

ADHRB Condemns Sentencing of Nabeel Rajab

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights of Bahrain (ADHRB) strongly condemns the three-year prison sentence handed down by a Bahrain court today against Nabeel Rajab for his participation in protests, referred to by the Government of Bahrain as “illegal gatherings.” Decisions were rendered in three separate cases against Mr. Rajab, each resulting in a one-year prison sentence. Mr. Rajab is already serving a three-month prison sentence on charges related to comments he made on Twitter that were critical of government officials. His appeal in that case has been postponed until August 23. This new verdict will keep Mr. Rajab in prison until 2015.

“This sentence demonstrates that the Government of Bahrain is not committed to reform. Quite the contrary, the government, emboldened by international silence, is escalating political tensions in Bahrain by silencing critics through intimidation and sham political trials,” said Husain Abdulla of ADHRB.

Mr. Rajab is a leading human rights defender in Bahrain. He currently serves as President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), and International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) Deputy Secretary General, and serves as a member of the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch’s Middle East Division and Chair of CARAM Asia.

Other activists, including Zainab al-Khawaja and her father, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, are also being detained on political charges. Ms. al-Khawaja’s detention was postponed yesterday until August 28. On Tuesday, her father’s appeals verdict was postponed until September 4.

Mr. Rajab’s sentence comes just one day after Said Yousif Almuhafdah, one of Rajab’s colleagues at BCHR, was detained and beaten by police after they found a poster of Nabeel Rajab in his car at a checkpoint. Mr. Almuhafdah told ADHRB that “they found a banner of Nabeel Rajab and asked who’s this? I told them and they said no say this is “our whore.” I refused and they punched me twice. They drove my car to the central police station where they took my testimony. They made me sign a pledge without the presence of a lawyer to come to the police station in case I was summoned. My arrest was arbitrary and without a warrant from public prosecution. What hurts is that the police assaulted and beaten me in front of my daughters (aged 5 and 2) although they were crying.”

“The United States Government must speak out loud and clear against today’s sentencing and the Government of Bahrain’s continued attacks against human rights advocates. If it does not, these attacks are likely to continue,” said Abdulla. ADHRB calls on the US Government to press the Government of Bahrain for the immediate release of Nabeel Rajab and all political prisoners currently being detained.

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