



October 17, 2011

OPEN LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Nurse Colleagues,

Three nursing colleagues in Bahrain — Rula Al Saffar, president of the Bahrain Nursing Society, Ibrahim Al Demistani and Deya Ibrahim — as well as 17 other health professionals, will now be tried in a civilian court for charges of trying to overthrow the government as they attempted to care for those injured during last February's social unrest and violent clashes in Manama, Bahrain.

Last week, we learned that prison sentences of 5-15 years for these 20 doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals, handed down by Bahrain's National Safety Court in a seven-minute trial, were overturned due in large part to an international outcry from human rights organizations and the International Council of Nurses (ICN), among others. Amnesty International stated that military courts such as the National Safety Court are not independent or impartial.

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) has monitored this situation closely and will continue to do so until there is a fair and just resolution. CNA's position statement *Registered Nurses, Health and Human Rights* states, "Where nurses experience conflict between performing professional duties and fulfilling obligations to their employer or other authority, their primary responsibility is to those who require care." The Bahraini health-care professionals were carrying out their ethical responsibilities.

In June, CNA wrote to John Baird, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in August, to the King of Bahrain calling for investigations into reports of torture of the detainees and for fair and public trials. CNA will continue to monitor this situation through the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Amnesty International and ICN, and will keep you informed of any developments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Judith Shamian".

Judith Shamian, RN, PhD, LLD (hon), D.Sci. (hon), FAAN
President