

A LabourStart campaign

## **Bahrain : Drop all charges against teachers, unionists and students**

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**A LabourStart campaign in partnership with the Education International, the world's largest federation of unions, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe.**

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Education International (EI) calls on you to urge the Bahraini authorities to review the charges and convictions and commute sentences of all teachers, teacher unionists and students charged with offences related to exercise of freedom of speech and right to assemble. The appeals of the Vice-President and President of the Bahraini Teachers Association (BTA) , on Sunday 11 December, are amongst EI's concerns. Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb are appealing of the sentences issued in September by the military National Safety Court of First Instance to three and ten years' imprisonment, for their involvement in peaceful protests last March. Seven other BTA board members are also on trial and 76 teachers have been sacked for similar baseless reasons. A larger number of teachers are still suspended. Most BTA Board members and sacked and suspended teachers have had the opportunity to share their experience with Fred van Leeuwen, EI General Secretary, during his mission to Bahrain in November. All reported on the unjust treatment they suffered. The revision of the convictions is also highlighted in the strong recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) . On 23 November, it recommended the Bahraini authorities "to review convictions and commute sentences of all persons charged with offences involving political expression, not consisting of advocacy of violence, or, as the case may be, to drop outstanding charges against them." International Labour Organisation jurisprudence stresses the importance of the "principle of prompt and fair trial by an independent and impartial judiciary in all cases, including cases in which trade unionists are charged with political or criminal offences."

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### **Letter**

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you to urge the Bahraini authorities to review the charges and convictions and commute sentences of all teachers, teacher unionists and students charged with offences related to exercise of freedom of speech and right to assemble.

I am notably concerned about the appeals of the Vice-President and President of the Bahraini Teachers Association (BTA). Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb are appealing of the sentences issued on 25 September by the military National Safety Court of First Instance to three and ten years' imprisonment, for their involvement in peaceful protests last March.

The revision of the convictions is highlighted in the strong recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). On 23 November, it recommended the Bahraini authorities "to review convictions and commute sentences of all persons charged with offences involving political expression, not consisting of advocacy of violence, or, as the case may be, to drop outstanding charges against them."

I urge the Bahraini authorities to :

Revoke the sentences against Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Deeb and drop all charges against other BTA leaders ;

Reinstate the teachers dismissed and the students expelled, together with their salaries and scholarships ;

Drop the suspension of all teachers and academics ;

Respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of teachers, students and union activists in accordance with international labour norms ;

Implement the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry ;

Engage in a respectful and peaceful dialogue to set up and institutionalise mechanisms to respect fundamental human rights of Bahraini teachers and to end the violations which include arbitrary arrests, detentions, unjust sentencing and dismissals.

I look forward to hearing about your positive intervention on this very serious matter.

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