

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Bahrain: Amnesty International concerned by latest human rights developments

Amnesty International has written this week to His Majesty Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, seeking clarifications regarding the case of human rights activist 'Abdul Hadi al-Khawaja and raising a number of human rights concerns. Specifically, the organization has sought further clarification about the decision taken by the Minister of Labour on 28 September to close the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR).

To the organization's knowledge the legal basis for the closure of the BCHR remains unclear. Concerns were also raised at reports that the third court session of the trial of 'Abdul Hadi al-Khawaja, which took place on 7 November, was held in *camera* and that he was reportedly beaten while being forcibly transferred from his prison cell to the court.

'Abdul Hadi al-Khawaja is facing charges under the 1976 Penal Code some provisions of which are vague and could be used to clamp down on government critics. Amnesty International urges that the Code be reviewed as soon as possible to ensure full compliance with international human rights standards and reflect Bahrain's positive developments in the field of human rights protection and promotion since 2001.

The organization has also expressed concern about a number of detainees arrested during the