



HM Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa
Office of HM the King P.O.
Box 555 Rifa's Palace Kingdom of Bahrain

Brussels, 17 June 2020

Your Majesty,

As Members of the European Parliament, we are writing to express our deepest concern over the condition of inmates and detainees held in the Bahraini prison system.

We welcomed the news that on 17 March 2020 a total of 1,486 prisoners had been [released](#) from prison, yet the calculated move to [remain](#) prisoners of conscience incarcerated is wholly disheartening, leaving notable cases behind bars. In addition, the fact that the number of positive Coronavirus cases continues to rise ([19,013](#) cases as of 17 June) concerns us, as this disease could extend to the prison population and thus expose thousands to an avoidable risk of contraction.

The [release](#) of prominent human right defender, Mr. **Nabeel Rajab**, is a welcome relief. However, we are writing to you to express our deepest worry regarding the cases of multiple political prisoners who still remain incarcerated; among them, Mr. **Hassan Mushaima** and Mr. **Abdulwahab Husain**, the leaders of the opposition in Bahrain. We also are concerned about reports of lack of medical care to Professor, blogger, and human rights defender Dr. **Abduljalil Alsingace** and political prisoners **Shaikh Abdulla Isa Al-Mahroos** also known as **Shaikh Mirza Almahroos**. Some other important political prisoners include **Shaikh Abduljalil Almiqdad** and **Shaikh Ali Salman**. Among these prisoners are leading and prominent human rights defender Mr. **Naji Fateel**, in addition to other imprisoned EU nationals Mr. **Abdulhadi Alkhawaja** and **Shaikh Mohammad Habib Almiqdad**.

Precautionary measures, such as social distancing, [are inherently impossible](#) in the overcrowded state of prisons, and many of these inmates require regular medical check-ups, routinely [denied](#) by penal authorities. While the government [claims](#) that new measures, such as regular testing, have been adopted to protect this vulnerable population, most prison staff have not [taken](#) sufficient steps to prevent an outbreak, like wearing protective gear, for the safety of inmates. This blatant, reckless failure of duty of care, could lead to a tragic loss of life inside prisons in Bahrain. Many political prisoners have complained to their families during their allotted phone calls that they are extremely worried about their health because prison-guards show no basic health education during times of normalcy, let alone now amid such a serious health crisis.

The international community, NGOs and individual States have been calling for the release of all political prisoners since the beginning of the crisis. On 25 March, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet [called](#) on the government to take urgent actions to protect the health and rights of prisoners, and this demand was passed by several NGOs. On 6 April, 21 NGOs including Amnesty



International, Human Rights Watch, European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain [raised](#) their concerns about the risk of contagion faced by inmates. More recently, similar claims [have been made](#) by prominent Shia religious leader of Bahrain, cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim.

While it is without question that Bahrain is facing immense pressure to tackle the Coronavirus health crisis, the High Representative for the European Union Mr Josep Borrell, on 5 May, [warned](#) that the crisis should not be a pretext to curtail human rights. For this, Bahrain must not forego the obligations owed towards its inmate population and should adopt further measures to protect prisoners from the risk of infection, such as releasing those political prisoners who should not even be imprisoned in the first place. They were arrested and prosecuted for peacefully exercising their basic rights, like freedom of expression, which is protected under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We, therefore, urge you to **abide by Bahrain's international human rights commitments**, to **release all political prisoners** and to **take all necessary measures to avoid the spread of the virus in Bahraini prisons and detention centers**.

Sincerely,

Marc Tarabella MEP
Alessandra Moretti MEP
Andrea Cozzolino MEP
Aurore Lalucq MEP
Brando Benifei MEP
Carmen Avram MEP
Dietmar Koster MEP
Eva Kaili MEP
Giuliano Pisapia MEP
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