



Bahrain Center for Human Rights

Bahrain regime continues to target freedom of expression by taking journalists and photographers to trials which criminalize the



Trials of journalists as a punishment for publishing facts or expressing their opinions, confirms lack of seriousness of the Bahraini regime in reconciliation and the reform of the political situation in the country

BCHR appeals to conscience to condemn the repression and intimidation campaigns and save the freedom of expression in Bahrain

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The Bahrain Center for Human Rights expresses concern for the continuation of the Bahraini authorities in its campaign against media professionals, journalists, photographers and practitioners of freedom of expression, after months of being subjected to campaigns of arrest, dismissal from work, and torture in detention centers since February and March, as many of them started, during these days, receiving summons to appear before the judiciary in the criminal courts in a move aimed directly to criminalize their exercise of a fundamental right to freedom of expression which is guaranteed by charters of human rights, and threatened by these trials to undergo imprisonment if convicted.

Bahrain Center for Human Rights came to know that four of the photographers who were arrested in the past months had been summoned to attend the trials in the Criminal Court on charges related to

taking pictures of events and demonstrations, posted on the Internet and social networking site "Facebook", and participating in peaceful demonstrations that have been described as unlicensed gatherings. Of these photographers was **Mohamed AlSheikh** - head of Bahrain Photographers Society - under construction - who won several international awards [1] in photography, and was arrested and detained between May 9, 2011 to July 2, 2011, and subjected to torture in detention centers, especially in the center of West Riffa, where he was arrested, and was blindfolded, beaten on the face, and kicked in the abdomen and the back and hit on the feet with plastic hose, was beaten on the knees until he suffered from difficulty standing, was hit with cable on the back, was deprived from food and drink and going to the toilet in the first 33 hours following his arrest until he signed pre-made confessions. He was subjected to further beatings after being transferred to AlQudaibiya center for five days and was threatened that his wife and family will be harmed. His photographing tools and professional cameras and computers with estimated value of more than BD 5500, were confiscated at the time of his arrest, and were not returned to him after his release.

Mohammed AlSheikh has been brought before military court in June 28, 2011 without informing his lawyer or his family, and was charged with several charges, before being released on July 2, 2011. But he received a new summon few days ago to appear before the Criminal Court on October 23, 2011 on charges related to "participation and filming unlicensed marches and incitement to hatred of the regime by broadcasting fake pictures detrimental to the Kingdom of Bahrain over the Internet and Facebook and foreign agencies.." AlSheikh was dismissed from his job earlier in the Aluminum Bahrain Company (ALBA), where he worked as an engineer. His dismissal came as part of the dismissal campaign which targeted workers supporting the popular pro-reform movement. His name and picture was published last April in pro-government forums demanding his arrest. [2] .

Other photographers who have received summons to appear before the Criminal Court are: **Mohamed AlAradi**, a photojournalist who worked for the AlBilad local newspaper before being dismissed as well, and was arrested on May 14 until June 29, 2011, photographer **Zouhair Aoun AlShama'** who was arrested between April 16 to July 2 2011 and photographer **Mojtaba Salmat** who was arrested in the second half of March 2011 to April 27, 2011, all of whom were brought before the military court before it was cancelled, without informing their lawyers or families. Their trials will be resumed again before the Criminal Court in November 2011 on charges related to " participation and coverage of unauthorized marches and incitement to hatred of the regime through the publication of the pictures on the Internet, and working for foreign channels". A summon was also sent to the photographer **Sadiq Marzooq**, who is wanted by authorities since the declaration of a state of national safety last March because of his coverage of the protests, where his house was raided several times looking for him, and had his photographic equipment confiscated.

The Center also came to know that the writer, journalist and blogger **Basema AlQassab** had received a summon to appear before the Criminal Court on 14 November on charges of participating in illegal gatherings and incitement to hatred of the regime. Basema was called on for investigation to Isa Town police station on May 19, 2011 for several hours where they interrogated her about writing on the internet and about a statement which she made to BBC Arabic on February 17, 2011 following the attack by security forces on peaceful demonstrators in the pearl roundabout at 3:00 am. She was also dismissed from her job in the Ministry of Education last June, after she was interrogated for several times and was suspended from her work for two months. She is actively blogging on her blog at <http://www.basema.net> and on Twitter <https://twitter.com/#!/bqassab> where she expresses her views in support for democracy.

about 7 sport journalists will be tried before the fifth Lower Criminal Court, on charges related to inciting hatred against the regime, and would be tried on 29 November as part of the case of athletes [3], among them is sports journalist **Abdullah Allawi**, who was detained from 26 April until

July 10, 2011, where he was charged with 4 charges before the Military Court, which are incitement to hatred of the regime, illegal assembly, broadcasting false news, and participating in illegal marches. He has received a summons to appear before the first Lower Criminal Court, on 19 October. Abdullah has already been dismissed from Al-Bilad local newspaper before his arrest in the campaign that targeted thousands of Bahraini workers and journalists who supported the movement of public protests.

