

**Joint global civil society letter:**

**RELEASE MARYAM AL-KHAWAJA AND END CLAMPDOWN ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN BAHRAIN**

18 September 2014

HM Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa  
Office of His Majesty the King  
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain

Dear King Hamad,

We, the undersigned 155 civil society organisations based in over 60 countries write to you united in our condemnation of the politically motivated arrest of human rights defender and co-director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Maryam Al-Khawaja at Manama airport on 30 August 2014. We urge that Maryam is immediately and unconditionally released.

We believe that Maryam Al-Khawaja is being persecuted for exercising her legitimate rights to freedom of expression and association in the defence of fundamental freedoms including her co-operation with international institutions and her important role in documenting human rights violations in Bahrain. We stand in solidarity with Maryam and all other human rights defenders wrongly imprisoned by your government for their work and beliefs.

We remind you that the harassment, intimidation or stigmatization of a human rights defender, including arrest, detention, trial or imprisonment for reasons of the opinions they may hold, constitute a serious violation of Bahrain's obligations under international law.

We remain concerned that since the pro-democracy protests intensified in February 2011 your government has deliberately subverted democratic freedoms using a combination of legal and extra-legal measures involving politically motivated prosecutions, brutal crackdowns on protests and silencing expressions of dissent in the print and online media. Many have raised the concern about the arbitrary detention of hundreds of pro-democracy activists and their being subjected to torture and ill-treatment in detention centres across Bahrain.

At the UN Human Rights Council, during Bahrain's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2012 your government agreed to protect human rights defenders and allow them to conduct their work without hindrance, intimidation or harassment. On 5 September 2014, a group of United Nations independent human rights experts also demanded Maryam Al-Khawaja's release, and urged you to follow through on your commitments made during the UPR to end the persecution of all human rights defenders in Bahrain. We support Maryam's courage and strength for advocating for democratic change.

We urge your government to recognise the legitimate demands of the Bahraini people for their rights and end the cycle of protest and repression. We thus call upon you to begin a process of democratic reform, healing and reconciliation in Bahrain. Key steps towards achieving the above would be to release all detained human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience and cease the oppression of human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organizations.

Sincerely,

1. African Life Center – USA
2. African Women's Active Nonviolence Initiatives for Social Change (AWANICH) - Democratic Republic of the Congo
3. Aithria Agro-Environmental Research and Action Team – Greece
4. Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) - Bangladesh
5. Aman Network for Rehabilitation & Defending Human Rights – United Kingdom
6. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) – USA
7. Andalus institute for tolerance & Anti-violence studies – Egypt
8. Arab Network for Democratic Elections – Lebanon
9. Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) – Lebanon
10. Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) – Egypt
11. ARTICLE 19 – UK
12. Asian Human Rights Commission – Hong Kong
13. Asian Press Institute – Sri Lanka
14. Association Dea Dia from Serbia - Serbia
15. Association for Progressive Communications – South Africa
16. Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) -Canada
17. Association Transparence et Développement (ATED) – Mauritania
18. Avocats Sans Frontières Network – France
19. Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) – Bahrain
20. Bahrain Human Rights Observatory (BHRO) - Bahrain
21. Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) – United Kingdom
22. Bahrain Rehabilitation & Anti Violence Organization (BRAVO) - Bahrain
23. Bahrain Salam for Human Rights – United Kingdom
24. Baidarie Pakistan – Pakistan
25. Belgrade Center for Human Rights - Serbia
26. Bishkek Feminist Collective SQ – Krygzistan
27. Building More Future Opportunities and Capacities (BMFOCA) – Nigeria
28. Burundi Child Rights Coalition (BCRC)– Burundi
29. Bytes for All – Pakistan
30. Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) - Egypt
31. Campaign Against Ignorance & Illiteracy (CAII) - Nigeria
32. Cambodia Center for Human Rights (CCHR) – Cambodia
33. Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) – Canada
34. Center for Peace Education - USA
35. Center for National and International Studies (CNIS) – Azerbaijan
36. Center International Training for Human Rights and Development – Democratic Republic of the Congo
37. Center of studies on Justice and Resolution of 1325 – Democratic Republic of the Congo
38. Charity and Security Network - USA
39. Citizens for Democratic Rights in Eritrea – United Kingdom
40. Civic Initiatives – Serbia
41. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation - South Africa

