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Urgent Call for the Release of Detained Teacher Union Leaders

Your Majesty,

The GEW, the German Education Union (GEW), representing 260.000 teachers, university professors and other education workers in Germany calls for the release of Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb, Vice-President and President of the Bahraini Teachers Association (BTA).

We have been informed that Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb were arrested along with several other board members of the BTA in March and April. While we understand that their colleagues have been released, Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb remain incarcerated awaiting trial in a civilian court. Jalila al-Salman was reportedly beaten and held in solitary confinement.

The charges against the two union leaders include “inciting hatred towards the regime”, “calling to overthrow and change the regime by force”, “calling on parents not to send their children to school” and “calling on teachers to stop working and participate in strikes and demonstrations”. We believe that they are detained solely for exercising their legitimate rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly as leaders of the BTA.

In addition, we condemn the punitive and vindictive campaign of violent repression carried out by your government since March 2011 against its own citizens engaged in the pro-democracy movement. The repression has been characterised by widespread arbitrary arrest, allegations of torture and ill treatment, unfair trials and mass dismissals of workers, especially teachers, and expulsions of students.

The GEW urges the Bahraini authorities to:

- Release immediately and unconditionally Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Deeb; protect them from torture or other ill-treatment;
- immediately set up a full, impartial and independent investigation into the reported ill-treatment of Jalila al-Salman and bring those responsible to justice;
- Reinstate the teachers dismissed and the students expelled, together with their salaries and scholarships;
- Respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of teachers, students and union activists in accordance with international standards;
- Engage in respectful dialogue to bring about a peaceful transition to democracy and a fair resolution of the current impasse and legitimate claims of the Bahraini people.

Looking forward to hearing about your positive intervention on this very serious matter.

Yours sincerely,



Ulrich Thöne