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His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa  
Riffa Palace  
Amiri Court  
FOB 555  
Manama, Bahrain

Dear Your Majesty King Hamad,

Freedom House is writing to express our outrage at the targeting of activists, doctors and journalists and their families. We are deeply concerned by the reports of torture, imprisonment and coercion they have faced over the past few months and urge your government to immediately halt attacks on individuals and investigate quickly allegations of torture.

We are particularly alarmed by the kidnapping and torture of medical professional Dr. Nada Dhaif. Dr. Nada was kidnapped by unknown identity masked armed forces from her family house in front of her husband. Dr. Nada is an oral and dental surgeon and who was simply providing medical support to Bahraini citizens wounded during protests.

In mid-March, she was detained, tortured and then released from custody after more than a month. She was then put on trial in June along with a number of other medical professionals and charged with inciting hatred of the Bahraini government, including inciting the overthrow of the regime. During the trial, Dr. Nada was not allowed to have her lawyer speak on her behalf or to speak by herself and was forced to plead “guilty” or “not guilty.”

This blatant lack of respect for Dr. Nada’s rights, including her right to due process, occurred because her sister is journalist and human rights activist, Mrs. Lamees Dhaif, who is an outspoken critic of the government, but also a respected journalist who has refused to remain silent while ordinary citizens have been mistreated. Yet the government has attempted to silence her by threatening her family and forcing her to flee the country. Although she has worked as a journalist for nearly ten years in Bahrain, and was a former member of the Bahraini Journalists Association, she can no longer find a job as a journalist because of her critical writing and commentary; her followers have paid very close attention to her sister’s arrest and Mrs. Lamees’ enforced silence. Your government and state media instigated an unwarranted public smear campaign against Mrs. Lamees and tried to keep her silent. Because of the negative attention and repeated death threats, Mrs. Lamees was forced to relocate. Her brother Mr. Majid Dhaif, an Interior Ministry First Lieutenant, was pushed to publicly write and endorse statements against his sister that were blatant lies.

Many doctors like Dr. Nada Dhaif, who aided activists, are now out of work. Their struggle reflects the overarching abuses of human rights occurring in Bahrain. Since February, 31 Bahraini citizens have been killed and hundreds arrested in the violent crackdown. After merely participating in protests, participants have been threatened, lost their jobs and their homes, been prevented from continuing their schooling, and arrested. Your government has taken unnecessary and extreme measures against those attempting to provide information to the outside world. You have even gone as far as to intimidate and torture the family members of protesters.

Freedom House calls upon your government and judiciary to immediately drop all charges against Dr. Nada Dhaif and other medical professionals and activists. The Dhaif family should be allowed to live in Bahrain without fear of harassment and imprisonment. Your actions against one family threaten the well-being of the Bahraini people as a whole.

Sincerely,



Paula Schriefer  
Director of Advocacy  
Freedom House

CC: Bahrain Ambassador to the United States, the Honorable Houda Ezra Ebrahim Nonoo