

13 June 2017

Excellency,

RE: UN Member and Observer States should call on Bahraini authorities to free human rights defender Nabeel Rajab

We, the undersigned, express our deep concern over the continued detention of prominent Bahraini human rights defender Nabeel Rajab, on the first anniversary of his arrest. We urge you to call for his immediate release and for all charges against him to be dropped.

Nabeel Rajab was arrested on 13 June 2016. He remains detained despite a court order to release him on 28 December 2016. He faces three separate legal cases, the trials for two of which have been postponed 23 times. In all cases, Rajab is being prosecuted for exercising his right to freedom of expression and faces up to a total of 18 years behind bars.

Rajab is the President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Founding Director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Deputy Secretary General of FIDH and a member of Human Rights Watch's Middle East Division advisory committee. Rajab has repeatedly spoken out about human rights violations in Bahrain, resulting in him being in and out of prison since 2012. In one of the three cases against him, in which he faces up to 15 years in prison, Rajab was charged in relation to his social media posts with: "insulting a statutory body"; "spreading rumours in war time"; and "insulting a neighbouring country." In another of the three cases, Rajab faces up to three years in prison on charges of "spreading false news", in relation to interviews given to the media. In September 2016, he was charged again with "spreading false news" after the *New York Times* published a letter in his name.

Rajab has spent nine and a half of the past twelve months in solitary confinement. In May 2017, the UN Committee Against Torture identified Rajab's case of concern, and called for his release, as well as all human rights defenders and journalists detained and imprisoned for their work in Bahrain.¹

We are particularly concerned about Rajab's health, which continues to deteriorate due to poor conditions and mistreatment. On Wednesday, 5 April 2017, Rajab underwent major surgery at a military hospital. Against medical advice, he was returned to his cell at East Riffa Police Station two days later. The following day he was rushed to the police clinic for emergency treatment. On 7 June, he underwent minor surgery. Rajab's health prevents him from attending his court hearings. The presiding judge has refused all requests submitted by his lawyers to release him on bail, despite the length of his detention period in solitary confinement and clear evidence about the deteriorating condition of his health.

Urgent international pressure for Nabeel Rajab's release is needed. We urge your delegation to call on Bahrain to end the unlawful detainment of Nabeel Rajab and to release him immediately and unconditionally. As Adam Rajab, Nabeel Rajab's son notes: "without international pressure we will not see him walk out of prison anytime soon."

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration,

Signed,
Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain
Amnesty International

¹ Committee against torture, Concluding observations on the second and third periodic reports of Bahrain, adopted by the Committee at its sixtieth session (18 April to 12 May 2017), http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CAT/Shared%20Documents/BHR/INT_CAT_COC_BHR_27465_E.pdf

ARTICLE 19

Bahrain Centre for Human Rights

Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy

CIVICUS

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European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights

FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Gulf Centre for Human Rights

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World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights