



The Law Society of
Upper Canada | Barreau
du Haut-Canada

July 4, 2016

His Highness Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa
Prime Minister's Office
P.O. Box 1000
Government Road
Manama
Kingdom of Bahrain

Office of the Treasurer

Osgoode Hall
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Toronto, Ontario
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Dear Prime Minister:

Re: Harassment and imminent expulsion of lawyer Taimoor Karimi

I write on behalf of the Law Society of Upper Canada* to voice our grave concern over the harassment and imminent expulsion of lawyer Taimoor Karimi. When serious issues of apparent injustice to lawyers and the judiciary come to our attention, we speak out.

Taimoor Karimi is a Shi'ite Muslim lawyer who took part in Bahrain's pro-democracy protests in 2011 and defended some of the prominent activists who were jailed afterwards. In 2014, Taimoor Karimi was one of 10 individuals whose Bahraini citizenship was withdrawn without due process. Bahraini authorities have obstructed Taimoor Karimi's right of appeal and refused to justify the decision to revoke his citizenship. Taimoor Karimi has fought the order for three years, during which time he has lost his government-issued identification, job and bank account.

On 10 August 2014, the public prosecutor issued a court summons to Taimoor Karimi for "violations of asylum and immigration law" that include remaining in Bahrain without the residence licence that all non-nationals over 16 are required to have. Since the Appeal Court in Manama upheld his sentence on 23 May 2016, he has been at imminent risk of expulsion from Bahrain.

The Law Society of Upper Canada urges Your Excellency to consider Articles 16 and 23 of the United Nations' *Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers*.

Article 16 states:

Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

Moreover, Article 23 states:

Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organizations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organization.

The Law Society urges the government of Bahrain to:

- a. immediately reinstate Taimoor Karimi's citizenship;
- b. put an end to all acts of harassment against Taimoor Karimi as well as other lawyers and human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- c. Immediately and unconditionally withdraw all charges against Taimoor Karimi;
- d. guarantee all the procedural rights that should be accorded to Taimoor Karimi and other human rights lawyers and defenders in Bahrain;
- e. ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments.

Yours very truly,

Paul Schabas
Treasurer

**The Law Society of Upper Canada is the governing body for more than 50,000 lawyers and 8,000 paralegals in the province of Ontario, Canada. The Treasurer is the head of the Law Society.*

The mandate of the Law Society is to govern the legal profession in the public interest by upholding the independence, integrity and honour of the legal profession for the purpose of advancing the cause of justice and the rule of law.

cc:

Alex Neve, Secretary General, Amnesty International Canada

Mary Lawlor, Executive Director, Front Line Defenders

Vincent Forest, Head of European Union Office, Front Line Defenders

Kenneth Roth, Executive Director, Human Rights Watch

President, Bahrain Bar Association

Adrie van de Streek, Executive Director, Lawyers for Lawyers

David F. Sutherland, Chair, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

Yves Berthelot, President, Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Gabriela Knaul, Special Rapporteur of the Human Council on the independence of judges and lawyers, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Sarah Smith, Human Rights and Rule of Law Policy Adviser, The Law Society of England and Wales