

## Letter to Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

15<sup>th</sup> June 2011

Dear Secretary-General,

We are three Bahraini women, who have come to the UN office today to call for immediate action on the issue of political prisoners in Bahrain. Like hundreds of families, we have been suffering because of the government crackdown through mass arrests of innocent people in an attempt to silence the demands for democracy and human rights. Each one of us has members of our family in detention.

Asma Darwish – Asma's brother, photographer Mohammed Darwish, is in detention. She was allowed to visit him 2 days ago for the first time since his arrest. Mohammed told Asma that he was tortured and that he had been hospitalized for the past week. Asma is on hungerstrike in protest of what has happened to her brother and countless other Bahrainis. **Today marks the 12<sup>th</sup> day of her hunger strike.**

Sawsan Jawad – Sawsans father has been named Bahrain's Nelson Mandela. He is 64 years old and is said to be the oldest political prisoner in Bahrain. Jawad is on military trial, and has spoken in court several times about the torture he is being subjected to. Jawads only crime is that he is an activist, who has been very vocal against arbitrary detention and torture, which he is now himself a victim of.

Zainab Alkhawaja – Zainabs father, husband, brother-in-law and uncle are in detention. Her father, human rights activist, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja, was tortured so severely it resulted in four facial fractures. Alkhawaja went through major surgery during his detention. Alkhawaja is also now on military trial. Zainab doesn't know where her husband is, and hasn't been given any visitation rights since his arrest 2 months ago.

Our cases are not unique, there are hundreds going through the same or even worse. The detention, torture and trials of innocent people has become common and systematic in Bahrain. Many are on unfair military trials with false charges, some as absurd as "spreading hatred against the regime." The UN must not allow this to continue.

We know that one of the UN's main purposes is "(...)To promote and protect all Human Rights". The hundreds of detainees in Bahraini prisons need protection now. It is too late to protect and save the four people who have already died in police custody, but we are here to demand that something is done to save the rest.

We are here to urge the UN to take action to ensure that: All political prisoners get released immediately, the false charges are dropped, and that allegations of torture are investigated and those responsible held accountable.

Sincerely,

Asma Darwish

Sawsan Jawad

Zainab Alkhawaja