

Bahraini Sheikh Mohammed Khojasta deported after citizenship revoked

22 February 2016 - The Bahraini authorities deported **Sheikh Mohammed Hasan Ali Husain (Khojasta)** following the court of appeal's decision. Sheikh Khojasta is one of the more than 100 Bahrainis whose citizenship was revoked by a Ministry of Interior's' administrative decision. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR), Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Justice Human Rights Organization (JHRO) and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) strongly condemn the deportation of Sheikh Khojasta and express deep concern over the imminent deportation of other Bahrainis who have been arbitrarily denaturalized by the Government of Bahrain.

In January 2015, the Bahraini authorities issued an administrative decision revoking the citizenship of Sheikh Khojasta and 71 other Bahrainis. Many of those thus denaturalized were members of civil society, including human rights activists, journalists, political exiles, and religious and opposition figures. In its [statement](#), the Ministry of Interior cited revoking their citizenship as a punishment for allegedly committing "illegal acts," including, among others, "defaming the image of the state, inciting against the state and spreading false news to hinder the rules of the constitution," as well as "defaming brotherly countries." None of those individuals were charged or brought to court for these allegations.

Shortly after the decision, Sheikh Khojasta was summoned to the criminal court and charged with "illegal residency." In May 2015, the court ordered his deportation and fined him BHD100; the court of appeals upheld the deportation order on 18 February 2016. On 21 February, Bahrain's Directorate of Immigration, Passport, and Citizenship summoned Sheikh Khojasta to inform him that he was under arrest and that the execution of his sentence was imminent. He was later deported from Bahrain to Lebanon.

This is not the first time that the Government has arbitrarily exiled Shia leaders. Similarly, in 2014, the Bahraini authorities forcibly deported another Shia cleric, **Sheikh Hussein Najati**. Sheikh Najati had his citizenship rescinded by an administrative decision in 2014. Currently, at least [ten stateless Bahrainis](#) are at risk of deportation by the Bahraini authorities.

In 2014, the Government of Bahrain amended its citizenship and anti-terrorism laws to allow for the denaturalization of persons convicted of terrorism-related offenses, broadly defined in Bahrain to include activities protected by the international human rights of free expression and assembly. In August 2014, a Bahraini court issued the first denaturalization sentence, revoking the citizenship of eight individuals. Since then, Bahraini authorities have revoked the citizenship of a total of [260 Bahraini citizens](#), either through administrative decisions or by court order. In the majority of these cases, defendants were subjected to torture and subjected to significant violations of their rights to due process and fair trial.

We, the undersigned NGOs, consider the acts of citizenship revocation and the deportation of Sheikh Khojasta to be a tool of intimidation used by the government of Bahrain to silence dissent and further restrict the exercise of free expression and assembly.

We therefore call on the government of Bahrain to immediately:

- Allow Sheikh Mohammed Khojasta to return to Bahrain;
- Reinstatement of the nationality of all those whose citizenship was arbitrarily revoked on politically-motivated grounds since 2011, including that of Sheikh Mohammed Khojasta; and
- Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.