



# INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

## OF ACADEMIES AND SCHOLARLY SOCIETIES

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Arjuna Aluwihare  
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D. Balasubramanian  
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Claude Cohen-Tannoudji\*  
*France*

Abdallah S. Daar  
*Oman/Canada*

Felton Earls  
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Belita Koiller  
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*Costa Rica*

Ida Nicolaisen  
*Denmark*

John Polanyi\*  
*Canada*

Alenka Selih  
*Slovenia*

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Carol Corillon

### SECRETARIAT

Committee on Human Rights  
The National Academies  
500 Fifth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001, USA  
tel: (202) 334-3043  
fax: (202) 334-2225  
email: [chr@nas.edu](mailto:chr@nas.edu)  
[nationalacademies.org/humanrights](http://nationalacademies.org/humanrights)

June 6, 2012

His Majesty King Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al-Khalifa  
Office of His Majesty the King  
P.O. Box 555  
Rifa'a Palace  
Al-Manama, Bahrain

Your Majesty:

We, the members of the Executive Committee of the International Human Rights Network of Academies and Scholarly Societies, write at this critical juncture in the appeal case of the 20 Bahraini medics, to express our urgent concern about their plight. We understand that the High Criminal Court of Appeal will pronounce its verdict on their appeal case on June 14, 2012. We respectfully request that you kindly facilitate the attendance of our representatives at the announcement of the verdict. Because time is of the essence, we would be grateful for a prompt response to this request.

Additionally, as prominent members of the international scientific community, we are obligated to write to you about how essential it is for health professionals to practice medical neutrality, which is our specific concern regarding the treatment and due process rights of our Bahraini medical colleagues. We urge you sincerely to use your good offices, on humanitarian grounds and out of respect for the importance of medical neutrality, to ensure that the Bahraini medics are accorded the full range of their fundamental rights. We are confident that a ruling, in strict accordance with international fair trial standards, will result in their full exoneration.

As you no doubt are aware, the 20 medics were convicted of a range of crimes in September 2011, following a military trial that violated international judicial norms. As much as we were gratified when Attorney General Dr. Ali Al-Boainain stated that the defendants would be accorded a "retrial" before the highest civilian

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Academies in the Network support and promote the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, assist unjustly incarcerated nonviolent professional colleagues, address grave science-related human rights issues, and advocate for member institutions whose independence is threatened.  
(The U.S. National Academies, non-profit, non-governmental honorary societies, host the Network secretariat.)

[www.nas.edu.hrnetwork](http://www.nas.edu.hrnetwork)

FOUNDING MEMBERS  
François Jacob\* – *France*  
Max Perutz\* – *United Kingdom*  
Pieter van Dijk – *Netherlands*  
Torsten Wiesel\* – *USA*  
(\*Nobel Laureate)

court and that they would have "the benefit of full reevaluation of evidence and full opportunity to present their defenses," we were equally dismayed that his assurances were not realized. Although three of the more serious charges were dropped and the defendants were allowed to remain free, although unemployed, until the verdict is rendered, the medics were not given a retrial. Rather, they were allowed only an appeal before the High Criminal Court of Appeal, which began on October 23, 2011, and violated international fair trial standards in a number of important ways.

The medics have alleged they were tortured to extract confessions—allegations that are consistent with the findings of the Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) as well as those of the international medical experts who, at the BICI's request, traveled to Bahrain, examined eight of the medics, and submitted confidential forensic reports to the commission. We understand that the court finally permitted the reports to be introduced by the defense at the end of March 2012 and the Attorney General allowed the "confessions" to be withdrawn. However, the other 12 medics, despite additional claims of torture, were denied permission to also be examined by an internationally respected and impartial medical doctor.

Another major concern is the lack of openness of the court proceedings to the public. Despite your government's claims that the proceedings were open, we understand that representatives from various nongovernmental organizations had restrictions placed on their visas, making it impossible for them to attend most of the hearings. We understand also that journalists were largely prevented from entering the courtroom. A number of other requests made by the defense were denied during the appeal proceedings as well. For example, the medics' request that weapons—never mentioned in the original trial but suddenly introduced by the prosecution as evidence against them—be excluded was denied.

Again, we appeal with utmost respect to you to use your good offices on humanitarian grounds in this important case to ensure that medical neutrality and the rule of law—issues paramount to the scientific community the world over—are upheld and that the cases of these medical colleagues are brought to a just conclusion so that they can return to their important work serving the medical needs of the people of Bahrain. We are anxious that our representatives be permitted to attend the announcement on June 14 of what we trust will be a favorable verdict.

Yours Sincerely,

Arjuna Aluwihare  
 Dorairajan Balasubramanian  
 Claude Cohen-Tannoudji  
 Abdallah S. Daar  
 Felton Earls  
 François Jacob  
 Belita Koiller  
 Pedro León Azofeifa  
 Ida Nicolaisen  
 John Polanyi  
 Alenka Šelih

cc: World Health Organization  
 International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
 Doctors without Borders  
 Federation of Islamic Medical Associations  
 Ministry of Health, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia