



Federica Mogherini

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission

Brussels, 03 December 2014

**Subject: EU relations with Bahrain**

Dear Federica,

We write to you following the recent elections in Bahrain, which were boycotted by the Shia population and political opposition due to lack of conditions to hold free and fair elections in the country.

In that regard, we are deeply concerned with the statement of 16 October 2014 from the EU Member States' Ambassadors present in Bahrain condemning the National Democratic Opposition's decision not to take part in the coming elections. That position was also conveyed by the EEAS Spokesperson on its statement of 30/11/2014.

The opposition in Bahrain has been working under highly repressive conditions to push for a serious dialogue and genuine reforms towards democratic rule in Bahrain, which has not happened yet. By choosing to publically disapprove of their decision to boycott the elections, with no condemnation or even mention to the several abuses committed by the ruling power in the country, these representatives of the EU fail to address what should be the priority - the defence of fundamental human rights and the promotion of democratic reforms.

Indeed, systematic violations continue to be reported, including the detention of the human rights activists Zainab Alkhawaja and Nabeel Rajab, shortly after his release and his intervention at the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights. On Monday, Maryam al-Khawaja was sentenced in absentia to a year in prison for assaulting two policewomen. In her public statement, al-Khawaja clarifies that her absence in trial is due to the lack of independence and due process in the Bahrain judiciary system.

All 28 EU Member States have signed the Joint Statement adopted on the UN Human Rights Council of June this year, expressing their concern about the human rights situation in Bahrain.

The European Union, however, has never explicitly called upon the Government of Bahrain to release political prisoners and human rights defenders imprisoned, neither has it adopted a strategy to improve the human rights situation in Bahrain in a visible manner, at a time when, it seems, "quiet diplomacy" efforts have failed to produce any results.



# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

We encourage you, therefore, to include this question in your dialogue with the Member States and to take action to re-focus the priorities of the EU in its relations with Bahrain, according to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.

Best regards,

Alyn Smith (Greens/EFA)

Ana Gomes (S&D)

Heidi Hautala (Greens/EFA)