



Federica Mogherini,
European External Action Service
1046 Brussels
Belgium

April 30th 2015, Brussels

Dear HR/VP Federica Mogherini,

We are writing to you to express our deep concern over continuing human rights violations in Bahrain, and namely the repeated arrests of Nabeel Rajab, prominent human rights defender and President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR). Mr. Rajab was recently arrested on April 2nd for "disseminating false or malicious news, statements or rumours in time of war" and for "insulting a statutory body." We demand that strong and urgent action is taken by the EU to pressure the Bahraini government for his immediate and unconditional release, and revocation of his travel ban. Likewise the Bahraini government must release all political prisoners and cease all human rights violations. We reiterate the call of the European Parliament in its Resolution on Bahrain October 12th 2013, and note with concern the lack of action by the EEAS on this so far.

Nabeel Rajab has faced continuous judicial harassment and arbitrary detention since 2012. He served two years of detention from 2012 to 2014. In October 2014, he was arrested again. Repeated international calls by international leaders and human rights organisations secured his release and a reduction of his sentence. There is scope for further intensified international pressure for his case to be dropped altogether.

Since his arrest on April 2nd, Nabeel has spent considerable time in solitary confinement. In an opinion piece that he published in the Huffington Post about his experience in Jaw prison, Nabeel stated that "Prisoners have rights and prisons should be centres of rehabilitation. In Bahrain, inmates are punished for being inmates, and punished collectively. Torture is a crime against humanity, yet it is a constant feature in Jaw."

Nabeel faces up to 10 years in prison, and is currently facing another trial for a tweet he posted in September 2014. His appeal for this 6 months sentence was scheduled for April 15th. It however took place on April 5th and was then postponed to May 4th.

The right to freedom of expression is universal and internationally guaranteed. We would like to express our commitment to the international campaign for Nabeel's release, as well as all Bahraini political prisoners, notably the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), and the European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, in reference to their letter to you from April 7th. As member of the international community, Bahrain must hold basic and fundamental human rights norms and allow for democratic opposition and debate in the country. We believe the EU should be at the forefront of international efforts to protect human rights defenders, and fight against gross human rights violations.

We therefore ask that the European Union take action to apply pressure on the Bahraini government to move it to take the following measures:

- Cease harassment against civil society and human rights defenders, including at the judicial level, and immediately release and drop charges against human rights defenders and other prisoners of conscience detained for merely exercising legitimate rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association.
 - Specific cases: Hussain Jawad; Nabeel Rajab; Ibrahim Al-Dimistani; Mahdi Abu Deeb; Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Naji Fateel
- Put an immediate end to all forms of harassment of political societies, engage in credible democratic reforms and a meaningful and inclusive national dialogue
 - Specific case: Release Sheikh Al Salman immediately and drop all charges
- Ensure effective, prompt and independent investigation into all human rights violations committed since 2011, and ensure the victims' right to effective remedy according to international standards.
 - Specific case: Investigate allegations of torture against Hussain Jawad in February 2015.
- Restore citizenship to all citizens who were unfairly stripped of their citizenship without recourse to due process in law, halt the policy of citizenship revocation used as a punishment against critics and dissidents practicing their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and put the legislative framework in accordance with international law.
- Effectively implement BICI and UPR recommendations, as well as other unimplemented UN mechanisms' recommendations such as the 2006 CAT and CERD recommendations and those issued by international NGOs.
- Cooperate with UN Special Procedures - in particular the Special Rapporteur on torture but also on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, on the independence of judges and lawyers and on the situation of human rights defenders - and allow the previously planned visits.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol of the Convention Against Torture, the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the Death Penalty, the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

We would be grateful to receive information on what action you have taken and intend to take to secure Nabeel's unconditional release, and what pressure is to be exerted on Bahrain to comply with the human rights norms outlined above.

Yours sincerely,

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Members of the European Parliament.