



### **NGOs Condemn Convictions of Maryam al-Khawaja and Zainab al-Khawaja**

This week, a Bahraini court sentenced sisters Maryam al-Khawaja and Zainab al-Khawaja to jail terms in separate cases related to freedom of expression and human rights activism. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy condemn the politically motivated sentences, and calls on the government to vacate the convictions.

On 4 December 2014, Zainab al-Khawaja was convicted of insulting the King of Bahrain for [tearing his photograph during a court appearance](#) on 14 October 2014. Zainab was sentenced to three years imprisonment and ordered to pay a 3,000 Bahraini Dinar fine, equivalent to roughly \$8,000 US dollars or £5,000 British Pounds. Zainab, who was released on bail and gave birth to a son on 28 November 2014, has not yet been taken into custody.

On 1 December 2014, Maryam al-Khawaja was convicted in absentia of assaulting two policewomen and sentenced to one year imprisonment. On 29 August 2014, Maryam al-Khawaja was [arrested from the Manama airport](#) by Bahraini authorities after traveling to the country to visit her ailing father, prominent human rights activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja. Maryam fled Bahrain in early October after being released on bail pending trial on charges of assaulting a police officer, entering Bahrain illegally, and insulting the King.

The aforementioned organizations call on the Government of Bahrain to:

- Vacate the convictions against Zainab Al-Khawaja and Maryam al-Khawaja;
- Repeal laws that restrict freedom of expression, including those pertaining to insulting the king of Bahrain; and
- Release all political prisoners and end the systematic targeting of individuals for exercising their right to peaceful freedom of expression.