

Bahrein: My Father is Dying

Friday 6 April 2012, by [al-KHAWAJA Maryam](#) (Date first published: 5 April 2012).

This is the thought constantly running through my head.

As a human rights defender I have learned to numb my emotions and continue working. I have been working on covering human rights violations in Bahrain for more than two years now, documenting all the arbitrary arrests, systematic torture, rapes, kidnappings, extra-judicial killings; the list goes on. At 24 years old I've come to learn how the world quantifies the value of a life. In Bahrain, the livelihood of an entire nation is not worth the value of one barrel of oil sold to the west by Saudi Arabia. Politics and geopolitical interests are what decide whether a people can live with dignity or if they are viewed as sub-human.

This politicization of the human condition is not only present in the policies of nation states, but in the international mechanisms supposedly set up to protect human rights. The so-called Arab spring proved, once again, that we are still living in an age where the UN Human Rights Council has little agency to act on its own accord. It, like all other agencies must bow to the powers that be.

Faced with the enormous obstacle that is geopolitics, it has become increasingly more difficult for me to remain hopeful and motivated. It is difficult to remain impartial and refuse to take up personal cases of my family members who have been imprisoned and tortured.

I constantly fear the phone call bearing the message that I will never see my father again. I cannot imagine a life without my father, and I cannot come to terms with a world that would allow my father to die.

Today, April 5th, is my fathers birthday. Abdulhadi Alkhawaja, the man who dedicated himself to fighting for human rights, who trained tens of other activists, is known as the Godfather of human rights in Bahrain. My father, who was beaten unconscious in front of his family, arrested, then severely tortured for months. My father, sentenced to life imprisonment in a military court. My father, on his 57th day of hunger strike as his only way of protesting the daily human rights violations of the Bahraini regime against the people of Bahrain.

My father, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja is dying to live. Literally. This is what propels my activism. This is why I will continue to fight.

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P.S.

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