

23 November 2016

## **Bahrain – Government escalates judicial harassment of human rights defenders**

Between 15 and 23 November, seven human rights defenders in Bahrain were summoned for interrogation by the Bahrain authorities in a wave of judicial harassment against human rights defenders in the Country. On 23 November, Ms. **Ibtisam Al-Saegh** was questioned by the Cyber-Crime Unit in Bahrain after being summoned without any given reason. On the same day, Ms. **Rula Al-Saffar** was also questioned after being called for interrogation by the Bahrain Public Prosecution. On 17 November, Mr. Hussain Radhi and Mr. **Nader Abd-al-Imam** were also interrogated by the Public Prosecution in Bahrain after being called in for questioning a day earlier. On 16 November, **Ibrahim Al-Demistani** was also questioned by the Public Prosecution office in Bahrain. On 15 November, the Public Prosecution interrogated Ms. **Nedal Al-Salman** and on the same day also questioned Ms. **Zainab Al-Khamees**.

[Ibtisam Al-Saegh](#) is a Bahraini human rights defender who works for the organisation Salam for Human Rights and Democracy. [Rula Al-Saffar](#) is a prominent medical practitioner in Bahrain that worked in a medical tent treating wounded protesters during the pro-democracy uprising in early 2011 in Bahrain. [Hussain Radhi](#) is a human rights defender who works for the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). [Nader Abd-al-Imam](#) is a human rights activist and Head of the Bahraini Organization for Anti-discrimination. [Ibrahim Al-Demistani](#) is a human rights defender, a nurse and secretary general of the Bahrain Nursing Society. [Nedal Al-Salman](#) is the Head of International Relations and Women & Children's Rights Advocacy at the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and active in the promotion of women's rights in Bahrain. [Zainab Al-Khamees](#) is a member of the Bahrain Human Rights Society, a non-governmental organisation established in 2001 to monitor and prevent all human rights violations in Bahrain.

On 23 November, Ibtisam Al-Saegh and Rula Al-Saffar were questioned by the Public Prosecution office in Bahrain about twitter posts that they engaged in and were accused of inciting hatred against the Bahrain regime and threatening public safety and security. Both human rights defenders are currently banned from travel. Hussain Radhi and Nader Abd-al-Imam were questioned about tweets that they posted about public needs in Bahrain and a United Nations report on incidents of sectarian persecution in Bahrain. On 16 November, Ibrahim Al-Demistani was brought in for questioning under fabricated allegations that he took part in an assembly on 11 August 2016 in Duraz. He denied taking part in the assembly. On 15 November, Nedal Al-Salman was also questioned regarding fabricated allegations that she participated in an assembly in Duraz. She denied taking part in the assembly. Also on 15 November, Zainab Khamees was questioned about taking part in an “illegal assembly” - she received the summons for questioning a day earlier after Bahrain forces raided her home.

Between 7 and 14 November, Front Line Defenders noted ten other human rights defenders who were called in for questioning by the authorities in Bahrain. Among those were [Abdulnabi Al-Ekry](#), [Jalila Salman](#), [Muhammad Al-Tajer](#), [Enas Oun](#), and [Ahmed Al-Saffar](#). According to human rights defenders in Bahrain, being called in for interrogation is later used against them as grounds by the Bahrain

authority to issue travel bans that restrict the defenders' work advocating internationally for human rights in Bahrain. Travel ban orders have been repeatedly used to curtail the activities of human rights defenders in Bahrain. On 29 August 2016, human rights defender Nedal Al-Salman was banned from travelling to Doha from Bahrain International Airport. Further in August 2016, human rights lawyer Mr. Mohammed Al-Tajer and human rights defender Enas Oun were banned from travelling from Bahrain International Airport. On 7 July 2016, journalist and human rights defender Mr [Ahmed Radhi](#) was prevented from travelling to Oman. On 12 June 2016, Bahraini security forces prevented three human rights defenders, Hussain Radhi, Ebtisam Al-Saegh and Mr Ibrahim Al-Demistani from travelling to Geneva from Bahrain International Airport to attend the United Nations Human Right Council session and to participate in a side event on the situation of human rights in Bahrain. Human rights defenders Abdulnabi Al-Ekry and journalist Ms [Nazeeha Saeed](#) were also prevented from travelling in June.

In a separate incident on 15 November, the family of imprisoned human rights defender Mr. [Saeed Al-Samahiji](#) reported a deterioration in his health in Jaw Central prison in Bahrain after he was deprived of his medicine – the human rights defender had been suffering from chronic headaches . Saeed Al-Samahiji is an ophthalmologist who extended his medical services to injured protesters during the popular uprisings in Bahrain in 2011.

Front Line Defenders condemns the recent judicial harassment against human rights defenders in Bahrain and all travel bans being imposed against defenders in Bahrain and believes that such acts are solely motivated by their peaceful and legitimate activities in the defence of human rights in Bahrain. Front Line Defenders is also deeply concerned that Saeed Al-Samahiji remains in detention and has been denied access to medical care.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Bahrain to:**

1. Cease all forms of judicial harassment against all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
2. Immediately and unconditionally remove the travel ban imposed against all human rights defenders facing travel restrictions in Bahrain, as Front Line Defenders believes that they are being restricted solely as a result of their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
3. Immediately and unconditionally release Saeed Al-Samahiji, drop all charges against him, and provide him with immediate and unconditional medical care;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bahrain are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.