

## URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

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**New information**  
**BHR 006 / 0511 / OBS 080.1**  
Judicial harassment / Intimidation  
**Bahrain**  
June 3, 2011

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), has received new information and requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Bahrain**.

### **New information:**

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the summons of Mr. **Nabeel Rajab**, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and Deputy Secretary General of FIDH, for interrogation by the Military Prosecutor.

According to the information received, on May 31, 2011, Mr. Nabeel Rajab received a letter from the Military Prosecutor at 4 pm, summoning him to appear at 6 pm the same day. On such a short notice, Mr. Rajab could not get his lawyer to accompany him. He was interrogated for several hours and remained within the military premises until 11.30 pm.

During his interrogation, Mr. Rajab was extensively questioned about his human rights activities and verbally condemned for expressing his opinion about the ongoing repression in Bahrain. He was also interrogated about his communication with international media outlets, and about his use of the social media tool *Twitter*. On this occasion, Mr. Rajab was informed that he might be referred to the Military Court on four charges, punishable by at least four years and three months in prison and a fine of at least 500 Bahraini Dinar (950 Euros): "insulting the King", "disseminating false reports, statements or malicious rumours seeking to damage public security, terrorise the population or cause damage to the public interest" pursuant to Article 168-1 ; "releasing false or malicious news, statements or rumours abroad about domestic condition in the State, so as to undermine the State's prestige, position, or national interests" pursuant to Article 134 and "inciting sectarian strife and undermining the public peace" pursuant to Article 172 of the Bahrain Criminal Code.

The Observatory denounces these acts of intimidation and reprisals against Mr. Nabeel Rajab, which seem to merely aim at sanctioning his human rights activities and preventing him from carrying out such activities.

The Observatory recalls that dozens of human rights defenders are currently facing charges or threatened thereof for their alleged support of the social protest demonstrations of February 2011 or face travel bans to prevent them from addressing regional and international fora about human rights violations committed in Bahrain.

More generally, the Observatory is also increasingly concerned about the context of great insecurity that human rights defenders face in Bahrain, in light of the current violent repression of protests. The Observatory once again calls for the immediate end to the harsh repression, which blatantly violates fundamental human rights such as freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly.

### **Background Information:**

In the early morning of May 21, 2011, while the whole Rajab family was still asleep, tear-gas bombs were shot into the house, breaking the window where Mr. Nabeel Rajab's brother,

Nader Rajab, lives with his family. Nobody could see the attackers. The family had to rescue Mr. Nader Rajab, his wife and daughter who were suffocating in the room. Mr. Rajab did not file a complaint for fear of reprisals.

**Actions requested:**

The Observatory urges the authorities of Bahrain to:

- i. Guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Nabeel Rajab and his family as well as all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- ii. Put an end to any acts of harassment, including at the judicial level, against Mr. Rajab as well as against all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- iii. Conform in any circumstances with the provisions of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted on December 9, 1998 by the United Nations General Assembly, in particular :
  - its Article 1, which states that “everyone has the right, individually or in association with others, to promote the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels” ;
  - and its Article 12.2 which states that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually and in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, de facto or de jure adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration”;
- iv. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bahrain.

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Please also write to diplomatic representations of Bahrain in your respective countries.

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Paris-Geneva, June 3, 2011

Kindly inform us of any action undertaken quoting the code of this appeal in your reply.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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