



Ms. Federica Mogherini  
High Representative for the Union Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and  
Vice President of the European Commission  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi /Wetstraat 200  
B-1049 Brussels

Brussels, 23 October 2017

**CONCERN: MEPs CALL FOR END TO ARBITRARY DETENTION AND TORTURE OF UK-BASED  
ACTIVIST'S FAMILY DETAINED IN BAHRAIN**

Dear High Representative Mogherini,

The European Parliament is seriously concerned about the Bahraini authorities' ongoing targeting and intimidation of UK-based human rights defender, Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, and his family, which includes arbitrary arrest, inhumane treatment, torture and death threats in retribution for his work. His brother-in-law, mother-in-law, and cousin have been detained and presented with fabricated terrorism charges, based largely on coerced confessions and "confidential sources".

The European Union has long been committed to supporting human rights defenders, whom the [EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders](#) describe as our "natural and indispensable allies in the promotion of human rights and democratisation in their respective countries". The [European Parliament resolution of 17 June 2010](#) stresses that "human rights defenders all over the world are crucial actors when it comes to the protection and promotion of basic human rights". The resolution further condemns the human rights violations they face, as well as the harassment of the "immediate family members of human rights defenders, (including their children), and their other relatives, so as to prevent them from continuing their activities".

In March 2017, as a retaliation to Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei's human rights activity, Bahraini security forces arrested his mother-in-law, Hajer Mansoor Hassan, 49, brother-in-law, Sayed Nizar Alwadaei, 18, and cousin, Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor, 29. After days of detention without official charge, officers accused the three individuals of planting "fake bombs" in January 2017. All three [were](#) reportedly tortured during their interrogations, which had no lawyers present, and claimed that security officers coerced them into confessing. They were also interrogated about Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei's activities in the UK. We are particularly concerned that despite the prosecution's lack of forensic evidence linking them to the alleged crimes, the three individuals remain in detention without bail. It is feared they will be sentenced on 30 October based on coerced confessions. Hajer Mansoor Hassan is currently being held in Isa Town Prison while Sayed Nizar and Mahmood Marzooq have been detained in Dry Dock Prison.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei is the Director of Advocacy at the London-based [Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy \(BIRD\)](#) and a prominent human rights defender. He fled to Britain in 2012 after he



was tortured and served six months in prison for taking part in demonstrations against the government in 2011. In January 2015, as punishment for his ongoing human rights activism, he was among a group of [72 Bahrainis](#) whose citizenship the authorities revoked, rendering him stateless.

In March 2017, [Human Rights Watch described](#) the detention of Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei's in-laws as an apparent "*campaign of retribution in response to his human rights work*", following on from the detention of his wife the previous year. On 26 October 2016, Mr Alwadaei's wife, Duaa Alwadaei, and infant son [were](#) detained, ill-treated and interrogated at Bahrain Airport after Mr Alwadaei [attended](#) a protest against the King of Bahrain's visit to London earlier that day. During the interrogation, which lasted seven hours, an officer asked Mrs Alwadaei: "*Where shall I go first, shall I go to his family or your family?*" They were only able to leave following intense international pressure and support particularly from the US Embassy in light of his son's US citizenship. On their return to London in November 2016, the Bahrain Embassy in London [announced](#) that Duaa Alwadaei had been charged with assaulting a police officer. The Embassy said Mrs Alwadaei's detention was based on Mr Alwadaei's "*history of being involved in and supporting terrorist acts*". He has never been presented with terrorism-related charges.

We, Members of the European Parliament, share the concerns raised by the [six experts from the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights \(OHCHR\)](#) on the allegations of arbitrary arrest, torture and ill-treatment of Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei's mother-in-law, brother-in-law and cousin, and the lack of due process in the criminal proceedings against them. We agree with the experts at [Amnesty International](#) that the detention of Mr Alwadaei's in-laws is arbitrary and represents a clear "*attempt to force him to halt his peaceful activities and muzzle him from afar*". The UN experts expressed "*grave concern*" that the actions were intended to "*intimidate and impair the human rights activities*" of Mr Alwadaei. They also note "*significant grounds*" to assume the three individuals may be subjected to further ill-treatment while in detention. We condemn the targeting of Mr Alwadaei's family in retaliation to his cooperation with international human rights mechanisms, including his engagement with the European Parliament.

Despite calls from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,<sup>1</sup> UN Special Rapporteurs,<sup>2</sup> and the European Parliament,<sup>3</sup> the Bahraini authorities have dramatically intensified their campaign to silence dissenting voices, including those abroad. Between June 2016 and June 2017, at least 169 government critics or their relatives [were arrested, tortured, threatened or banned](#) from travel by the authorities. We reiterate here our grave concerns about the heightened crackdown on human rights defenders, political opposition, and civil society actors.

In light of the above, we therefore request that you and the European Union and its Member States urge the Government of Bahrain both publicly and privately to:

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<sup>1</sup> See notably, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [High Commissioner for Human Rights on the activities of his Office and recent human rights developments](#), 8 March 2017; [Zeid calls for investigation of protestor deaths in Bahrain](#), 2 June 2017.

<sup>2</sup> See notably, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, [Bahrain must end worsening human rights clampdown, UN experts say](#), 16 June 2017; [UN experts urge Bahrain to investigate reports of torture and ill-treatment of rights defender Ebtisam Alsaeg](#), 18 July 2017.

<sup>3</sup> See notably, the [European Parliament resolution of 16 February 2017](#) on executions Kuwait and Bahrain and the resolution of [7 July 2016 on Bahrain](#).



- put an end to the continuing harassment and targeting of the family of human rights activist Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei;
- immediately release Sayed Nizar Alwadaei, Hajer Mansoor Hassan and Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor;
- drop the charges against them as they are based on “confessions” extracted as a result of torture and other ill-treatment;
- ensure a full investigation and prosecution in relation to the reported cases of torture and ill-treatment of Sayed Nizar Alwadaei, Hajer Mansoor Hassan and Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor.

We ask the European Union and its member states to observe and attend the trial of these three individuals, the next hearing of which is 30 October. We further urge you to publicly condemn all acts of intimidation of dissent, including those abroad, and to call for the release and the protection of all human rights defenders and their relatives.

We look forward to hearing from you on these issues and stand ready to provide any further information you may require.

Many thanks,

*Julie Ward, S&D*

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*Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, ALDE*

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