



# Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

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## ADHRB Applauds TLHRC Defending Freedoms Hearing

WASHINGTON, DC – January 16, 2014 – Today, the [Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission](#) (TLHRC) held a [Defending Freedoms Hearing: Highlighting the Plight of Prisoners of Conscience around the World](#), which aimed to address the plight of human rights defenders who find themselves victims of their oppressive government. The hearing featured testimony from six witnesses, including [United States Commission on International Religious Freedom](#) (USCIRF) Chair Dr. Robert P. George and [Mr. Josh Colangelo-Bryan](#), Pro Bono Attorney on behalf of imprisoned Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) applauds the TLHRC for holding such a timely briefing and the statements by members of Congress calling for action to address the human rights situation in Bahrain.

“We commend the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for holding this timely and important hearing and are encouraged by the many mentions made by members of Congress and witnesses alike in support of human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience in Bahrain and around the world,” said ADHRB Director Husain Abdulla. “As we approach the three-year anniversary of the February 14 uprising in Bahrain, it is reassuring to know that the broader policy community in Washington has not forgotten those political prisoners who continue to struggle against oppression and tyranny.”

In his opening statement, [Representative Jim McGovern](#) (D-MA) reiterated his belief that charges leveled against [Nabeel Rajab](#) are politically motivated and in violation of his fundamental human rights. Representative McGovern called for Mr. Rajab’s immediate release, stating that such a move from the Government of Bahrain would signal that the government is committed to creating real and lasting reform in the country. Representative McGovern adopted Mr. Rajab as part of the TLHRC’s Defending Freedom’s Project, and has continued to advocate on his behalf. ADHRB strongly supports Rep. McGovern’s calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab.

United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Chair Dr. Robert P. George also criticized the behind-the-scenes diplomacy so often conducted by the U.S. government when addressing human rights concerns with strategic allies, recognizing that it can have the undesired effect of being viewed as tacit support for human rights violations, including in countries like Bahrain. Dr. George particularly highlighted the crackdown by the Government of Bahrain on 2011’s peaceful protests, the oppression of the majority Shia population and the continued detention of Nabeel Rajab.

“The remarks and testimony of both members of Congress and witnesses participating in this hearing serve as a reminder to those working towards human rights in Bahrain and around the world that they are not alone,” Abdulla said. “We urge the Government of Bahrain to acknowledge the concerns that were raised during this hearing and to act swiftly to bring about reform and an end to the culture of repression and impunity.”