42. Civil Rights Defenders - Sweden
43. Coalition pour le Development et la Rehabilitation Social (CODR UBUNTU) – Burundi
44. Community Empowerment for Progress Organization (CEPO) – South Sudan
45. Concertation Nationale de la Société Civile du Togo (CNSC Togo) - Togo
46. Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE) – Colombia
47. Counseling Center for Transgender People Association – Turkey
48. Danish PEN – Denmark
49. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) – Philippines
50. Democracy Monitor – Azerbaijan
51. Diverse Voices and Action for Equality - Fiji
52. East and Horn of African Human Rights Defenders Project - Uganda
53. Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms – Egypt
54. Egyptian Organization for Human Rights (EOHR) - Egypt
55. Elma7rosa Network for Advocacy Media& Arts - Egypt
56. English PEN – UK
57. Ethiopian Human Rights Project - Ethiopia
58. European-Bahraini Organisation for Human Rights (EBOHR) – Switzerland
59. European Women’s Lobby – Belgium
60. European Saudi Organizations for Human Rights - Germany
61. Federation of African Muslim Women in America (FAMWA) – USA
62. Families of Desaparecidos for Justice - Philippines
63. Foundation of The Victims Of Abduction And Forced Disappearance (FVAFD) – Egypt
64. Fontaine-ISOKO for Good Governance and Integrated Development- Burundi
65. Freedom International – Ghana
66. FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, France
67. Freedom House – USA
68. Freedom Now - USA
69. Frontline Defenders – Ireland
70. Ghanaian Centre of PEN International - Ghana
71. Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP) –USA
72. Groupe des Experts Nationaux - Madagascar
73. Gulf Civil Society Association Forum - Kuwait
74. Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) - Lebanon
75. Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly – Turkey
76. Human Rights Center "Viasna" – Belarus
77. Human Rights Concern Eritrea – United Kingdom
78. Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (HIVOS) – Netherlands
79. International Campaign for Human Rights in Iran – USA
80. International Centre for supporting Rights and Freedoms (ICSRF) - Egypt
81. International Commission of Jurists – Switzerland
82. International Pen, San Miguel Chapter – Mexico
83. International Service for Human Rights - Switzerland
84. International Solidarity Network Women Living Under Muslim Laws - USA
85. International Youth Human Rights Movement – Russia
86. Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) – UK
87. Lualua Centre for Human Rights(LCHR) - Lebanon
88. Justice for Iran (JFI) – United Kingdom
89. KAOS GL – Turkey
90. Karapatan Alliance - Philippines
91. Kham Rehabilitation Center For Victims of Torture – Lebanon
92. Kitgum Women Peace Initiative (KIWEPI) - Uganda

93. Lawyers Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM) – Serbia
94. Ligue des Droits de la personne dans la région des Grands Lacs (LDGL) – Democratic Republic of Congo
95. Ligue Algerienne Pour la Defense des Droits de l (LADDH) - Algeria
96. Maharat Foundation – Lebanon
97. Martin Ennals Foundation – Switzerland
98. MENA Monitoring Group - Tunisia
99. Middle East Democracy (POMED) – USA
100. Mpalabanda - Associacao Civica de Cabinda - Angola
101. Movimiento Amplio de Mujeres de Puerto Rico – USA
102. Monitoring of Human Rights in Saudi Arabia – Saudi Arabia
103. Muslim Women's Research and Action Forum – Sri Lanka
104. Nasra for Feminist Studies – Egypt
105. New Bakkah Foundation – Switzerland
106. National Lawyers Guild - USA
107. National Organization for Defending Rights and Freedoms - Yemen
108. National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) – Somalia
109. No Peace Without Justice – Italy
110. World Organisation Against Torture, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders – Switzerland
111. Pacific Feminist SRHR Coalition – Australia
112. Palestinian Conflict Resolution / Transformation Center – Palestine
113. PEN Center – Nicaragua
114. PEN American Center – USA
115. PEN International - USA
116. PEN International Women Writers Committee – Egypt
117. Policy Center – Serbia
118. Pusat Komnas - Malaysia
119. Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) - France
120. Réseau des Défenseurs des Droits Humains en Afrique Centrale (REDHAC) – Cameroon
121. Right Defenders Lawyers & Consultants (RDLC) – Pakistan
122. Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association - Turkey
123. Shia Rights Watch - USA
124. Social And Human Development Consultative Groups (SAHDCG) – Sudan
125. South African Centre of PEN International –South Africa
126. Synergie des Femmes pour les Victimes de Violences Sexuelle – Democratic Republic of the Congo
127. Secularism Is a Women's Issue – UK
128. Society of Former Political Prisoners Against Arrest and Detention in the Philippines – Philippines
129. South Sudan Law Society (SSLS) – South Sudan
130. Synergie des Associations Feminines du Congo - Democratic Republic of the Congo
131. Swiss Italian PEN – Switzerland
132. Tanzania Human rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC) – Tanzania
133. Teso Women Peace Activists (TEWPA) - Uganda
134. The Training Nest - Sri Lanka
135. Three Cities Foundation – Malta
136. Trans-der – Turkey
137. Transparency International – Bangladesh
138. Ucan Supurge Women's Association – Turkey
139. Treatment Advocacy and Literacy Campaign (TALC) – Zambia
140. Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights - USA
141. Un Ponte Per- Italy

142. Union Nacional de Instituciones para el trabajo de accion Social – Bolivia
143. Vivarta - UK
144. West African Human Rights Defenders Network (WAHRDN) - Togo
145. Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) – Liberia
146. Women Peace Initiatives-Uganda (WOPI-U) - Uganda
147. Women and Allies Peace Builders Network – Burundi
148. Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) – Philippines
149. Women's Resource Center – Pakistan
150. Women's Solidarity Fund – UK
151. World Movement for Democracy - USA
152. Zambia Council for Social Development (ZCSD) – Zambia
153. Zeugmadi LGBT- Turkey
154. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum – Zimbabwe
155. 1325 Policy Group – Sweden