

**Maryam Al-Khawaja:**

Maryam Al-Khawaja is a Bahraini-Danish Human Rights Defender, and currently the Co-Director for the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR).

She served as the Acting President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) until July 2014 when the President, Nabeel Rajab, was released from prison.

In Bahrain, Al-Khawaja played an instrumental role in the democratic protests taking place in the Pearl Roundabout in February 2011, which triggered a government response of widespread extra judicial killings, arrest, torture, discrimination, sackings and fear to suppress dissent and quell voices for reform.

She is the daughter of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, the founder of BCHR and GCHR, who went on a 110 day hunger strike protesting human rights violations and was among a group of high-profile activists and opposition leaders sentenced to life imprisonment in June 2011.

In August 2014, Al-Khawaja made a trip back to Bahrain to visit her father who was on a life threatening hunger strike. She was held back at the airport, assaulted then detained for 19 days. Due to international pressure, she was released and able to leave the country a week later, then sentenced to one year imprisonment on the 1st of December on trumped up charges.

Despite being abroad, Al-Khawaja remains very connected to events on the ground and has emerged as a leading voice for human rights and political reform in Bahrain and the Gulf region. She has been influential in shaping official responses to the atrocities in Bahrain around the world by engaging with prominent European and American policymakers in her advocacy efforts.

Al-Khawaja and the BCHR have received numerous awards for their human rights work, including the Rafto Prize. The Al-Khawaja family was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 by an EU Parliament Member.