Also sports journalist **Faisal Hyat**, who was arrested and detained in the period from 7 April to June 29, 2011, after his picture was broadcasted on television after he participated in the march of media professionals and journalists claiming freedom of the press. Hyat spoke about being tortured in detention centers, especially in Noaim police station where he was detained for about 13 days, had his hands tied with his feet in a position known as the (Shrimp), where the detainee is thrown over his stomach, so that his face is facing the ground, His hands and feet are tied up together, arms raised back, and was beaten on his feet using a plastic hose continuously for a period of not less than 10 minutes, while he was blindfolded. He was then asked about which hand he was writing with, and was beaten on both hands with the plastic hose. He was subjected to several sessions of group beatings where a group of security men beaten him using hose, cable, hands, and kicking him with their legs, and also he said that he was subjected to sexual harassment. After being transferred to Dry Dock detention centre, he was subjected to further beatings, including beatings using cables on the back, and beaten with hands and legs and edge of the weapon, and was forced to clean up garbage container and clean the toilets and clean the ground of the corridor, and has his hair forcibly shaved in order to humiliate him [4]. He was charged with illegal gathering and incitement to hatred of the regime.

The Center was also informed that media professional **Ali al-Moussawi**, a correspondent of Al-Alam television was summoned to trial, which began in the Criminal Court on September 12, 2011 on charges of sending incorrect information and picture about Bahrain. Mr. Ali is currently residing outside Bahrain after his departure last July, and had his name previously published in recent months in the lists of "traitors" on websites related to the regime, demanding his arrest [5]. AlAlam channel, which Mr. Ali worked for, is one of the few channels which covered the events of popular protests in Bahrain, and had its website blocked due to the coverage, as well as a disrupt in broadcasting.

After few days of honoring **Mansour Al-Jamri**, editor of "AlWasat" newspaper who was awarded the International Prize for Freedom of the Press in 2011 by the Committee for American journalists, the high criminal Court fined him along with three senior editors at the newspaper a fine of BD 1,000 on 11 October 2011, for each one of them on charges of spreading false news which tarnished image of Bahrain abroad during the protest movement last February, while AlJamri and his colleagues asserted that their newspaper was a victim of planned manipulation targeting the newspaper, which included destruction of its printing press, and was closed temporarily in April by the authority, and these 4 journalists were forced to submit their resignations at that time [6].

photographer **Hassan Matooq**, 29, is still behind bars after being sentenced by the military court on May 12, 2011 to three years on charges including "spreading false news and fabrication of pictures."

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights believes that the trials of journalists, writers and photographers are criminalizing their right to exercise freedom of expression and dissemination of their ideas, opinions and circulation of information, and considers the trials merely a reprisal for their role they played in spreading the true situation in Bahrain during the last period, despite attempts to obscure the ongoing violations of human rights in Bahrain and the ongoing attacks on peaceful demonstrators, and it is an indirect threat to everyone who express freedom of expression by

subjecting them to be jailed. These trials come at this time to confirm lack of seriousness of the Bahraini regime in reconciliation and the reform of the political situation

Freedom of opinion and expression is a constitutional right in Bahrain and a fundamental right for all human beings. Bahrain Center for Human Rights considers the arrest and criminalization of media practitioners of this right is a flagrant violation of the international covenants on human rights, and in particular Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which stipulates that "every human being has the right to freedom of expression. this right includes freedom to seek various forms of information and ideas, receive and impart to others regardless of frontiers, either in writing or in print, in the form of art or any other media of his choice"

Based on all the above, Bahrain Center for Human Rights calls Bahraini authorities for the following:

- 1 - release of all journalists convicted on charges related to the exercise of freedom of expression in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 2 - Stop all the trials of journalists, writers and photographers, bloggers, and the defendants on charges related to the exercise of freedom of expression guaranteed by human rights conventions and in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 3 - put an end to ill-treatment and physical and psychological torture in prisons, and carry general and impartial investigation into allegations of torture and other abuses and to bring offenders to justice.
- 4 - Cancel all measures that restrict freedom of opinion and expression or prevent the dissemination of information.
- 5 - commitment to the international covenants and respect all forms of freedom of expression and publication as provided for in the covenants and international charters.

Dates of trials of media mentioned in this report:

- 1 Sayed Ali al-Moussawi - TV correspondent of AlAlam Channel- October 18, 2011
- 2 Abdullah Allawi - a journalist - October 19, 2011 (previously appeared before a Military Court)
- 3 Mohammed AlSheikh - photographer - October 23, 2011 (previously appeared before a Military Court)
- 4 Mohamed AlAradi - photographer - November 2, 2011 (previously appeared before a Military Court)
- 5 Sadiq Marzouk - photographer - November 14, 2011
- 6 Mojtaba Selmat - a photographer - November 14, 2011 (previously appeared before a Military Court)
- 7 Basima AlQassab - Blogger - November 14, 2011
- 8 Zuhair Aoun AlShama' - photographer - November 22, 2011 (previously appeared before a Military Court)
- 9 Faisal Hyatt - a journalist and independent media professional - November 29, 2011

More information

- [Bahrain government targeting Freedom of expression and suppressing truth by intensifying crackdown on Photographers](#), May 2011

- [Bahrain: Authorities targeting anyone who talks to the media with arrest and prosecution](#), June 2011

[1][AlShaikh Portfolio pdf](#)

[2][snapshot](#)

[3]<http://www.alwasatnews.com/3320/new..>

[4][The full story of Faisal Hyat at detention](#)

[5]<http://www.b4bh.com/vb/archive/index.php/t-142593.html>

[6]<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wrs0J0VAXrk>

[See a collection of Photos of Mohamed AlShaikh which he is now on trial for taking.](#)