



Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

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His Majesty, King Juan Carlos of Spain
Palacio de La Zarzuela
Carretera del Pardo s/n
28071 Madrid, Spain

Your Majesty,

I write to call your attention to the deplorable status of human rights in the Kingdom of Bahrain and to request that you raise the issues of human rights and democratic reforms during your upcoming visit to Bahrain to discuss economic and bilateral relations. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) specifically calls on you, as the leader of a democratic and constitutional monarchy which experienced its own period of autocracy and repression, to highlight the need for democratic and human rights for a stable and prosperous kingdom.

ADHRB recognizes and applauds Spain's previous efforts in raising such concerns; including through co-signing three joint statements at the United Nations (U.N.) Human Rights Council which raised serious concerns over the Bahraini government's continued regression in the state of human rights in the country. These statements, released in the wake of the mass protests and ensuing crackdown of February 2011, condemned ongoing human rights abuses, laws which greatly restricted citizens' basic rights, the lack of accountability for human rights violations, and Bahrain's failure to meaningfully implement the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) and its 2012 Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The statements also called on Bahrain to cooperate fully with the UN Special Procedures. In the time since Spain co-signed such statements, Bahrain has made no effort to correct these human rights deficiencies or to cooperate more fully with the various U.N. human rights mechanisms.

Most recently, King Hamad approved and enacted a series of legislative measures which broadened Bahraini terrorism laws to restrict many forms of political dissent, severely curtailing the rights of freedom of expression, assembly and the press. As a result, Bahrain's prisons have now swelled with approximately 3,800 political prisoners. Bahrain's own police ombudsman recently released a report documenting overcrowding in Bahrain's prisons, with cells often housing over two and half times the prisoners they were designed to hold. Many of these political prisoners, including children, have been systematically targeted with arbitrary arrest, abuse and ill-treatment, with some being subjected to torture. Such violations are carried out in an environment of impunity, as torturers and other human rights violators have faced few convictions. The few who have been convicted of abuse, torture and the death of prisoners and protestors have seen their prison sentences drastically reduced.

These continued abuses stand in stark contrast to the object and purpose of the recommendations of the BICI and Bahrain's 2012 UPR that the government accepted. Furthermore, such violations stand in



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direct contrast to the various international treaties and commitments Bahrain has made to comply with international standards for human rights. Bahrain has also refused to allow the United Nations Special Procedures access to the country to follow up on the growing number of complaints their offices continue to receive. Particularly concerning is the twice-canceled visit of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Mr. Juan Mendez.

Strong economic and bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Bahrain are at stake without significant and urgent reform. As an ally of the Kingdom of Bahrain, we call on you to engage frankly with the leading members of the al-Khalifa ruling family to raise your concerns over the severe restrictions on the political and human rights of Bahrain's citizens, and to call upon your experience in overseeing Spain's democratic reformation to encourage a comprehensive and collaborative path forward out of the current political and human rights crisis in Bahrain.

We thank you for your consideration and we look forward to your Majesty's continued commitment to human rights and democratic reform.

Sincerely,

Husain Abdulla

Executive Director, Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain