

## **Human Rights Defenders Threatened at the Human Rights Council**

On 15 March 2015 during a side event that was organized by Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), human rights defenders **Husain Abdulla**, Executive Director of ADHRB, and **Abdulnabi Al-Ekri**, President of Bahrain Transparency Society and member of the Bahrain Human Rights Observatory (BHRO), were reportedly threatened by MP Khalid Al-Shaer, Chairman of the Human Rights Committee in the Bahraini Parliament. This resulted in UN security being called to prevent Mr. Khalid Al-Shaer from attending the event.

Al-Shaer allegedly threatened Mr. Al-Ekri stating that he would “be discussing things at the public prosecution” when returning to Bahrain. In addition he reportedly told Mr. Abdulla that “I came to Geneva to see you,” he accused Mr. Abdulla of using ADHRB to “defame his homeland and spread lies.” He then added, “I know that you still have family residing in Bahrain and you can imagine what would have already happened to them [his family], if the government was truly bad.”

During the event, another member of Al-Shaer’s delegation took pictures of the Bahraini activists with her mobile phone. During previous Human Rights Council sessions, people accredited by the Government of Bahrain took pictures of human rights defenders as a means of intimidation. In addition, articles were written in the local Bahrain press defaming organizers. (See: <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=397594> and <http://www.alwatannews.net/PrintedNewsViewer.aspx?ID=BAaNaDzsvsXPB733337Ta65uI1Q933339933339>)

After the reported threats Husain Abdulla informed the President of the Human Rights Council, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Secretariat of the Human Rights Council and other bodies and mechanisms about the incident.

The co-signed organizations believe that human rights defenders Husain Abdulla and Abdulnabi Al-Ekri have been targeted solely due to their co-operation with the UN system and in particular their role in documenting and reporting the continued human rights violations in Bahrain.

Attacks and intimidation against Bahraini human rights defenders for engaging with the UN human rights system have increased in recent years. Authorities continue to systematically target defenders who collaborate with the international mechanisms on politically-motivated charges using the judiciary, which lacks both independence and the most basic international standards. It is critical that the UN Human Rights Council addresses these threats and calls upon the Government of Bahrain to ensure the safety of human rights defenders returning to Bahrain after Geneva.

### **The co-signed organizations call on the government of Bahrain to:**

1. Immediately stop the ongoing reprisals against human rights defenders who are engaging with the international mechanisms including the UN system;
2. Immediately stop the human rights violations as well as escalating attacks on human rights defenders;
3. Release all human rights defenders jailed in Bahrain, stop putting them on trial and lift the travel bans imposed on them;

4. Make the amendments and policy changes necessary to bring domestic legislation and procedures into conformity with Bahrain's international obligations and commitments to ensure and prevent violations of freedoms protected by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and
5. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bahrain are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals, and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

**Signed,**

Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)  
Amman Center for Human Rights Studies  
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)  
Arab Organization for Human Rights in Syria  
Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF Network)  
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)  
Bahrain Observatory for Human Rights (BOHR)  
Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)  
Bahrain Salam for Human Rights  
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Information (CIHRS)  
CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation  
Committee for the Defense of Democracy Freedoms and Human Rights in Syria  
Damien McCormack – Irish Surgeon and activist  
Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR)  
Human rights Organization in Syria (MAF)  
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders  
International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)  
Iraqi Journalists Rights Defense Association (IJRDA)  
Kurdish Organization to Defense Human Rights  
Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada  
Lualua Centre for Human Rights  
Metro Centre to Defend Journalists in Iraqi Kurdistan  
No Peace Without Justice  
Rewangeh  
Syrian Federation for Human Rights Organizations and Bodies  
The Tunisian Intuitive for Freedom of Expression  
World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders