

Advocacy dossier

Naji Fateel

ناجي فتيل

Detained (pretrial) **Bahrain**

Naji Fateel is a Bahraini human rights defender and board member of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights who spent more than 11 years in prison before a royal pardon in April 2024. He was re-arrested on 18 August 2026 over an unpaid share of fines from a 2016 prison protest case and is held in Jau Prison.

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The case at a glance

Naji Fateel is a Bahraini human rights defender and board member of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights who spent more than 11 years in prison before a royal pardon in April 2024. He was re-arrested on 18 August 2026 over an unpaid share of fines from a 2016 prison protest case and is held in Jau Prison.

Status **Detained (pretrial)**	Arrested **18 Aug 2026**	Country **Bahrain**

Sentence Prison terms totalling 25 years and six months (2013 to 2016), ended by royal pardon on 8 April 2024; now held over his unpaid share, about US$23,700, of a collective fine imposed in the 2016 Jau Prison case.

Charges Establishing a group aiming to disable the constitution, under Article 6 of the Terrorism Act (2013 case)
Attending illegal gatherings (2013 case)
Charges in the 2016 Jau Prison protest case, described as damaging public property, attacking police, arson and resisting authorities

What we ask

We call on the authorities to:

01 Release Naji Fateel immediately and unconditionally.

02 Drop all charges related to the peaceful exercise of fundamental rights.

03 Ensure unrestricted access to legal counsel, family, and adequate medical care while in detention.

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How the case unfolded

13 July 2008

Conviction

Sentenced to five years after December 2007 arrests

The High Criminal Court sentenced him to five years in prison, one of 11 men convicted that day of offences including illegal assembly, arson and attacking security forces after unrest in December 2007. Relatives said he and Hasan Abdelnabi had been deliberately placed with prisoners suffering from contagious illnesses.

2 May 2013

Arrest

Arrested at dawn without a warrant

Security officers in civilian clothes arrested him at dawn at his home in Bani Jamra without a warrant. He was held incommunicado for three days and reportedly tortured at the Criminal Investigation Directorate, including with electric shocks, simulated drowning and beatings.

22 May 2013

Conviction

Sentenced to six months for attending illegal gatherings

A criminal court in Manama sentenced him to six months in prison for attending illegal gatherings, in relation to a gathering on 24 January 2012 that, according to OMCT, he did not attend.

29 September 2013

Conviction

Sentenced to 15 years in the 14 February Coalition case

The Fourth Criminal Court sentenced him to 15 years in prison for establishing a group aiming to disable the constitution, under Article 6 of the Terrorism Act, in a mass trial of 50 defendants. At a hearing he had shown the court marks of torture on his back.

29 May 2014

Appeal: judgment upheld

Court of Appeal upholds 15-year sentence

The Court of Appeal upheld the 15-year sentence. OMCT stated that the conviction rested on confessions obtained under torture.

2016

Conviction

Convicted in the Jau Prison protest case with a collective fine

He was among 57 defendants convicted over the 2015 protests in Jau Prison, whose sentences were increased and who were collectively fined 507,187.97 Bahraini dinars (about US$1.35 million). His individual share was about US$23,700. His convictions between 2013 and 2016 totalled 25 years and six months in prison.

14 November 2022

Other act

UN Working Group finds his detention arbitrary

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted Opinion No. 65/2022, finding his detention arbitrary because it was linked to his peaceful exercise of fundamental rights and because his right to a fair trial was violated, and called for his immediate release.

8 April 2024

Release

Released under a royal pardon

He was released under a royal pardon, together with more than 1,500 other detainees, after more than 11 years in prison.

17 February 2025

Threats and intimidation

UN experts raise concern about reprisals after his release

UN Special Rapporteurs raised concerns about reprisals since his release, including repeated summonses by the Criminal Investigation Directorate, the loss of his job and the cutting of his housing allowance.

16 June 2026

Other act

Pardoned prisoners ask the Crown Prince to apply the pardon to the fines

He and other men pardoned in 2024 who still owed shares of the 2016 Jau Prison fine wrote to Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, asking that the pardon be recognised as covering the outstanding penalties and that enforcement that could return them to prison be halted. Human Rights Watch reports that 14 pardoned men signed the letter.

18 August 2026

Re-arrest

Re-arrested in a dawn raid over an unpaid fine

Plainclothes police arrested him at about 5:45 a.m. at his home without showing a warrant, and he was taken to East Riffa Police Station. He was told only that the arrest concerned a fine linked to one of his cases. Two days earlier, when he asked officials to document the amount owed, he had been told to approach the Public Prosecution and the sentence enforcement judge.

20 August 2026

Transfer between places of detention

Transferred to Jau Prison

He was moved from East Riffa Police Station to Jau Prison, where he remains held. Other former political prisoners are reportedly held over the same issue.

October 2026

Detention conditions and health

Still detained in Jau Prison over the fine

In October 2026 he spoke to Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy from detention, and the Gulf Centre for Human Rights' update of 20 October 2026 lists him as held in Jau Prison. The FIDH and OMCT Observatory issued an urgent appeal for his release on 17 September 2026. No court hearing, settlement or release has been reported.

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The full story

Update, 12 November 2026: Naji Fateel has been held in Jau Prison since August 2026, re-arrested over his unpaid share of a fine imposed in a 2016 case, although a royal pardon released him in April 2024. No hearing, settlement or release has been reported.

Background and Work

Naji Ali Hassan Fateel is a Bahraini human rights defender and a co-founder and board member of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights. According to Front Line Defenders, he documented human rights violations, advocated for monitoring mechanisms and promoted freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. His deprivation of liberty, as considered by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, began in 2007. Human Rights Watch reported in July 2008 that the High Criminal Court had sentenced him to five years in prison on 13 July 2008, one of 11 men convicted after unrest in December 2007, and that relatives said he and Hasan Abdelnabi had been deliberately placed with prisoners suffering from contagious illnesses. During the 2011 protests, Wikipedia records that messages calling for his killing circulated and that security forces searched his home.

The Arrest

On 2 May 2013 security officers in civilian clothes arrested him at dawn at his home in Bani Jamra without a warrant. OMCT reported that he was held incommunicado for three days at the Criminal Investigation Directorate, where he was reportedly tortured, including with electric shocks, simulated drowning and beatings. At a later hearing he showed the court marks on his back.

Detention Conditions and Health

Front Line Defenders, OMCT and Amnesty International recorded allegations of torture after his 2013 arrest. After his release in 2024, UN Special Rapporteurs raised concern on 17 February 2025 about reprisals, including repeated summonses by the Criminal Investigation Directorate, the loss of his job and the cutting of his housing allowance. He described the August 2026 arrest as intimidation. No information has been published on his health in Jau Prison since then.

Legal Proceedings

On 22 May 2013 a court in Manama sentenced him to six months for attending illegal gatherings, over a gathering that OMCT says he did not attend. On 29 September 2013 the Fourth Criminal Court sentenced him to 15 years in a mass trial of 50 defendants in the 14 February Coalition case, for establishing a group aiming to disable the constitution under Article 6 of the terrorism law. Amnesty International reported torture allegations in that trial, and the Court of Appeal upheld the 15-year sentence on 29 May 2014. In 2016 he was among 57 defendants convicted over protests inside Jau Prison in 2015. Their sentences were increased, and the court ordered them collectively to pay 507,187.97 Bahraini dinars, about US$1.35 million; his share is about US$23,700, according to the Gulf Centre for Human Rights. Human Rights First reports that the added 15 years were reduced to ten on appeal. His sentences between 2013 and 2016

totalled 25 years and six months.

He was released on 8 April 2024 under a royal pardon that covered more than 1,500 prisoners, after more than 11 years in prison. He understood the pardon to include the fines. On 16 June 2026 he and other pardoned men wrote to Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa asking that the pardon be recognised as covering the penalties. On 16 August 2026 officials contacted him about the fine. Two days later, at about 5:45 a.m. on 18 August 2026, plainclothes police arrested him at his home without a warrant and took him to East Riffa Police Station, where an officer told him the arrest concerned a fine. On 20 August 2026 he was transferred to Jau Prison. Human Rights Watch reports that at least nine pardoned men were re-arrested in July and August 2026, including 8 of the 33 men convicted in the 2016 case and pardoned in 2024; the Gulf Centre for Human Rights names Ali Sanqoor as held with him.

International Response

On 14 November 2022 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention adopted Opinion No. 65/2022, finding his detention arbitrary, calling for his immediate and unconditional release and compensation, and asking for an investigation into his torture allegations. Front Line Defenders, the Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Human Rights First and the FIDH and OMCT Observatory, which issued an urgent appeal on 17 September 2026, have called for his release. On 8 October 2026 Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy urged the authorities to recognise the effect of the 2024 pardon and stop re-imprisoning pardoned detainees.

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