

EXTERNAL

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EXTRA 42/97

Torture/detention without trial

25 March 1997

BAHRAIN

Sayyid Jalal Sayyid 'Alawi Sayyid Sharaf

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about Sayyid Jalal Sayyid 'Alawi Sayyid Sharaf, who was reportedly tortured while held incommunicado by Bahraini intelligence officials. There are fears that he may be subjected to further torture.

Sayyid Jalal Sayyid 'Alawi Sayyid Sharaf was arrested at his home in al-Duraz in a dawn raid on 6 March 1997. During the raid his home was searched and documents and computer equipment were seized. Since his arrest his family has remained ignorant of his whereabouts. According to information received by Amnesty International, he is being held incommunicado in the al-Qal'a compound in al-Manama, where he underwent interrogation by intelligence officials. He has reportedly been severely beaten, and at one stage was barefoot and shackled by the wrists.

No official reasons have been given for his arrest, but reports indicate that he may be suspected by the authorities of transmitting information about the internal situation in Bahrain to persons abroad through the Internet system. Sayyid Jalal Sayyid 'Alawi Sayyid Sharaf, aged about 29 and single, is a telecommunications engineer and a graduate of Cardiff University in the United Kingdom. He is an employee of Bahrain's National Telephone Company (Batelco).

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The human rights situation in Bahrain has remained serious since the outbreak of mass protests in December 1994 calling for the restoration of democratic rights. Amnesty International estimates that between 1,000 and 1,500 political prisoners and detainees are currently being held, the majority without charge or trial. Torture and ill-treatment is still rife. Since March 1996, more than 150 people have been convicted after unfair trials before the State Security Court. Three of the 150 were sentenced to death.

The Bahraini authorities continue to take steps to prevent the dissemination of information abroad about the internal situation in the country, including about human rights violations. For example, a number of lawyers acting on behalf of defendants brought before the State Security Court have been summoned by government officials and given warnings after having given interviews to foreign journalists. There are also increasing reports that some individuals who have access to the Internet system either at home or in their workplace are being monitored, and that those suspected of disseminating information as described above are then arrested and their computer equipment seized. [The Internet system was introduced to Bahrain in 1995 through Batelco.]

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English, Arabic or your own language:

- expressing concern about reports of the torture of Sayyid Jalal Sayyid 'Alawi Sayyid Sharaf and urging that immediate steps be taken to protect him from further torture or ill-treatment and to provide him with any necessary medical treatment;

- expressing concern at his continued incommunicado detention and urging that he be granted immediate access to his family and legal counsel;
- seeking clarification of the reasons for his arrest and calling for his immediate release if he is not promptly charged with a recognizably criminal offence and given a fair trial in accordance with international standards;
- urging that a prompt, thorough and effective investigation is initiated into the allegations of torture, that the findings be made public and those found responsible be brought to justice.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency
Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister
PO Box 1000, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9336 PROM BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Prime Minister, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +937 533033
Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency
Shaikh Muhammad bin Khalifa Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
P O Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 7889 PMPO BN
Telegrams: Minister of Interior, al-Manama, Bahrain
Faxes: +937 276765 or 290526
Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 22 April 1997.