

Americans for Democracy



& Human Rights in Bahrain



ECDHR



Brussels, 7 April 2015

Dear Ms Vice-President/High Representative,

On 2 April 2015, 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. 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.”

Nabeel Rajab has been accused of insulting a statutory body (by denouncing acts of torture in Jaw prison) and spreading rumours during wartime (by criticising Bahrain’s involvement in the current conflict in Yemen). Nabeel remains under solitary confinement in prison, as is not expected to be released before 11 April 2015, at the earliest. For these two charges, Nabeel Rajab faces up to 10 years in prison.

In an [opinion piece](#) that Nabeel published on Huffington Post last week, Rajab stated, “Prisoners have rights and prisons should be centres 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.”

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. Mr Rajab is currently facing another trial for a previous tweet he wrote in September 2014. His appeal for this 6 months sentence was scheduled for 15 April. It however took place on 5 April and was then delayed until 4 May, the prosecutor arguing the existence of new evidence under this case. Further, Nabeel’s home was raided that same day and all the electronics in his home (whether his own or not) were seized for evidence.

Nabeel has previously reached out to the EU to seek support for his case and long standing battle for Human Rights in Bahrain. In past occasions, the European External Action Service and the [European Parliament](#) have issued formal statement demanding his immediate release, as well as of others fellow human rights defenders and Bahraini citizens labelled criminals by the Government for peacefully speaking their mind about the human rights violations and democratic deficit in Bahrain. Despite these gross human rights abuses and the blatant injustice they suffer, the EU institutions have not used their full leverage on the matter.

Nabeel's case is just an example of the many injustices committed in Bahrain and in the Gulf Region daily, because they dare to speak out and to defend basic human rights and ideals. Injustice does not stop there; the treatment detainees receive in prisons amounts to grave torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, putting their physical and mental health at grave risks, as well as the health and security of their relatives.

The European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (representing Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy) and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of FIDH and OMCT, urgently seek to raise awareness of the human rights situation in Bahrain and the Gulf Region and call upon the European Union to stand firm against these abuses of freedom suffered by many. We also urge you to ask for the charges brought against Nabeel, and other unjustly imprisoned Bahrainis, to be dropped immediately and for their unconditional release.

Sincerely yours,

Husain Abdulla, President of ADHRB (Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain)

Karim Lahidji, President of FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights)