



BIRD
BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR
RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY



NGOs Condemn Arrest of BCHR President Nabeel Rajab

2 April 2015 – Today at approximately 4:00 PM local time (GMT+3), Bahraini security forces and police arrested Nabeel Rajab, prominent human rights defender and president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). Reports indicate that over 20 police vehicles surrounded his home in Bani Jamra, after which security forces presented him with a warrant charging him with spreading false news relating to statements concerning acts of torture and inhumane treatment at Jaw Prison. In a statement shortly following his arrest, the Bahraini Ministry of Interior confirmed the charges against Nabeel, stating that he “posted information that could incite others and disrupt civil peace,” and that he “illegally defamed a statutory body.”

Last month, protests broke out in Jaw Prison over security personnel’s treatment of inmates and children in the facility. Prison personnel responded with excessive force, and several inmates allege that government forces engaged in [retaliatory acts of torture](#). Rajab’s organization has [thoroughly documented](#) human rights abuses in the prison, and Rajab himself has been outspoken regarding the recent bout of cruel treatment and torture.

In an [opinion piece](#) that he published on Huffington Post last week, Rajab stated, “Prisoners have rights and prisons should be centers of rehabilitation. In Bahrain, inmates are punished for being inmates, and punished collectively. Torture is a crime against humanity, yet it is a constant feature in Jaw.”

Said Yousif Almuhaftah, Vice President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, said: “We have witness testimony and photographic evidence showing that human rights abuses are being carried out in Jaw. The violations are undeniable, yet rather than address the truth, they are calling Nabeel a liar and a criminal.”

This is not the first time that the government has punished Rajab for exercising his internationally-guaranteed right to free expression. In May 2014, Rajab [completed](#) a two-year prison sentence after taking part in peaceful assemblies and protests criminalized by the government. That October, the government [arrested](#) him on charges of “denigrating public institutions” less than 24 hours after he returned from participation in the United Nations Human Rights Council and spoke before the European Parliament. A Bahraini court sentenced him to six months in prison on these charges, and his appeal is scheduled for 15 April.

Husain Abdulla, Executive Director of Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, said: “Bahrain has carefully chosen this timing for Nabeel’s arrest, one week after the UN Human Rights Council’s session ended and on the eve of the Easter holiday.”

As the government continues its campaign to silence dissent, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), the Bahrain Human Rights

Society (BHRS), the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), and the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR) condemn the latest arrest of Nabeel Rajab, and call for the government to drop any and all charges imposed against him in relation to his rights to peaceful expression and assembly.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy at the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, said: "In arresting Nabeel, the government has once again demonstrated a fear of dissent. We demand that the government release Nabeel Rajab and immediately cease its campaign of persecution against this peaceful human rights defender."

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 immediately release Nabeel, and vacate his earlier 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 any and all laws that infringe upon internationally protected rights; and
- Insist that 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.