

Human Rights Watch

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<https://www.hrw.org/news/2009/05/12/bahrain-investigate-abduction-beating-rights-activist>

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(New York) - Bahrain should immediately begin a thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction and torture of the human rights activist Ja'far Kadhim Ibrahim, Human Rights Watch said today. Men whom Ibrahim believed were working for a Bahraini security agency abducted him on the night of May 7, 2009, and beat him severely with batons.

Ibrahim had been contacting political activists recently released from detention concerning their allegations that they had been subjected to torture and abuse in detention. Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), said Ibrahim believes that the men who attacked him are agents of the National Security Apparatus - an official security force - citing their use of walkie-talkies and the batons they used to beat him.

"It looks like the men who abducted and beat Ja'far Ibrahim intended to teach him a lesson - that pursuing torture allegations in Bahrain today carries a high price," said Joe Stork, deputy director of the Middle East division at Human Rights Watch. "The government needs to appoint an independent prosecutor or commission to investigate this incident as the first step in bringing the attackers to justice."

Rajab told Human Rights Watch that he spoke with Ibrahim in his hospital room on May 8. Ibrahim said that at approximately 8:45 p.m. the previous day, he was driving in the Jid Hafs neighborhood, west of the capital, Manama, when two cars cornered him on the road. At least six men in plain clothes, some with walkie-talkies, dragged Ibrahim from his car and confiscated his wallet and two mobile phones. The men blindfolded Ibrahim, forced him into one of their cars, and drove 10 to 15 minutes to an unidentified area, where they beat him unconscious.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself covered in blood and back in his car, alone. He attempted to drive himself to the nearby house of Hasan Mushaima, the head of Haq, an opposition political party. Eventually, acquaintances drove him to the nearby Salmania Public Hospital, where he remains with wounds to his face and head, as well as two broken ribs.

Photographs taken by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights show him badly bruised, with swollen facial features, stitches, and a brace on his head and neck. At the time of the attack, Ibrahim was working on behalf of the BCHR and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, documenting recent allegations of torture in detention and assisting the families of detainees.

"The abduction and beating of Ja'far Ibrahim are a wake-up call that Bahrain needs to investigate seriously and hold accountable those responsible for violence against dissidents," Stork said. "The message here seems to be that torture is acceptable in Bahrain."

Ibrahim, 41 years old and a father of two, was himself only recently released from detention. In the early hours of February 4, he and fellow rights activist Ali Hassan Salman were taken from their homes by security agents without warrants or explanation and detained for a month without access to a lawyer or family members. Ibrahim was released on March 2.

Bahrain's obligations as party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights include the right of individuals not to be tortured and the right to freedom of association and peaceful public assembly. The UN Convention against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Bahrain is a state party, prohibits torture and cruel and inhuman treatment and requires all cases of torture to be investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted.

Bahraini press coverage of Ibrahim's abuse has been limited to one article in the independent newspaper *Al Wasat* on May 9, in which a spokesperson for the director of the Northern Governorate Police said that Ibrahim was a victim of robbery, despite the fact that, according to Rajab, no money had been taken from his billfold. The websites of many prominent critics of the government and most human rights organizations that would normally have published details of such an incident continue to be blocked in Bahrain.

Human Rights Watch said the government should make public the results of the investigation into Ibrahim's abduction and beating.

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