

14 June 2016

## **Bahrain – Rearrest of Nabeel Rajab and travel ban against human rights defenders attending UNHRC**

13 June 2016 marked the opening of the 32nd session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in Geneva and the rearrest of prominent human rights defender Mr **Nabeel Rajab** by Bahraini authorities following a raid on his house. In a separate case, on 12 June 2016, three human rights defenders were banned from travelling to Geneva to attend the UNHRC session.

[Nabeel Rajab](#) is a Bahraini human rights defender, the President of the [Bahrain Centre for Human Rights](#) (BCHR) and the Director of the [Gulf Centre for Human Rights](#) (GCHR). He has campaigned around the world to bring attention to human rights abuses in Bahrain committed by the state. He has been repeatedly arrested and has served several prison sentences as a result of his human rights work and for leading a pro-democracy uprising in 2011.

In the early hours of 13 June 2016, the Cybercrime Unit of the Bahraini Police Force stormed Nabeel Rajab's house in the village of Bani Jamra, near the capital Manama, without a search warrant. He was also arrested without a warrant and no reason has been given for his arrest. His personal electronic devices have been confiscated by the police including his laptop. He was immediately transferred to East Riffa Police Station and has since been transferred to the Offices of the Public Prosecutor where he is currently detained. He has not been informed of any charges brought against him.

On 14 July 2015, Nabeel Rajab was released for health reasons following a Royal Pardon, after he had served three months of the six-month prison sentence he received, over charges of “insulting a statutory body”, “spreading rumours during a time of war”, and “disseminating false news causing damage to public security.” He was issued a travel ban on the day of his release and charges are still outstanding against him.

In a separate case on 12 June 2016, as the UNHRC convenes, Bahraini security forces prevented three human rights defenders, Mr **Hussain Radhi**, Ms **Ebtisam Al-Saegh** and Mr **Ibrahim Al-Demistani** from travelling to Geneva from Bahrain International Airport to attend the UNHRC and to participate in a side event on the situation of human rights in Bahrain. They were held for one hour by officials at the airport before being informed that a travel ban had been imposed against them, for which no reason was given. Ibrahim Al-Demistani was later informed that the public prosecution had issued a travel ban against him on 9 June 2016.

In his opening statement of the UNHRC, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mr Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein commented on the situation in Bahrain and declared that:

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*At least 250 people in Bahrain have reportedly been stripped of their citizenship by the Government because of their alleged disloyalty to the interests of the Kingdom. In addition to these severe restrictions on freedom of expression, which contravene Bahrain's international human rights obligations, an indefinite ban on gatherings in the capital has been in place since 2013. Dozens of people – including minors – have been prosecuted for participating in protests. Repression will not eliminate people's grievances; it will increase them."*

Front Line Defenders expresses strong concern for the rearrest and on-going harassment of Nabeel Rajab, as well as the travel ban imposed against the three human rights defenders prevented from attending the UNHRC. Front Line Defenders believes that the on-going proceedings against Nabeel Rajab and the travel bans imposed against the three human rights defenders are solely motivated by their peaceful and legitimate activities in the defence of human rights.

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

1. Ensure the immediate release of Mr Nabeel Rajab, and drop the charges outstanding against him, as Front Line Defenders believes he is being detained solely as a result of his peaceful and legitimate human rights work;
2. Lift the travel ban against human rights defenders Mr Hussain Radhi, Ms Ebtisam Al-Saegh and Mr Ibrahim Al-Demistani;
3. Return all of Nabeel Rajab's belongings confiscated during the raid;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Bahrain are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities, nationally and internationally, without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

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