

English transcript

# Jailed for a Tweet: Interview with Nabeel Rajab

Nabeel Rajab:

Repression is much worse than ever, and more people are in jail than 2 years ago. If you are not ruled by a democracy that respects all parties, that has a proper system, you never know what is going to happen tomorrow.

«VICE NEWS»

«BAHRAIN, AN INCONVENIENT UPRISING»

Journalist:

Since 2011 an uprising in the tiny Gulf state of Bahrain has been met with what Amnesty International calls a continuous downward spiral of repression. Protesters claim nightly rallies are met with police violence, teargas and live gunfire. The government claims reforms are on their way and the protesters are fueled by sectarianism.

Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain center for human rights and Bahrain's most famous dissident has been in the center of the uprising since it began. He's been arrested and claims to have been beaten by police. He was released last May, having served 2 years of a 3-year sentence.

Nabeel Rajab:

PRESIDENT BAHRAIN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The arrest is all about my Twitter account. Then I was arrested by masked men. I was sentenced for 3 years by court.

Journalist:

You must have thought like giving up?

Nabeel Rajab:

No, no, no. Even the British Embassy in Bahrain asked my lawyer if I can guarantee them I'll keep quiet they will work for my release.

Journalist:

But only if you promised to keep quiet?

Nabeel Rajab:

If I promised to keep quiet. I said no. I don't bargain the values and principles I'm fighting. We have now 4000, more or less, people behind bars, sentenced from 1 year to 120 years. Doctors, lawyers, academics behind bars. Many people were tortured to death. Today there is a law that you cannot criticize the king who has all the power in his hand. I could end up in jail for 7 years for doing so and there are people now who are behind bars for criticizing the king. You can't do that. The British government is totally behind the dictators, totally against our movement.

Journalist:

Can you describe what benefits Britain gets from supporting the dictatorship?

Nabeel Rajab:

The ruling family is guaranteeing them the interest. They can buy their silence by money. They need our petrol. They need us to buy their arms.

Journalist:

When I read that Saudi Arabia or Bahrain or other countries were buying all these fighters, jets and tanks, it never quite made sense to me, but you're saying that those sales buy the silence of the..

Nabeel Rajab:

I think they buy these airplanes for their kids to play with. Otherwise, what do they do with these airplanes? To silence the Western government.

Journalist:

The British government has been questioned about it and they've said they believe the government of Bahrain is committed to reform. What do you say to that?

Nabeel Rajab:

If you see what they promised, they always talked about reform. But if you see the reality, you'd see they sit back, day by day things are getting worse.

Journalist:

The things that the foreign officers said...sometimes your principles and your interests clash.

Nabeel Rajab:

There's always their interest in our region. It has got nothing to do with principles. How do you want the international community and public opinion to believe in what you say as supporting democracy when you're ignoring the struggle of this part of the world? You see people getting killed and you keep justifying that. That's the sad part of our revolution. A 100 years from today this will be a black history for this Western government. If you are not ruled by a democracy that respects all parties, that has a proper system, you never know what's going to happen tomorrow. I want to raise the awareness among the public because we are paying the price of their double standard.

Many people have been killed, thousands of people left the country, thousands of people are behind bars, but the revolution did not stop.

«A FEW WEEKS AFTER WE INTERVIEWED HIM, NABEEL RAJAB WAS AGAIN ARRESTED, ACCUSED OF INSULTING THE BAHRAINI GOVERNMENT VIA SOCIAL MEDIA. IF CONVICTED HE COULD FACE ANOTHER THREE YEARS IN PRISON»

Journalist:

So as soon as they got anywhere near the police station, 2 or 3 riot vans came forward and fired canisters of teargas. Everyone ran straight away but still it's burning in the eyes, in the throat, in the nose. And this is happening every night for the last 3 years.

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