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H.E. the Head of the European Union Delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman
Ambassador Michele Cervone d'Urso

Brussels, 21 November 2019

Dear Ambassador Cervone d'Urso,

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, are writing to express our concerns about the cruel and inhumane treatment of several high-profile prisoners in Bahrain, and to ask that you urge the Bahraini authorities to immediately allow those prisoners access to adequate medical care.

Human rights organisations and family members of the prisoners, whose detention is at least questionable in the first place, have reported that prison authorities are arbitrarily denying prisoners urgent medical care, refusing to refer them to specialists, failing to disclose medical examination results, and withholding medication as a form of punishment. Denying a prisoner needed medical care violates the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as the Mandela Rules.

Jau Prison

Medical negligence, delays, and arbitrary exercise of authority in Bahrain's prison system have been well-documented by the international human rights community. According to Amnesty International, in many cases, this has escalated to the level of intentional ill-treatment and permanent damage to the health of individuals suffering from injuries or grave chronic illnesses.

The cases of political leader Hassan Mushaima, 71, and academic and opposition figure Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, 57, are especially alarming. Both men have been arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment in relation to their peaceful role in the 2011 pro-democracy movement. Dr. Al-Singace has experienced abuse and torture while in prison, documented by several human rights organisations. The son of Mr. Mushaima has also expressed concern for his father who has remarked on his own torture in prison. Both men also sustained lasting injuries from the reported torture they endured. International human rights mechanisms have expressed concerns for their conditions, with Human Rights Watch condemning the degrading prison conditions they face and Amnesty International calling for their release.

Mr Mushaima suffers from a range of serious medical issues including diabetes, gout, heart and prostate problems, numbness and is in remission from lymphoma cancer, requiring PET scans every six months. According to his son, prison authorities insist on shackling Mr



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Mushaima during transfers to hospital appointments, but he has refused to go under these circumstances, considering it humiliating and unnecessary.

Mr Mushaima's case is not an isolated one. Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace, who suffers from post-polio syndrome and depends on a wheelchair, has also been denied access to medical appointments unless he subjects himself to humiliating treatment that violates the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The [UN](#)¹ has called for his release. Dozens of others have faced violations of their human rights in the Bahraini prison system, including medical negligence and restrictions on family visits and religious rights. Symptomatic cases of such violations include Ali AlHajee and Najji Fateel at Jau prison as well as Hajer Mansoor and Medina Ali at Isa Town Female Detention Centre.

The pattern of denial of medical care and religious discrimination prompted 600 prisoners to launch a hunger strike in both Dry Dock Pre-trial Detention Centre and Jau Prison in August 2019. Human rights defenders Ali AlHajee and Najji Fateel, joined the protest on 1 September 2019, demanding that prison authorities grant them access to medical treatment, family visitations and respect their religious rights without discrimination. While on 10 October 2019 other prisoners renewed their strike, Ali AlHajee continued his protest for 75 days and ended it on 14 November 2019 after being promised by prison authorities that he would be granted family visitation; his medical treatment was then resumed.

Isa Town Female Detention Centre

The situation in Isa Town Female Detention Centre closely resembles the one in Jau Prison, with reports of medical negligence and restrictions on family visits and religious rights being commonplace. In particular, political prisoners Hajer Mansoor Hassan and Medina Ali appear to be deliberately targeted by punitive restrictions. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has declared Ms Mansoor to be arbitrarily imprisoned in retaliation for the human rights activism of her son-in-law Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, while the UN Secretary-General and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders have expressed concern for both women and the reprisals they face in prison.

Notably, Isa Town Prison officials allegedly assaulted the two women in September 2018 after they were prevented from joining their fellow inmates in the commemoration of Ashura. These officials also targeted Ms Mansoor by deliberately denying her medical care for a lump in her breast and kidney stones. In addition to the denial of medical care, after the alleged assault took place, the prison administration imposed a physical barrier in the visitation room, which prevents any physical contact. The barrier contravenes Rule 23 of the UN Rules for the

¹ UN, Committee against Torture, Concluding observations on the second and third periodic reports of Bahrain, 29 May 2017.



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Európsky parlament Evropski parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

Treatment of Women Prisoners ([Bangkok Rules](#)²) which emphasise that any disciplinary sanctions for women prisoners “shall not include a prohibition of family contact, especially with children”.

Our Requests

While prison conditions continue to deteriorate, we regret that local oversight institutions such as the National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR) and the Ministry of Interior Ombudsman have done little to improve the situation. We express our regret that the EU Delegation’s Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the Gulf Cooperation Council Region was awarded in 2014 to the NIHR, when reality demonstrates that the NIHR works solely to justify human rights violations undertaken by the Bahraini Government.

We urge the Delegation of the EU in Riyadh to use its private and public channels to advocate on behalf of Hassan Mushaima, Dr. Albduljalil AlSingace, Ali AlHajee, Naji Fateel, Hajer Mansoor and Medina Ali to ensure that, while in prison, their fundamental rights are respected, while working to secure their release. In particular we request the following:

- A. That Hassan Mushaima and Abduljalil AlSingace are taken to their medical appointments without humiliating restraints that degrade their human dignity;
- B. That Ali AlHajee and Naji Fateel’s demands for medical treatment, family visitations and the end of religious discrimination are met;
- C. That Hajer Mansoor and Medina Ali are granted family visitations without the presence of any physical barrier, and authorities in Isa Town Prison immediately cease targeting them with reprisals;
- D. That EU Representation in Riyadh put pressure on the Bahraini authorities to hold officers from the Ministry of Interior who committed the heinous crimes of torture responsible for their actions by removing them from their posts and prosecuting their cases.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Horwood MEP (UK, Renew Europe)
Bernard Guetta MEP (France, Renew Europe)
Tudor Ciuhodaru MEP (Romania, S&D)
Izaskun Bilbao Barandica MEP (Spain, Renew Europe)
Karen Melchior MEP (Denmark, Renew Europe)
Ellie Chowns MEP (UK, Greens/EFA)

² UN General Assembly, A/RES/65/229, 21 December 2010, United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (the Bangkok Rules).



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CC:

H.E. Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the EU
Dr. Bahia Jawad Al Jishi

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President
of the European Commission
Ms Federica Mogherini