

URGENT ACTION

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE FACING REPRISALS

Danish-Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja continues to be denied due process by the court. On 29 December 2022, an appeal court ruled that he did not have the right to appeal the case in which a criminal court convicted him of insulting a public servant and on 5 January 2023 it upheld his conviction in the case of breaking a chair in prison. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was not brought to court to attend the sessions. On 6 January 2023 he was taken to the prison guards' room to face the public servant he is accused of insulting. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is a prisoner of conscience who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Crown Prince and Prime Minister

Sheikh Salman bin Hamad

Court of the Crown Prince

P.O Box 29091

Riffa – Bahrain

Email (via contact form): <http://www.crownprince.bh/en/contact>

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Your Highness,

The two cases against dual Bahraini-Danish national and prisoner of conscience **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja** have gone before the Second High Criminal Court of Appeal, without him being allowed to attend the court proceedings. On 29 December 2022, the court ruled that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja did not have the right to appeal his conviction and 100 Bahraini dinars (equivalent to 265 US dollars) fine in relation to an incident on 30 March 2022 when Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja protested in prison against the normalization deal with Israel (Abraham Accords) and had an altercation with a prison officer. The court also postponed to 5 January 2023 its hearing in the second case in which he was convicted and fined 60 Bahraini dinars (equivalent to 160 US dollars) for breaking a chair and insulting a public servant in November 2021 while in Jaw prison after he was denied phone calls to his daughters who live abroad. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja has so far spent more than 11 years of an unjust life sentence in Jaw prison for leading peaceful protests during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain.

On 5 January 2023, his lawyer handed the head of the court a [letter](#) in which Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja said that he had instructed his lawyer to withdraw from the session in the event that he was unable to visit him prior to the hearing session or if he was not permitted to attend. Indeed, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was not brought to court, his lawyer withdrew from the court's session, and the judge upheld the conviction and fine.

The next day, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja called his daughters and told them that prison guards had lured him to the prison administration building under the pretence to have a call with his lawyer, only to be taken to the prison guards' room to face the public servant he was convicted of insulting. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja resisted being forced into the room and started yelling and shouting slogans. On 8 January, he was informed that he would not be allowed to have calls with his lawyer anymore.

Given that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is a prisoner of conscience targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights, we call upon your Highness to ensure that he is immediately and unconditionally released, and his convictions and sentences are quashed. Pending his release, he must be granted access to his lawyer and be protected from torture and other ill-treatment.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, aged 61, is married and has four daughters and four grandchildren. He co-founded both the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). Until early 2011, he worked as MENA Protection Coordinator for the human rights group Frontline Defenders. He also previously took part in an Amnesty International fact-finding visit to Iraq in 2003 and is a member of the International Advisory Network of the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre. He is a peaceful advocate of human rights and the recipient of several human rights awards, including the Dignity - World without Torture Award which he received in October 2013. Most recently, in 2022, he obtained the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

On 6 November 2022, during a call to his daughters, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja said that he was facing a number of separate new trials. On 3 November 2022, his trial began in his absence before the Second Lower Criminal Court for allegedly breaking a plastic chair in November 2021 and insulting a police officer in Jaw prison after being denied phone calls to his daughters who live abroad. A second hearing on 16 November 2022 was rescheduled for 28 November 2022 because Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, who wanted to attend it, had to first sign a power of attorney document for his lawyer to represent him in court. However, while waiting to do so in prison, an officer in charge attempted to pressure and threaten him into recording a video stating that he was refusing to attend the hearing. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja refused and repeatedly stated on camera that he wanted to attend the hearing. He was then transferred back to his cell without being allowed to sign the power of attorney.

On 21 November 2022, his second trial began on charges of insulting a public servant. The case relates to an incident on 30 March 2022, when Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja protested against the normalization deal with Israel (Abraham Accords) and told a prison officer "You are a dirty and unclean person. You have a way of treating people like animals". The hearing was also postponed to 28 November.

On 28 November 2022, the court convicted and fined Al-Khawaja in both cases. On 15 December 2022, the European Parliament adopted an [urgent resolution](#) highlighting Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's case and those of other political prisoners and calling for his release. On 27 December 2022, he met his lawyer for the first time in prison, however his lawyer was yet to receive the court documents relating to the recent convictions.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja faces a third case and faces the charge of incitement to overthrow or change the regime in relation to an incident that took place in prison on 27 July 2022 in which he called for the removal of the Minister of Interior when protesting against the normalization with Israel and their actions towards the Palestinians. The case is now pending with the Prosecution and could be referred to court at any moment. If convicted Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja could be sentenced to up to 10 years imprisonment.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is serving a life sentence in Jaw prison for his role in for leading peaceful protests during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain.

In May 2012, the [UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#) considered that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's detention was arbitrary as it resulted from his exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly; and called for his immediate release and an enforceable right to compensation.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English, Arabic

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 8 March 2023

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja (he/him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/6295/2022/en/>

ADDITIONAL TARGETS

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