



## **Bahraini NGOs Express Cautious Optimism over Release of Maryam al-Khawaja**

18 SEPTEMBER 2014—GENEVA, SWITZERLAND—Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) note with cautious optimism the release of prominent Bahraini human rights activist Maryam al-Khawaja from detention. However, we remain concerned that the Government of Bahrain has yet to drop charges against the human rights activist and has imposed a travel ban on Maryam. Bahraini authorities [arrested](#) Maryam at the Manama airport on 30 August and have [accused](#) her of assaulting a lieutenant and a policewoman.

"We are very pleased with Maryam's release and sincerely thank the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights for its coordination on the matter," said Husain Abdulla, ADHRB's Executive Director. "We also thank the United Nations missions who expressed concern over the human rights situation in Bahrain, including the detention of the al-Khawajas, during the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council, including Ireland, Norway and Denmark."

Maryam, whose imprisonment garnered [international attention](#), returned to Bahrain from exile to visit her ailing father, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, a human rights defender held as a prisoner of conscience serving a life sentence delivered in 2011. Abdulhadi's has greatly deteriorated since he began a hunger strike on 25 August.

"While I am overjoyed for Maryam, I remain concerned over the condition of my friend, Abdulhadi," said Nabeel Rajab, who cofounded BCHR with the imprisoned rights activist. "The government may have responded to international pressure in Maryam's case, but officials still refuse to release Abdulhadi, Ibrahim Sharif, Naji Fateel, and many other prisoners of conscience from arbitrary imprisonment."

"Maryam's release is a positive step, but we remain troubled that the government has not dropped the unfounded charges against her," said Sayed Ahmed Alwadaie, Advocacy Director of BIRD. "We fear that she will, like so many other released detainees caught in Bahrain's unjust legal system, live under the constant fear of re-arrest."

ADHRB, BIRD and BCHR reiterate their call for Bahrain's government to release all political prisoners and end the practices of torture and arbitrary detention.

###

For additional information or comment, please contact Rachel Peterson at [rpeterson@adhrb.org](mailto:rpeterson@adhrb.org)