

Verdict Expected for Nabeel Rajab 20 January, NGOs Call for Charges to be Dropped

19 January 2015 - On 20 January, a verdict is expected in the trial of Nabeel Rajab, a prominent Bahraini activist and internationally recognized human rights defender. President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), Deputy Secretary General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and a member of Human Rights Watch's Advisory Board, Rajab is charged with insulting public institutions via Twitter. The undersigned NGOs strongly condemn the politically motivated prosecution of and judicial attack against Nabeel Rajab and call on the Government of Bahrain to drop all charges against the peaceful human rights defender.

On 1 October 2014, Rajab presented himself to Bahrain's General Directorate of Criminal Investigations (CID) upon receiving a summons for questioning, where he was arrested after hours of interrogation regarding one of his [tweets](#). Rajab had just returned to Bahrain from a months-long advocacy tour, which included appearances at the 27th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and the European Parliament in Brussels, as well as meetings with foreign ministries throughout Europe. Charged with insulting public institutions under article 216 of Bahrain's penal code, Rajab was granted bail on 2 November 2014, but was banned from leaving the country.

Rajab has won many international awards for his human rights work, including the Ion Ratiu Democracy award, presented by the Woodrow Wilson Center, and the British Silbury prize to "facilitate his on-going humanitarian and human rights work." In 2013, Rajab and BCHR were awarded the Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize, an annual recognition of those who have devoted their lives to promote democracy and respect for human rights. Rajab was unable to attend the ceremony, as he was imprisoned in Bahrain for his activism.

The international community's response to the current charges leveled against Rajab has been monumental in denouncing the CID and Bahraini government for their actions. Over 100 NGOs and civil society organizations, as well as members of the European Parliament, the UK Parliament and the United States congress have called for the charges against Rajab to be dropped. The United States, Norway, France and the United Nations all made public statements supporting Rajab and called on Bahrain to respect freedom of expression and free public debate.

Rajab is one of many Bahrainis who have been victimized by the government's intensified campaign to silence dissent through judicial harassment and the improper use of judicial and police powers. On 28 December, Sheikh Ali Salman, General-Secretary of Bahrain's largest opposition party Al-Wefaq, [was arrested for his political and human rights activism](#). Earlier in December, human rights defender Zainab al-Khawaja [was sentenced to four years in prison for insulting the king](#) and ripping up his picture, while her sister Maryam al-Khawaja, Director of Advocacy of the Gulf Center for Human Rights, [was sentenced to one year in prison for](#) allegedly assaulting a police officer during her arrest in August 2014. These are a few of the many Bahrainis who have been wrongfully arbitrarily detained, charged, or sentenced for peacefully exercising rights protected by, *inter alia*, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). These including rights to freedom of expression (ICCPR and UDHR art. 19), assembly (ICCPR art. 21; UDHR art. 20), association (ICCPR art. 22; UDHR art. 20) and the right to take part in public affairs (ICCPR art. 25; UDHR art. 21).

The aforementioned organizations call on the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United States and other national and international bodies to:

- Publicly call for the dismissal of the charges against human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, as well as the removal of restrictions to his international travel;
- Apply pressure on the Government of Bahrain to halt any further judicial harassment of Nabeel Rajab and other human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- Apply pressure on the Government of Bahrain to drop all charges against all charged or sentenced for exercising their internationally protected human rights;
- Apply pressure on the Government of Bahrain to release all political prisoners;
- Urge the Bahraini government to repeal laws that infringe upon internationally protect rights;
- Urge the Government of Bahrain to end reprisals against human rights defenders; and
- Urge the Government of Bahrain to ensure that civil society organizations and human rights defenders in Bahrain may conduct their work without fear of retaliation or reprisal.

Signatories:

1. Activists Organisation For Development And Human Rights
2. American for Democracy and Human rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
3. Africa Freedom Of Information Centre
4. Albadeel Center For Studies And Research
5. Alliance For Tunisia's Women
6. Aman Network For Rehabilitation & Defending Human Rights
7. Asociación Por Los Derechos Civiles
8. Bahrain 19
9. Bahrain Press Association
10. Bahrain Salam For Human Rights
11. Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR)
12. Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
13. Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR)
14. Bytes For All, Pakistan
15. Cairo Institute For Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
16. Cartoonists Rights Network International
17. Center For Media Freedom & Responsibility
18. Centre For Independent Journalism (CIJ) Malaysia
19. Chokri Belaid Foundation To Combat Violence
20. Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE)
21. European-Bahraini Organisation for Human Rights (EBOHR)
22. Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF)
23. European Saudi Organisation For Human Rights
24. Freedom Forum
25. Freedom House
26. Gulf Center For Human Rights (GCHR)
27. Globe International Center
28. Initiative For Freedom Of Expression - Turkey
29. Institut Studi Arus Informasi (ISAI)
30. International Centre For Supporting Rights And Freedom

31. International Press Institute (IPI)
32. Jordanian Commission For Culture And Democracy
33. Khiam Rehabilitation Center For Victims Of Torture
34. Kuwait Human Right Institute
35. Kuwait Human Right Society
36. Lawyers Rights Watch Canada (LRWC)
37. MADA - Palestinian Center For Development & Media Freedoms
38. Maharat Foundation- Lebanon
39. Media Watch , Bangladesh
40. MENA Monitoring Group
41. National Union Of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ)
42. Nidal Tagheer Organisation For Defending Rights (Yemen)
43. No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ - Italy)
44. Nonviolent Radical Party, Transnational And Transparty (NRPTT - Italy)
45. Pakistan Press Foundation (PPF)
46. PEN American Center
47. PEN International
48. Réseau Avocats Sans Frontières
49. Shia Right Watch
50. Sudanese Development Imitative
51. Syrian Nonviolence Movement
52. The Arabic Network For Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
53. The Independent Journalism Center (Moldova)
54. The World Association Of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)
55. Tunisian Association For The Rehabilitation Of Prisoners
56. Tunisian Centre For Transitional Justice
57. Tunisian National Council For Liberties
58. UN Ponte Per (Italy)