

URGENT APPEAL - THE OBSERVATORY

BHR 008 / 0611 / OBS 097
Slandering and defamation campaign
Bahrain
June 30, 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), requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in **Bahrain**.

Description of the situation :

The Observatory has been informed by reliable sources about the slandering campaign launched against Mr. **Nabeel Rajab**, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), and Ms. **Maryam Al Khawaja**, Head of the Office of Foreign Relations at the BCHR and daughter of the prominent human rights activist Mr. Abdulhadi Al Khawaja.

According to the information received, an anonymous defamatory campaign against Mr. Nabeel Rajab and Ms. Maryam Al Khawaja was launched in early May 2011, with the active and passive support of the Bahraini authorities. A print document entitled "*Crimes never reported by Nabeel Rajab & blessed by AMNESTY Int.*" accuses Mr. Rajab and Ms. Al Khawaja of having committed 27 crimes and grave violations, including forced disappearance, torture, and murder against civilians and members of the Bahraini security forces. The author of the document is anonymous. The document comprises a series of pictures allegedly evidencing the crimes committed by Mr. Rajab, and associates on every page the images of dead or individuals with the close-up picture of Mr. Rajab, implicitly targeting him as the sole perpetrator of these 27 crimes. This document would also have been distributed in print by Bahraini authorities during meetings abroad. In addition, a video was also published and disseminated on the Web via the social network *Youtube*, conveying similar evidence of the alleged crimes¹.

The Observatory condemns this slandering campaign, which merely seems to aim at discrediting the human rights activities of Mr. Nabeel Rajab and Ms. Maryam Al Khawaja. Furthermore, the Observatory is deeply concerned that this campaign is fuelling, among the public opinion, hostility towards human rights defenders and organisations monitoring human rights violations.

The Observatory recalls that during the past months Mr. Rajab has been victim of other acts of reprisals, including slandering campaigns, physical assaults and threats of judicial harassment².

Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Bahrain urging them to:

- i. Guarantee in all circumstances the physical and psychological integrity of Mr. Nabeel Rajab and Ms. Maryam Al Khawaja, and all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- ii. Put an end to the slandering campaign and provide appropriate compensation for the harm done to the public image of both Mr. Nabeel Rajab and Ms. Maryam Al

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agRTz8Os8yg>

² See Observatory Press Release, April 11, 2011 and Urgent Appeals BHR 006/0511/OBS 080 and BHR 006/0511/OBS 080.1.

Khawaja.

- iii. Order an immediate, effective, thorough and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned campaign and identify all those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
- iv. Stop all acts of harassment against Mr. Nabeel Rajab and Ms. Maryam Al Khawaja, as well as all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- v. Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, in particular its Article 1, which provides that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels”, Article 11, which states that “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to the lawful exercise of his or her occupation or profession”, Article 12(1) that provides “everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms”, as well as Article 12.2, which provides that “the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or 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”;
- vi. Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bahrain.

Addresses:

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- Cheikh Khaled Bin Ahmad AL KHALIFA, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tel: +973 172 27 555; fax: +973 172 12 6032
- Cheikh Khalid bin Ali AL KHALIFA, Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Tel: +973 175 31 333; fax: +973 175 31 284
- Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations in Geneva, 1 chemin Jacques-Attenville, 1218 Grand-Saconnex, CP 39, 1292 Chambésy, Switzerland. Fax: + 41 22 758 96 50. Email: info@bahrain-mission.ch

Paris-Geneva, June 30, 2011

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

The Observatory, a FIDH and OMCT venture, is dedicated to the protection of Human Rights Defenders and aims to offer them concrete support in their time of need.

To contact the Observatory, call the emergency line:

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