

20 March 2012

British Embassy in Manama, Bahrain
21 Government Avenue
P O Box 114
Manama 306
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Your Excellency

Subject

Free jailed Bahraini trade union leader Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb

On behalf of the 122,000 members of the University and College Union (UCU) I am writing to you with my concerns about the continued detention of and ill-treatment against Mr Mahdi Issa Abu Dheeb, President of the Bahraini Teachers' Association. My organisation – the UCU – calls for your immediate action to press for the Bahraini judicial authorities to respect a transparent and fair judicial process.

Together with our global union federation, Education International representing 30 million teachers and education workers worldwide, we are deeply concerned about the BTA President's life, about the continued repression of teacher unionists, education workers and students in Bahrain despite the strong recommendations from the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI).

In view of the 2 April court hearing which will take place at the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs – Diplomatic area – Manama – Bahrain between 9 and 10 A.M., the UCU respectfully asks your office to help protect those being persecuted in Bahrain for exercising their trade union rights and urge authorities in Bahrain to act within the law and acknowledged international standards.

Arrested on trumped up charges related to the Pearl Roundabout pro-democracy movements of last year, the teacher union leader has been detained since 11 April. Mr Mahdi Abu Dheeb has abuse in prison and has been refused medical treatment. He has twice been denied release on bail by the Supreme Court of Appeal on 11 December and 19 February and the continued detention is gravely endangering his life.

The Bahraini authorities' crackdown on the protests resulted in many teachers and teacher unionists being subjected to arbitrary arrests, military prosecution, torture, suspensions, salary cuts, and investigation. In September 2011, the military National Safety Court sentenced Mr. Dheeb as well as Jalila al-Salman, female Vice President of the Bahraini Teacher Association, to respectively ten and three years in prison, for unwarranted accusations of *"inciting others to commit crimes, calling for hatred and overthrow of the ruling system, holding pamphlet, disseminating*

fabricated stories and information, leaving work on purpose and encouraging others to do so and taking part at illegal gatherings". None of these charges have been substantiated and never have the teacher union leaders used nor advocated violence.

Here are some specific ways your embassy can offer visibility and protection to those exercising their trade union rights in Bahrain:

- **Monitor the appeals of Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila Al Salman on April 2 and report on the judicial proceedings;**
- **Encourage the Bahrain authorities to:**
 - grant Mahdi Abu Dheeb the right to bail in accordance with international human rights law;
 - respect the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
 - Implement without delay all the recommendations made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, BICI;
 - Drop the suspension of all teachers and academics; reinstate the teachers dismissed and the students expelled, as well as restore their salaries and scholarships;
 - Invite representatives of teachers' trade union organisations to your office for a meeting. By listening to these activists, you will not only learn their side of the story, but you will also extend them protection;

We are very interested to hear the steps taken by your Embassy so far to monitor and address this distressing situation. I look forward to receiving your response as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Hunt', with a horizontal line underneath.

Sally Hunt

UCU General Secretary