

### **Four Bahrainis Arbitrarily Detained, Says UN Body**

18 March 2016 – Geneva, Switzerland – The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has declared four Bahrainis to be arbitrarily detained, stating that their detention is impossible to legally justify and violates international law. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) welcomes the decision of the Working Group, and calls on the Government of Bahrain to release not only the four victims but also all other persons arbitrarily detained in the country.

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention is an independent group of human rights experts tasked with determining if cases of detention raised to their attention may be arbitrary in nature. In a decision authored December 2015 but released only recently, the Working Group decided that the Government of Bahrain had arbitrarily detained Ali Mahdi Hasan Saeed, Hasan Mahdi Hasan Saeed, Husain Abdul Jalil Husain, and Mahmood Mohamed Ali Mahdi. The Working Group also noted allegations that 61 other individuals were similarly arbitrarily detained.

In reaching its decision, the Working Group found that the Government had tortured the victims into providing false confessions, including by beating them, depriving them of sleep, subjecting them to extreme temperatures and stress positions, and, in the case of Mr. Mahmood Mohamed, subjecting him to sexual abuse. According to the Working Group, the confessions were then admitted into evidence in a court of law to achieve their convictions. The use of coerced confessions at court is prohibited under international law.

“A decision of the Working Group carries the full weight of the United Nations Human Rights Council behind it,” said Husain Abdulla, the Executive Director of ADHRB. “Bahrain must now heed the call of the UN, and release these four victims immediately.”

This is only the most recent case decided against Bahrain by the Working Group. In late 2015, the UN Experts announced that Bahrain had arbitrarily detained Sheikh Ali Salman, the leader of the political opposition group *Al-Wefaq*. In 2014, the Working Group noted a concerning trend of arbitrary detention in Bahrain, citing that, in some cases, the violations could denote individual criminal responsibility in line with crimes against humanity. The Working Group has held that at least fifteen Bahrainis have been subjected to arbitrary detention by the Government of Bahrain since deciding in favor of human rights defender Abdulhadi al-Khawaja in 2013.

“Since the Working Group put Bahrain on notice as to crimes against humanity committed within its borders, Bahrain has done nothing to hold its judiciary to account,” said Abdulla. “We call on Bahrain to implement the full breadth of its human rights commitments, to try and convict its human rights criminals, and to release all political prisoners currently arbitrarily detained in the country.”