In the wake of serious human rights violations, the government accepted all of the recommendations for human rights reforms that came from the 2011 Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) as well as 158 of the 172 human rights-related recommendations suggested during their 2012 United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR). [Bahrain has publicly committed](#) to presenting its mid-term report on implementation of the 2012 UPR recommendations during the 27th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva this month.

"Maryam's detention is only the most recent example of the Government of Bahrain's increased suppression of basic human rights," said Husain Abdulla, ADHRB's Executive Director. "Instead of following the path of reform suggested by the BICI and the international community, the Bahraini government has been on a path towards regressive human rights policies and legislation. This is a slippery slope that has broad implications for the region and the international community."

In addition to increased targeting of human rights activists and peaceful protesters in the country, the Bahraini government has actively obscured the human rights situation from its most powerful ally. On 7 July 2014, the Government of Bahrain [expelled](#) United States Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, Tom Malinowski for meeting with opposition leaders and civil society activists. Just last month, on 21 August 2014, the government made an [official decision to deny](#) Congressman James McGovern (D-MA) and Human Right First's Brian Dooley access to the country.

"The Bahraini government continues to promise the international community that it is committed to the implementation of reform laid out in the BICI and the UPR recommendations, but the arbitrary detention of Maryam al-Khawaja is a clear indication of how seriously they take such promises," said Sayed Alwadeai, BIRD's Head of Advocacy. "Unfortunately, it is clear that the Government of Bahrain has no desire for living up to their international commitments to respect and protect human rights, and the international community must hold the government accountable."