



Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

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Secretary of State Nominee John Kerry Commits to Promoting Human Rights in U.S. Foreign Policy at Confirmation Hearing

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) applauds Senator John Kerry, who was nominated by President Obama to become the next Secretary of State, for his stated commitment to uphold human rights in U.S. foreign policy during his confirmation hearing on Thursday. ADHRB is disappointed, however, that the issue of ongoing human rights abuses in Bahrain—a strong U.S. ally in the Gulf region—was not raised during the hearing.

In response to questioning by members of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Kerry promised that, if confirmed, he would “not hesitate” to address concerns regarding human rights violations with U.S. allies. Since late 2011, the United States has been reluctant to openly criticize its Gulf ally, Bahrain, for its ongoing human rights violations, which include the suppression of free speech and assembly, arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and opposition leaders, torture by law enforcement officials, and excessive use of force against protesters and bystanders.

“During his time as Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman, Senator Kerry urged the Government of Bahrain to hold human rights violators accountable, and to implement much-needed reforms, [calling](#) them ‘critical for the healing process,’” said ADHRB Director Husain Abdulla. “As Secretary of State, we hope Mr. Kerry will be bold in addressing human rights violations with the Government of Bahrain, and that he will pressure that government—publicly, if necessary—to implement these critical reforms.”

As the host country to the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet, the United States has a vital interest in ensuring that these ongoing abuses do not contribute to a diminished security situation in Bahrain. Already, it is [commonly accepted](#) that the lack of pushback from the United States and other members of the international community has led the Government of Bahrain to become bolder in its repression of dissent. Continued or worsening repression could pose a threat to the security situation in the country, and consequently, to the presence of the U.S. Fifth Fleet.

“Senator Kerry told committee members that the United States has a ‘fundamental obligation’ to ‘keep faith with those who are struggling in different parts of the world,’” noted Abdulla. “Unfortunately, many in Bahrain are losing faith in the United States. They do not feel supported in their aspirations for greater political, social, and economic freedoms. We hope that this will change under Mr. Kerry’s leadership as the next Secretary of State.”