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Fifth UA: 100/22 Index: MDE 11/6810/2023 Bahrain of May 22, 2023

**BAHRAIN
PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE, ABDULHADI AL-KHAWAJA DENIED
HEALTHCARE**

Danish-Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja has not been seen by a cardiologist since he experienced cardiac arrhythmia in jail on February 28, 2023. A doctor who examined him at the Bahrain Defence Force hospital had stated that he should be urgently referred to a cardiologist.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is a human rights defender who is serving a life sentence in Jaw prison. He has been arbitrarily imprisoned for 12 years solely for exercising his rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is a prisoner of conscience who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

Write to the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain urging him to:

- Release Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of his human rights.
- In the meantime, and due to his serious health issues, ensure he has timely access to adequate health care, consistent with international human rights standards.

Write to:

Crown Prince and Prime Minister
Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa
Court of the Crown Prince
P.O Box 29091
Riffa – Bahrain
Email (via contact form): <http://www.crownprince.bh/en/contact>
Twitter: @bahrainCPnews @BahrainPMO
Salutation: Your Highness,

And copy:

His Excellency Shaikh Abdulla Rashed Abdulla ALKHALIFA
Ambassador
Embassy of the Kingdom of Bahrain
3502 International Drive North West
Washington, D.C., DC 20008
United States of America
Tel: (202) 342-1111, 0741, -0742,-0743,-0744
Fax: (202) 362-2192

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, aged 61, 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. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is serving a life sentence in Jaw prison for his role in leading peaceful protests during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain. He was convicted and sentenced following a military trial in 2011 and later at a retrial in 2012 by a civilian court on charges including “setting up terror groups to topple the royal regime and change the constitution”.

On May 4, 2023, the United Nations published [a joint communication](#) sent earlier in the year by the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and five other UN experts to the government of Bahrain, expressing their utmost concern over Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja’s case, including his arbitrary detention and renewed allegations of torture, and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment. On April 17, 2023, the Bahrain government [responded to the letter](#) not recognizing Abdulhadi al-Khawaja as a human rights defender, rather labelling him as a “terrorist”. It also said that he was enjoying his rights, including healthcare and legal representation.

On May 9, 2023, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja began a daily protest in front of the CCTV cameras in the prison yard in order for him and his fellow prisoners to access the necessary medical appointments. He would hold up written signs that read: “Preventing medical treatment is slow, systematic murder” and “You commit torture and prevent medical treatment”. On May 14, 2023, he told his family that he was temporarily suspending his protest as the prison administration had promised to improve conditions and allow him access to adequate treatment, but he is yet to see the specialists who were meant to examine him.

On November 6, 2022, during a call with his daughters who live abroad, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja said that he was facing a number of new trials. He told them that the first trial began on November 3, 2022 in his absence before the Second Lower Criminal Court for allegedly breaking a plastic chair and insulting a police officer in Jaw prison in November 2021 after being denied phone calls with his daughters. His second trial began on November 21, 2022, on charges of “insulting a public servant”. The case relates to an incident on March 30, 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”.

On November 28, 2022, the court convicted and fined Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in both cases. The two cases were taken before the Second High Criminal Court of Appeal. On December 29, 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 the second case for insulting a public servant. On

January 5, 2023, the court upheld his conviction and the fine of 60 Bahraini dinars (equivalent to 160 US dollars) in the first case for breaking a chair and insulting a public servant.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was not allowed to attend any of the courts' proceedings.

On December 15, 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.