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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

*Wayne Marston*

Member of Parliament for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek

*Constituency*

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April 17th, 2015

Honourable Rob Nicholson  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Nicholson,

I write to you today about a very serious matter. Bahraini authorities have arrested the prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, apparently over his allegations on social media of torture in a Bahraini prison (basically, the government did not like his tweets). This is the second time in six months that authorities have arrested Rajab for criticizing the government.

Nabeel Rajab has an unusually impressive CV: he is the Deputy Secretary General of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and the Director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR).

According to Amnesty International, the Bahraini government is known to stifle and punish dissent and to curtail freedoms of expression, association and assembly. Security forces use excessive force to disperse protests, with at least two people dead so far. Opposition activists and prisoners of conscience are routinely imprisoned after unfair trials and the torture of detainees continues within a climate of impunity.

Said Boumedouha, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa deputy director was recently quoted as saying: "Where is the freedom in a country where peaceful activists, dissidents and opposition leaders are repeatedly rounded up and arbitrarily arrested simply for tweeting their opinions, and reading a poem can get you thrown in jail?"

As noted by Human Rights Watch, Mr. Rajab has been arrested solely for his human rights work. I therefore agree with HRW that he should be released immediately.

Minister, by the time you read this the Formula One Grand Prix will have taken place in Bahrain. Hosting this tournament is one of the ways in which the country has attempted to burnish its image on the international stage. It is therefore incumbent upon the international community to speak out on behalf of human rights, to let the Bahraini government know in no uncertain terms that its reputation will remain tarnished until such time as it releases opposition leaders such as Nabeel Rajab from prison and implements substantive human rights reforms.

Canada has long been a source of inspiration to the world in the field of human rights. I ask you, Minister, to please use the influence that Canada has and urge Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab immediately.

I thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wayne Marston". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Wayne Marston, MP  
NDP Critic for Human Rights