



Human Rights Defender Nabeel Rajab Sentenced to Six Months in Prison

20 January 2015 – Today, a Bahraini court sentenced human rights activist Nabeel Rajab to six months in prison on a conviction related to a [tweet](#) he published in September 2014. Rajab was also ordered to pay 200 BHD (\$530 USD) for his bail during his appeal process. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy condemn the sentence imposed upon Rajab and call on the Government of Bahrain to immediately overturn his conviction.

In October 2014, Rajab was arrested and charged with insulting public institutions under article 216 of Bahrain's penal code. 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.

"The Government of Bahrain's judicial harassment of Nabeel Rajab is intended to silence dissent and intimidate those who would speak out against the government," said BCHR Vice President Sayed Yousif Almuhaftah. "However, no amount of government repression can stop the march towards justice. In fact, today's sentence will only elevate the cries of those who fight for human rights in Bahrain."

The international community responded to Rajab's arrest with condemnation. [59 NGOs and civil society organizations](#), as well as [80 members of the European Parliament](#), and [21 UK Parliamentarians](#), called for the charges against Rajab to be dropped. Additionally, 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.

"While the international community has been outspoken in condemning the charges leveled against Rajab, today's sentence is a clear sign that words will not stop the Bahraini government from harassing human rights defenders and targeting dissent," said ADHRB Executive Director Husain Abdulla. "Bahrain's allies must go beyond words if they are to stop government policies that run the risk of pushing the country's disenfranchised population towards extremism."

"Just last week, Bahrain's Foreign Minister participated in a march in Paris to condemn the violent attack on *Charlie Hebdo* and call for respect of free speech at the same time the judiciary prepared to sentence Nabeel for a Tweet," said BIRD Advocacy Director Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei. "Bahrain is able to avoid consequence for such hypocrisy and for targeting free speech because it is enabled by its Western allies and specifically the United Kingdom, which has chosen to remain silent on human rights abuses rather than risk losing a new £15 million military base in the country."

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 Government of Bahrain to overturn the conviction against Nabeel and vacate his sentence;
- Apply pressure on the Government of Bahrain to halt any further judicial harassment of Nabeel Rajab and other human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- Urge the Bahraini government to repeal laws that infringe upon internationally protect rights;
- 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.