

# URGENT ACTION

## PHOTOJOURNALIST ARRESTED AND TORTURED

**Bahraini photojournalist Ahmad Fardan was arrested at his home on 26 December 2013. He was brought before the Prosecution on 1 January, who ordered his detention for 45 days on a charge of “intending to participate in gatherings”. He was tortured during interrogation.**

**Ahmad Fardan**, a photographer for the agencies Nur Photo, Demotix and Sipa, was arrested at 2.30am on 26 December during a raid on his home in Abu Saibah village, west of the capital Manama. The arresting officers, in plain clothes, did not show an arrest warrant and confiscated his computer and cameras. Ahmad Fardan was held incommunicado at the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama, and during his interrogation was beaten until he passed out. He was taken to the Salmaniya Medical Complex where X-Rays revealed he had sustained two broken ribs. He was transferred the next day to al-Qal'a Prison hospital where he remained until 31 December. During this time he was allowed to make two 10-second phone calls to his family to reassure them.

Ahmad Fardan appeared without his lawyer before the Public Prosecutor on 1 January, who ordered him to be detained for 45 days on a charge of “intending to participate in gatherings”, pending investigation. He was then transferred to Dry Dock Prison in Manama where his family visited him for the first time on 5 January.

### **Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:**

- Calling on the authorities to release Ahmad Fardan immediately and unconditionally, if he is being held solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression;
- Calling on them to order an impartial and independent investigation into his reported torture and bring those responsible to justice;
- Urging them to uphold the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, in line with Bahrain's international human rights obligations.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 18 FEBRUARY 2014 TO:**

#### King

Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa  
Office of His Majesty the King  
P.O. Box 555  
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1766 4587 (keep trying)  
**Salutation: Your Majesty**

#### Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah Al Khalifa  
Ministry of Interior  
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1723 2661  
Twitter: @moi\_Bahrain  
**Salutation: Your Excellency**

#### **And copies to:**

Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs  
Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Abdullah Al Khalifa  
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs  
P. O. Box 450, al-Manama, Bahrain  
Fax: +973 1753 1284  
Email: minister@justice.gov.bh  
Twitter: @Khaled\_Bin\_Ali

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Ahmad Fardan has been photo-documenting demonstrations in Bahrain. He was the 2013 winner of the annual Freedom House photo contest, dedicated to highlighting images of repression and freedom. Freedom House is a US-based NGO that conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom, and human rights.

The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), appointed by Royal Order on 29 June 2011, was charged with investigating and reporting on human rights violations committed in connection with the 2011 protests. At the launch of the BICI report in November 2011, the government publicly committed itself to implementing its recommendations. The report recounted the government's response to the mass protests and documented wide-ranging human rights abuses. Among its key recommendations, the report called on the government to bring to account those responsible for human rights violations, including torture and excessive use of force, and carry out independent investigations into allegations of torture.

Two years have passed since the BICI report, and the government has failed to implement the report's key recommendations. Prisoners of conscience, including some arrested during the protests, remain behind bars and the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly are still being suppressed. More people have been jailed simply for daring to express their views, whether via Twitter or on peaceful marches. Bahraini courts have appeared more concerned with toeing the government line than offering effective remedy to Bahrainis and upholding the rule of law.

The establishment of BICI and its report was considered a groundbreaking initiative, but the promise of meaningful reform has been betrayed by the government's unwillingness to implement key recommendations around accountability; this includes its failure to carry out independent, effective and transparent investigations into allegations of torture and other ill-treatment and excessive use of force, and to prosecute all those who gave the orders to commit human rights abuses. For further information see the report *Reform shelved, repression unleashed*, <http://amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/062/2012/en>.

Bahrain's parliament held an extraordinary session on 28 July 2013 and then submitted 22 recommendations to the King, Shaikh Hamad Bin 'Issa Al Khalifa. The recommendations toughen punishments laid out in the 2006 anti-terrorism law. A few days later the King issued several decrees further curtailing the right to freedom of expression, including banning all protests, sit-ins and public gatherings in Manama indefinitely and giving the security forces additional sweeping powers.

A joint statement signed by 47 countries at the UN Human Rights Council on 9 September expressed serious concern about the ongoing human rights violations in Bahrain.

Name: Ahmad Fardan  
Gender m/f: m

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