



16 July 2014

The Rt Honourable Philip Hammond MP
 Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
 Foreign and Commonwealth Office
 King Charles Street
 London
 SW1A 2AH

Dear Mr Hammond,

In your new capacity as Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, we hope to highlight our grave concern regarding the human rights situation in Bahrain and are hopeful of a fresh Foreign Office direction on human rights abuses in the country.

In November 2013, the Foreign Affairs Committee recommended that if there was no “*significant progress by the start of 2014*”, the FCO should “*designate Bahrain as a ‘country of concern’*” in its next Human Rights Report¹. Despite this recommendation, the FCO did not list Bahrain as a country of concern in the 2013 Human Rights and Democracy Report, but merely as a brief ‘case study’. The human rights report further declared that:

“The government of Bahrain continues to implement the recommendations set out in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) in 2011, and those set out in the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR)”².

In stark contrast to these conclusions by the FCO, the Foreign Affairs Committee raised implementation of the BICI as being “*disappointingly slow*” referring to this as evidence of Bahrain’s “*damaged international reputation*”³. In addition, a recent statement by UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Mr. Juan Mendez affirms that, contrary to the FCO’s report, the human rights situation in Bahrain is “*a situation that gives reason for grave concern*”. Mr. Mendez finds that “*the important recommendations made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry under the chairmanship of Professor Cherif Bassiouni are all in a state of non-implementation*”. Furthermore, he expresses concern that “*all the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review on Bahrain are as far as we can tell not being implemented by Bahrain at this point*”⁴.

¹ Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, The UK’s relations with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Fifth Report of Session 2013 - 2014, November 2013, p.13.

² Foreign and Commonwealth Office, “Country case study: Bahrain - progress on reform implementation” in *Human Rights and Democracy Report 2013*, April 2014.

³ Foreign Affairs Committee, House of Commons, The UK’s relations with Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, Fifth Report of Session 2013 - 2014, November 2013, p.19.

⁴ Mendez, Juan. American University, Washington College of Law.

<<https://media.wcl.american.edu/Mediasite/Play/e97125dd13674476a51b155e83d4551a1d>>

Particular areas of concern include, but are not limited to: the use of torture; the passing of death sentences on political dissidents in Bahrain; the erosion of basic principles of the rule of law, such as, the denial of access to lawyers and an independent judiciary; and limitations on people's freedom to expression – all of which are key priorities of the UK government's foreign affairs policy.

Although we applaud the UK co-sponsorship of the recent joint-statement signed by 47 member states on Bahrain during the 26th session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), we nevertheless urge the UK government to designate Bahrain as a 'country of concern' as recommended by the Foreign Affairs Committee in 2013⁵. We note that the UK co-sponsorship of the joint-statement at the HRC commits to a multilateral position on Bahrain that declares "serious concern" for the human rights situation in the country, a position that must also be expressed by the FCO on a bilateral level. We request consistency in the FCO's policy towards Bahrain and urge the UK to demand accountability from the government of Bahrain for the continuation of human rights abuses against political dissidents and human rights defenders that have been occurring since 2011.

We would welcome your comments on our appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Aman Network
Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI)
Article 19 (Bahrain)
Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF)
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR)
Bahrain Human Rights Observatory (BHRO)
Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)
Bahrain Justice and Development Movement (BJDM)
Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights (BYSHR)
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS)
Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE)
CIVICUS
CM Solutions
English PEN
European Bahraini Organisation for Human Rights (EBOHR)
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
Khiam Rehabilitation Center (KRC)
Lawyers Rights Watch Canada
Lawyers Without Borders
Maharat Foundation
PEN International
Privacy International
Redress
Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF)
Relieve
The Gulf Center for Human Rights
Tunisian Initiative for Freedom of Expression
Vivarta

⁵ UN Human Rights Council 26th Session, Joint Statement read out by Switzerland, <<http://birdbh.org/2014/06/un-human-rights-council-issue-joint-statement-on-bahrain-at-26th-session>>