

**SUBJECT: OPEN LETTER TO THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN – FREE ALL PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE
in the Kingdom of Bahrain**

We, the undersigned, a group of international organisations and human rights activists, are writing to request the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience in the Kingdom of Bahrain in the aftermath of the 2011 popular uprising. High profile opposition leaders and other prisoners of conscience are currently unjustly languishing in the prisons of Bahrain, all serving various terms from five (5) years to life imprisonment.

They have been charged under laws which were conveniently applied to restrict basic freedoms and criminalise opposition to government. Their trials have lacked due process and their indictments were a worrying example of severe encroachments and infringements on human rights. Majority were subjected to military trials and later retried in civilian courts. All were severely plagued with deficiencies throughout and lacked the basic evidentiary pillars of the crimes in question.

The glaring shortcomings in the judicial system in which all prisoners of conscience were tried have been the subject of widespread international condemnation which we previously joined.

We are concerned that the Government of Bahrain is not meeting its international obligations and confirmations of implementing the recommendations by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) Report asserting the status of political prisoners. In addition, the government is not meeting the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) along with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, persistently failing in complying with its aforementioned obligations.

Legal system deficiencies has further amalgamated the plight of prisoners of conscience and has allowed the targeting of such individuals, who continue to be arrested, imprisoned, tortured, prosecuted and/or harassed with impunity for violators. Additionally, Government reform initiatives and human rights institutions have significantly failed to advocate for the rights of these prisoners, often aiding in the whitewashing of such glaring breaches.

We also note that some of the prisoners of conscience have already served 75% of their respective terms since their arrest in 2011:

No.	Name	Profession	Sentence
1	Mr. Ebrahim Sharif	Economics & Financial Analyst	5 years
2	Mr. Salah Al Khawaja	Social Consultant	5 years
3	Mr. Mahdi Abu Deeb	Curricula specialist - Educator	5 years
4	Shaikh Moh'd Ali Almahfoodh	Cleric	5 years
5	Dr. Ali Al Ekri*	Orthopaedic Consultant	5 years

(*) Dr. Ali Al Ekri will complete 75% of his sentence in December 10, 2015

In accordance with Articles 349 and 350 of the Bahraini Criminal Procedures Law and Article 81 of the Reform and Rehabilitation Facility Law, the prisoners shall have the right of early release after completion of the abovementioned term subject to the orders of the enforcement judge on recommendations of the Director of the relevant Reform and Rehabilitation Facility. Accordingly, we urge the Government of Bahrain to process their release immediately and without further delay.

In this letter, we set out specific immediate and proactive steps to ensure that all prisoners of conscience do not continue to suffer as a consequence of the Government's persistent failures, to increase transparency, end the era of politically motivated arrests and to create a democratic environment where peaceful dissent is encouraged and protected instead of criminalised.

Recommendations

1. Release all prisoners of conscience and ensure that all are formally recognised under the definition of prisoners of conscience. We reject engagement in dilatory measures including persistent questioning of such well-established definitions.
2. Drop all convictions for the released prisoners of conscience
3. Clear their criminal record to reinstate legal dignity and to mitigate the effects of any discrimination post release.
4. Commit to full financial support for rehabilitation, restitution and/or just compensation to all released prisoners consistent with international standards and obligations.
5. Allow the visit of the Special Rapporteur on Torture to conduct independent investigation into allegations and to discharge his mandate with respect to ensuring compliance with anti-torture practices.
6. Seek full assistance in eliminating torture and inhuman treatment at all levels and allow international independent observers to monitor the progress of reform and treatment of prisoners.

We call on your Government to act promptly and responsibly in the release of all prisoners of conscience. We urge you to commence the full and transparent reform of all your agencies to ensure compliance with the highest international standards of human rights

Yours sincerely,



UK

Arab Commission for Human Rights



**National Tertiary
Education Union**

Australia



University and College Union

UK



Läraryrörbundet

Swedish Teacher's Union

NASUWT
The Teachers' Union
UK



International
Council
Supporting
Fair Trial and HR

مركز الحق الانساني (اليمن - عدن)
Human Right Center (Yemen, Aden)



Ana Gomes
Member of
European Parliament



Mark Durkan
Member of
British Parliament



Baroness (Ruth) Lister
of Burtersett
Member of British Parliament