



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

STATEMENT

Critical time for Bahrain to restore educational opportunities for all citizens

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Every week, Education International receives anxious requests from Bahraini students, parents and academics alarmed about the on-going infringements of academic freedom and human rights directed at professors, students, and staff at higher education institutions in Bahrain. Reports indicate that, in recent months, the University of Bahrain has dismissed at least 117 of its academic staff and expelled more than 400 students for participating in demonstrations against the government or posting related links on social media sites.

The University of Bahrain has also revoked the scholarships of those pursuing higher education abroad.

In addition, students, academics and teachers are still in detention and or released on bail awaiting trials. Teacher unionists of the Bahrain Teacher Association (BTA) have been sentenced to up to 10 years' imprisonment by a military court. At least six students have been sentenced to over 15 years' imprisonment.

Education International, representing over 400 teacher unions in the world, expresses serious concern with the continued and unjustified crackdown on teachers and students. We call upon authorities in Bahrain to implement the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) and to take additional steps to support the education sector. It has been over 4 months since the BICI issued its recommendations, yet professors and students remain unable to return to their academic roles, several members of the higher education community remain in prison, some without regular access to needed medical care while others report mistreatment in detention.

The actions taken by the University of Bahrain and the Ministry of Education contravene widely accepted principles of academic freedom enshrined in the 1997 *UNESCO Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Staff*. Those violations are also unacceptable restrictions to basic civil liberties, including freedom of speech and freedom of association guaranteed by the *United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* which Bahrain ratified in 2006.

Education International invites the Bahraini authorities and the University of Bahrain:

- To release immediately and unconditionally all teachers, academics and students detained for charges in relation to the peaceful pro-democracy marches,
- to implement the BICI's recommendations and reinstate all faculty and students dismissed or expelled, to their former study position,
- to guarantee the right to academic freedom, including its constituent freedoms of opinion, expression, assembly and association,
- to revise the University by-laws to reflect internationally recognized standards of academic freedom and professional rights, including those elaborated in the 1997 UNESCO Recommendation,
- to turn all education establishments, including higher education institutions, into safe sanctuaries for every citizen.

Education International will continue to monitor the situation closely.

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