



# Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

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October 29, 2013

Mr. Andrew Messick  
IRONMAN World Headquarters  
2701 North Rocky Point Drive  
Suite 1250  
Tampa FL, 33607

Dear Mr. Messick,

We write to bring to your attention grave allegations of deeply unethical behavior, including defamation, arbitrary arrest, and torture, directed and [carried out](#) by Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al Khalifa and his brother Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al Khalifa, both members of the Bahraini Royal family and participants in the upcoming IRONMAN Florida Triathlon. Given the very serious allegations leveled against the participants and their well-documented participation in serious human rights violations, we feel that their participation in the IRONMAN Florida Triathlon will bring considerable negative attention to your organization and its many sponsors. As such, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) respectfully requests that the participation of Sheikhs Nasser and Khalid in this year's IRONMAN Florida Triathlon be denied.

In February 2011, thousands of Bahrainis took the streets to peacefully call for democracy, freedom, and political reforms as part of a broader movement in the Middle East. The authorities in Bahrain responded with a violent and brutal crackdown that resulted in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries, and thousands of arbitrary arrests.

Shortly after the crackdown, Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al-Khalifa—son of the King and IRONMAN Florida triathlete—was put in charge of a committee formed to arrest, detain, and punish the more than 150 members of the athletic community who participated in the protest. Sheikh Nasser's intent on pursuing retribution was unmistakable; in a public statement on national television, he [called for](#) "a wall to fall on [protesters'] heads ... even if they are an athlete." He also [stated](#) on his official twitter account that if it were up to him, he would sentence all of the athletes to life in prison.

[Following](#) Sheikh Nasser's calls for public retribution, dozens of athletes were arrested and reportedly subjected to torture and ill-treatment in custody, while many more were suspended

or barred by their clubs. Additionally, a public defamation campaign was launched by Bahrain's state television station, which encouraged viewers to publicly discredit, defame and slander the athletes on air.

Abuse and ill-treatment of protesters committed by Sheikh Nasser does not end with the athletes. Sheikh Nasser, and his brother Sheikh Khalid, have been [documented](#) on [numerous occasions](#) for their involvement in the torture and inhumane treatment of Bahraini citizens for the most minor associations with peaceful protests for political reform in the country.

Due to the well documented nature of Sheikhs Nasser and Khalid's human rights abuses, their [travels](#) often raise [controversy](#). Beyond the efforts raised to ban the royals from the Olympics in London, Bahraini and international human rights advocates protested the princes' involvement in the IRONMAN Berlin triathlon, where the two princes and their security services were involved in [threatening](#) and physically assaulting protesters.

Given the extensive human rights abuses committed by Sheikhs Nasser and Khalid, ADHRB is asking IRONMAN Florida to prohibit the sheikhs from participating in the event. It is our hope that IRONMAN Florida, along with its many generous sponsors, will choose to stand alongside the human rights defenders and active Bahraini-American community, many of whom reside in neighboring Alabama, in taking a stand against those who commit human rights violations.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Husain Abdulla', with a horizontal line underneath.

Husain Abdulla