

Joint MEP Statement

Ahead of upcoming EU-GCC Ministerial meeting, taking place in Bahrain on 30th June, we call on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, in coordination with the 27 EU Member States, to actively and publicly press for the immediate and unconditional release of all individuals in Bahrain who have been imprisoned solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.

On 7 January 2013, a Bahrain court of cassation upheld the convictions against 13 individuals, including life sentences, for their involvement in anti-government protests in 2011. The repression has continued over the last year with the imprisonment of prominent activists and human rights defenders such as Nabeel Rajab, Zainab Al-Khawaja, Ibrahim Sharif and Naji Fateel. Three of those imprisoned – including Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja – are EU citizens.

In a resolution adopted in January 2013, the European Parliament called on the High Representative to work together with EU Member States and “actively push for the release of the imprisoned activists prior to the EU-GCC ministerial meeting”. Since this resolution was adopted, it’s unclear what has been done by the EU to secure the release of those detained. We note the fact that the High Representative has to date not explicitly called for the release of those wrongfully imprisoned.

*With the adoption of the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy in June 2012, the EU pledged to throw its “full weight behind advocates of liberty, democracy, and human rights throughout the world”. **We therefore expect the High Representative and EU Member States do all in their power to secure the release of those individuals who have been imprisoned solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly in Bahrain.** The upcoming visit by the High representative and EU Member States representatives to Bahrain is a litmus test for the EU to demonstrate its commitment to implementing the strong human rights pledges made exactly one year ago.*

Edward McMillan-Scott (ALDE), Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for Democracy and Human Rights

Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/EFA), Chair of the European Parliament’s Subcommittee on Human Rights

Ana Gomes (S&D)

Marietje Schaake (ALDE)

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