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TO SELECTED EI MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Brussels, 1 October 2012

Take a stand for teachers in Bahrain!

Dear colleagues,

World Teachers' Day is celebrated annually on 5 October. It is an opportunity for Education International and its partners to celebrate the profession and to promote international standards for the teaching profession.

World Teachers' Day is an opportunity to appreciate the dedication and contribution of teachers to quality education for all. Unfortunately, so far in Bahrain, teachers have been rewarded by arbitrary arrests, military prosecution, investigation, suspensions, dismissals, salary cuts and torture for exercising their basic trade union rights.

On the occasion of the World Teachers' Day, Education International (EI), on behalf of its 30 million members in over 170 countries of the world, is expressing its full support and solidarity with the struggle of Bahraini Teachers, especially their union leaders.

The Bahraini Teachers' Association leaders were arrested during the pro-democracy protests in March 2011 for peacefully exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly, in accordance with international human rights law and international labour standards.

Mahdi 'Issa Abu Dheeb, BTA President and Jalila Al-Salman Vice President -who is currently released on bail- were sentenced to ten and three years in prison by a military court for using their position "to call for a strike by teachers, halting the educational process and inciting hatred of the regime", among other charges. There is no evidence proving that they either used or advocated violence.

Mahdi Abu Deeb testified that he has been tortured and denied access to medical care while in detention and has been on hunger strike several times protesting his arbitrary arrest and the deplorable prison conditions. The appeal hearing of BTA leaders started in December 2011 and has been consecutively adjourned 9 times on 19 February, 2 April, 2 May, 25 June, 4 July, 6 August, 9 September and 12 September, consequently prolonging Abu Dheeb's pre-trial detention. The final court appeal hearing is scheduled for 21 October.

In this context, EI is calling on your organisation to take action and urge the Bahraini authorities to comply with international human rights standards, drop all charges against Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila Al Salman and ensure that due process is respected. While celebrating the World teachers' Day we call on you to denounce the continuing repression of civil liberties and the criminalisation of teachers and unionists undertaking their legitimate human rights activities in Bahrain and elsewhere.

You can also send messages from the World Teachers 'Day website, so the Bahraini Teachers' Association colleagues know that they are supported in their struggle for unions' rights, that they are not alone for their call for social justice and that the right to freedom of expression and of assembly should be respected everywhere!

Yours sincerely,

Fred van Leeuwen,
General Secretary