

April 10, 2013

Dear driver:

In light of your participation in the upcoming Formula One race in Bahrain, we are writing to bring your attention to the ongoing human rights abuses and the more than one dozen prisoners of conscience currently detained in Bahrain, and to ask you to publicly support the Bahraini people in their peaceful calls for justice, freedom, and basic human rights.

As you may know, in February 2011, thousands of Bahraini protestors took to the streets to peacefully call for political reforms, taking part in a broader movement for democracy and dignity in the Middle East. In response, the Bahrain government began a concerted effort to repress demonstrators, arrest and detain activists, and persecute doctors who attempted to treat wounded protesters. Detainees were tortured in detention and forced to make false confessions. Hundreds were accused of “crimes” for having exercised their rights to free speech and assembly, and were subsequently subjected to unfair trials before military courts. Many of the most prominent and outspoken voices for reform and human rights were condemned to punishments as severe as life in prison.

More than two years later, these voices for reform have had their prison sentences upheld by Bahrain’s highest court and remain imprisoned. Meanwhile, stability and security in the country continues to deteriorate as peaceful protesters are arbitrarily arrested and detained, denied their due process rights, and subjected to brutal force by police. Although Bahrain’s prisoners of conscience have been denied their freedom, their morale is lifted and spirits are strengthened by messages from people around the world supporting Bahrainis “in their struggle to build [a future of justice, freedom, democracy, and human rights.](#)”

We recognize the importance of the Formula One race in the sport of racing, and we respect your decision to participate in the race. But as a public figure, we urge you to pledge your support for a free and just Bahrain, as public figures have done in support of [this](#) and [other human rights issues](#) in the past. Such support could be expressed during an interview at the Bahrain Grand Prix, in a statement published on your website, or in a Tweet. You could also publicly dedicate your race to one of the many prisoners of conscience held under lock and key for exercising their rights to free speech, expression, association, and assembly (a table with further details on these prisoners and the charges they face is attached to this letter).

In the more than two years since the outbreak of peaceful protests in Bahrain, the people of Bahrain have faced unimaginable hardship in petitioning their government for greater freedoms. Between the choice of remaining silent or speaking out, we hope you will make the right decision by showing your support for democracy and human rights in Bahrain.

Sincerely,

Americans for Democracy



& Human Rights in Bahrain



human rights *first*

Just
Foreign
Policy



If you have any questions regarding this letter or what you can do to help, please contact any of the following individuals:

Ms. Colleen Costello (Senior Advocacy Associate, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain): ccostello@adhrb.org, +1-202-650-5530, ext. 1832.

Ms. Michelle Kissenkoetter (Representative to the United Nations, International Federation for Human Rights): mk@fidh.org, +1-646-465-8530.

Mr. Brian Dooley (Director of the Human Rights Defenders Program, Human Rights First): dooleyb@humanrightsfirst.org.

Bahrain's Prisoners of Conscience

Name	Affiliation	Statements by human rights groups on charges against the prisoners	Sentence
Mahdi Abu Deeb	President of the Bahrain Teachers' Association	Mahdi Abu Deeb was given 10 years in prison...for peacefully expressing [his] views. " (link) "According to Mahdi, he was beaten when he was arrested, handcuffed, blindfolded and verbally abused...Their trial was a farce, falling far short of any recognizable international legal standards." (link)	5 years (reduced from 10)
Nabeel Rajab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights • President of the Gulf Center for Human Rights • Deputy Secretary General of the International Federation for Human Rights • Advisory Committee member of Human Rights Watch's Middle East Division 	"Mr. Rajab has been targeted for his tireless efforts at highlighting gross human rights violations in Bahrain." (link) "Rajab's activities do not warrant any prison time... By persisting in the practice of imprisoning citizens simply for exercising their right to gather peacefully and express their opinions , the Bahraini regime is once again demonstrating the hollowness of last year's promised reforms." (link) "Nabeel Rajab should be immediately released from prison. Human Rights First considers his conviction to be politically-motivated and a denial of his freedom of expression. He should be released immediately and the conviction quashed. He should be allowed to go about his activities as a human rights defender without being harassed or jailed by the authorities." (link)	2 years (reduced from 3)
Abdulhadi al-Khawaja	Co-founder of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights	"Al Khawaja was sentenced to life in prison after being arrested, tortured and given an unfair trial in a military court after he took part in the pro-democracy protest . He is best known internationally for his human rights activism (including as a staff member for Front Line Defenders, a human rights NGO based in Dublin)." (link)	Life in prison
Hassan Mushaima	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretary-General of the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy, an opposition political group • Founding member of Al Wefaq, an opposition political group 	"These trials [of Mushaima and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed." (link) These dissidents were "convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released." (link)	Life in prison

Abdulwahab Hussain	Founding member of Al Wafaq	“These trials [of Hussain and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)	Life in prison
Abduljalil al-Singace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor of Engineering at the University of Bahrain • Director of the Human Rights Bureau of the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy 	“These trials [of Singace and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)	Life in prison
Sheikh Mohammad Habib al-Miqdad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent religious leader • President of al-Zahraa Society for Orphans 	“These trials [of Miqdad and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)	Life in prison
Abduljalil al-Miqdad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prominent political leader • Founder of Al Wafa, an opposition political group 	“These trials [of Miqdad and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)	Life in prison
Saeed Mirza al-Nouri	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious cleric • Member of Al Wafa 	“These trials [of Nouri and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)	Life in prison
Mohammad Hassan Jawwad	Human rights activist	“These trials [of Jawwad and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views . All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)	15 years

Mohammad Ali Ridha Ismail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political activist • Related to Abdulwahab Hussain 	<p>“These trials [of Ismail and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views. All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)</p>	15 years
Abdul Hadi Abdullah Hassan al-Mukhodher	Shia cleric	<p>“Today’s confirmation of jail sentences against 13 leading Bahraini dissidents [including Mukhodher] show the regime’s promises of reform are a hoax...The denial of the men’s appeals shows the regime has little intention to reform. Bahraini government claims that they are on the path to human rights progress appear to be a sham.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views. All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)</p>	15 years
Sheikh Abdullah Isa al-Mahroos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious leader • Vice President of al-Zahraa Society for Orphans 	<p>“These trials [of Mahroos and others] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views. All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)</p>	5 years
Ebrahim Sharif	President of the National Democratic Action Society (Wa'ad), an opposition political group	<p>“Today’s confirmation of jail sentences against 13 leading Bahraini dissidents [including Sharif] show the regime’s promises of reform are a hoax...The denial of the men’s appeals shows the regime has little intention to reform. Bahraini government claims that they are on the path to human rights progress appear to be a sham.” (link) The court “sentenced Sharif to five years’ imprisonment on various dubious charges that included “attempting to overthrow the regime.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views. All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)</p>	5 years
Salah Abdullah Hubail al-Khawaja	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Former member of Islamic Action Society (Amal) • Brother of Abdulhadi al-Khawaja 	<p>“These trials [of Khawaja] fall far below international standards of fairness and due process. The claims of torture by the defendants should be urgently investigated, and those held for peacefully expressing their views immediately freed.” (link) These dissidents were “convicted in politically-motivated trials after peacefully expressing their views. All should be immediately and unconditionally released.” (link)</p>	5 years