



Ms. Federica Mogherini

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

European External Action Service

1046 Brussels

Belgium

19 December 2016

Dear Ms. Mogherini,

We are writing to urge you to take action on the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain, particularly the continued imprisonment of human rights defenders and opposition politicians. We ask you to persist in engaging with the Bahraini government in order to secure their release.

Particular concern has been raised regarding the conditions of political activists Dr. Abduljalil al-Singace and Hassan Mushaima, who have been imprisoned since 2011. Dr. Singace has been subject to torture, ill-treatment and solitary confinement. Both suffer from deteriorating health conditions and have been denied access to medical care.

In the meantime, prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Nabeel Rajab, remains in prison after a prolonged period of solitary confinement, has had to be taken to hospital for the third time with an irregular heart-beat. He has been put on trial for peaceful comments he posted on Twitter and faces up to 15 years in prison. His trial was postponed for the fifth time at the on 15 December, while the Bahraini government seeks to examine his twitter account more thoroughly and the verdict in his trial is scheduled for 28 December. Human rights groups have emphasised that Nabeel Rajab's trial is also a trial of Bahrain's future.

This comes amid the intensified crackdown on civil society and political opposition in Bahrain as of mid-2016. The main opposition party Al-Wefaq has been dissolved by Bahraini authorities, with the Secretary General Sheikh Ali Salman sentenced to four years in prison for peaceful speeches he made, a sentence which was later extended to nine years. He too is a prisoner of conscience and his sentence was upheld on appeal trial on 12 December. Fadhel Abbas Mahdi Mohamed, former Secretary General of another opposition party, Al-Wahdawi, was sentenced to three years in prison for his party's statements criticising the war in Yemen.

The Ombudsman and the Special Investigations Unit, institutions created to investigate alleged human rights violations and ensure accountability, have achieved some successes but these have been limited. Both institutions have fallen short of investigating violations in a transparent, prompt, thorough and effective manner, ultimately not delivering genuine accountability or acting as a deterrent and thereby allowing a culture of impunity to prevail.

In the meantime, Bahraini authorities have continued the practice of stripping the citizenship of dissidents, activists and others, often leaving them stateless. The authorities have also imposed travel bans on scores of human rights defenders including those who were attempting to participate in the UN Human Rights Council sessions in June and September this year.

In the complex geo-political environment we find ourselves in, it is crucial that the EU perseveres with its role as a promoter and defender of human rights. We therefore request that the EEAS and Member States raise these human rights abuses with the Bahraini authorities with urgency. We look forward to hearing back from you on the matter.

Many thanks,

Signed MEPs:

Julie Ward

Jean Lambert

Ana Gomes

Jude Kirton-Darling

Bart Staes

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