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## Statement – Bahrain: UN Working Group calls for the release of Bahraini human rights defender Naji Fateel

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned about the continued imprisonment of human rights defender **Naji Fateel** and the denial of urgent medical treatment by the prison authorities in Bahrain.

On 25 March 2023, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for Naji Fateel's "immediate and unconditional" release and for the Bahraini government to investigate his arbitrary detention and alleged torture. The UN Working Group [opinion](#) also stated that there was "no legal basis" for his arrest and that he should not have been imprisoned.

[Naji Fateel](#) is a prominent Bahraini human rights defender who has dedicated his life to peaceful protest activities and documenting human rights violations in Bahrain. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Bahraini human rights NGO Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR). Since 2007, he has endured periods of imprisonment, been subjected to torture at the hands of the authorities and was the target of death threats during the Bahraini uprising, beginning in February 2011.

Naji Fateel has been detained in Jaw prison since May 2013. Between 2013 and 2016, the human rights defender was found guilty in three separate cases and sentenced to a total of 25 years and six months in prison.

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has found that there is no legal basis for his arrest and that Bahraini authorities should investigate his arbitrary detention and alleged torture.

The severity of the torture that Naji Fateel has been subjected to is alarming. According to Sayed Alwadaei (Director of Advocacy with the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), who filed the claim that initiated the UN Working Group's investigation), human rights defender Naji Fateel is experiencing persistent health problems in prison, such as a range of health conditions that demand immediate medical attention. However, prison authorities have repeatedly failed to provide any treatment to Naji Fateel.

Front Line Defenders echoes the concerns expressed by BIRD concerning Naji Fateel's lack of access to adequate and necessary medical treatment and urges the Bahraini authorities to take immediate action to ensure Naji Fateel's access to adequate medical care, including facilitating access to medical experts who can remove the metal rod from his left leg which has caused chronic inflammation and makes it difficult for him to walk.

Front Line Defenders joins the United Nations Working Group in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Naji Fateel, and for an investigation into his arbitrary detention and alleged torture.

Front Line Defenders stands in solidarity with Naji Fateel and all other human rights defenders in Bahrain who have been targeted for their peaceful activities. It demands that the Bahraini government immediately and unconditionally release Naji Fateel and all prisoners of conscience in the country. We call on the Bahraini authorities to respect the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and to ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work without fear of reprisals.