

Physicians for Human Rights

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://phr.org/our-work/resources/bahraini-hunger-striker-force-fed-if-so-its-torture/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

on March 31, 2012

On 9 April 2011, two hours after I left his family and flew home from Bahrain, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, a well-known human rights activist, [was brutally beaten](#) in his home and dragged away by security forces. A military court later sentenced him to life in prison for participating in last year's Arab Spring demonstrations.

For the past seven weeks, Abdulhadi has led a hunger strike protesting his imprisonment and torture at the hands of his captors, who this week transferred him to a military hospital. There, he is likely physically restrained to his bed. Military doctors could by now have forced a thick nasogastric tube up his nose and down the esophagus into his stomach.

Such forced feeding may sound like the best thing for Abdulhadi, who has reportedly lost 25% of his body weight due to his decision not to eat. But this painful procedure more probably caused him undue psychological trauma if it were done against his will.

Forced feeding without consent is a flagrant violation of a patient's medical autonomy. When conducted by a physician against the patient's will, it is medical complicity in torture, according to the [World Medical Association](#).

This week, PHR requested that the Government of Bahrain allow an independent medical doctor to visit Abdulhadi. PHR urges that Government authorities abide by its pledge to implement the [Bassiouni Report recommendations](#) and allow such access. More importantly, the life sentence given to Abdulhadi as a prisoner of conscience should be overturned and he should immediately be released.

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