



NGOs Condemn Continued Detention of Nabeel Rajab

20 October 2014 - Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) are extremely concerned over the continued detention of prominent human rights defender [Nabeel Rajab](#). The aforementioned organizations condemn the prosecution of Mr. Rajab on charges related to his right to free speech and call for his immediate release.

Mr. Rajab, President of BCHR and Co-Director of the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR), is accused of “derogating government institutions” for a [tweet](#) in which he questioned whether Bahraini security institutions are “ideological incubators” for the known terrorist group the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). While the government originally scheduled Mr. Rajab’s trial for 19 October, the government postponed ruling on the case until 29 October in the face of mounting international pressure. The government also denied Mr. Rajab bail, and did not allow his family to attend the proceeding. If convicted, Mr. Rajab could face up to three years in prison.

“Mr. Rajab’s continued detention, despite calls for his immediate release from the international community, makes a mockery of the Bahraini government’s claims of respecting human rights and desiring reform,” said Husain Abdulla, ADHRB’s Executive Director.

On 30 September, Mr. Rajab returned to Bahrain after spending months participating in a foreign advocacy tour to raise awareness about human rights abuses in Bahrain. During his tour, Mr. Rajab spoke at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, addressed the European Parliament in Brussels, and visited foreign ministries throughout Europe. Upon returning to the country, Mr. Rajab immediately received a summons from the Cyber Crimes Unit of the Central Investigations Directorate’s (CID) for interrogation due to complaints filed by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense. When Mr. Rajab arrived for interrogation, the Public Prosecution ordered his detention pending investigation.

“The government detained Mr. Rajab less than 24 hours after he returned,” said Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of BIRD. “Clearly, the Government of Bahrain did not appreciate what Mr. Rajab was doing, and has taken this opportunity to silence him.”

More than 100 civil society organizations [called](#) for Mr. Rajab’s immediate and unconditional release, while the [United Nations](#) called his detention “chilling” and argued that it sends a “disturbing message.” The [United States](#) and [Norway](#)

called for the government of Bahrain to drop the charges against Mr. Rajab, and [France](#) called on Bahrain to respect freedom of expression and facilitate free public debate.

“It is clear that the government of Bahrain is persecuting Mr. Rajab for his human rights work,” said Said Yousif, Vice President of BCHR. “Free expression is effectively outlawed in Bahrain, where government institutions are used to gag critics and quash dissent.”

The government has previously arbitrarily imprisoned Mr. Rajab on multiple occasions. From July 2012 to May 2014, he was detained as a result of calling for and participating in peaceful protests in Bahrain’s capital of Manama. The government has also prosecuted Mr. Rajab on multiple occasions for tweets critical of the government, including an incident in which he was sentenced to 3 months imprisonment for allegedly defaming citizens of Muharraq. Despite his eventual acquittal by the Court of Appeal, Mr. Rajab served most of his sentence.

We, the undersigned human rights organizations, call on the United States, the European Union, and other national and international bodies to actively engage the Government of Bahrain to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Nabeel Rajab;
- Drop all charges against him in relation to or retaliation for his work; and
- Ensure that all civil society organizations and human rights defenders in Bahrain are able to conduct their work without fear of retaliation or reprisal.