

Briefing:
Bahrain - Government must engage with demands of hunger strikers;
European Union must abide by its own commitments and
the troubling case of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja

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Overview

In August 2023, prisoners at Bahrain’s Jau Prison undertook a hunger strike in protest against ongoing poor conditions. While it was underway, a senior European Union (EU) official visited the country. Neither the EU nor the Government of Bahrain (GoB) addressed the significance of the hunger strike nor the deeply-rooted human rights problems it represents. EU policy, as expressed by the official who visited in August 2023, appeared to contradict stated EU policy. The participation in the hunger strike by human rights defender, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, and the manner in which the authorities dealt with his case exemplify the human rights challenges faced by the GoB and EU, in the middle of which unfairly imprisoned persons, like Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja find themselves.

This briefing provides summary analysis of the human rights violations unfolding at the time of writing, as well as the GoB and EU’s failure to address these violations, including apparent contradictions in EU conduct. The text briefly assesses the case of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja as emblematic of the human rights failures by both the GoB and the EU. It sets out recommendations aimed at changing the current, downward human rights trajectory seen in Bahrain.

About this text

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Introduction

On the 20th day of a mass hunger strike, carried out by - *at the time of writing* - up to 800 people at Bahrain's largest prison, Jau Prison (also called Jau Central Prison or Jau Rehabilitation and Reform Centre), Salam for Democracy and Human Rights (SALAM DHR) urges the GoB to end its willful disregard of the complaints made by detainees and to address concerns repeatedly expressed by them. Tens or more of those undertaking a hunger strike have faced arbitrary arrest and unfair trials, including prisoners of conscience.

In light of the public conduct displayed during the 21 August 2023 visit to Bahrain by the [European Union's Special Representative for the Gulf region](#) (EUSR), Luigi De Maio, SALAM DHR also appeals to the European Union (EU) to abide by the commitments set out in the [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024](#). SALAM DHR calls on the EU's European External Action Service (EEAS) - its foreign service - to take public, concrete action to facilitate the advance of Bahrain's adherence to international human rights standards, including in respect to long term political prisoner, and Danish national, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja.¹

SALAM DHR also echoes calls to the EU and United Kingdom governments set out in the 24 August 2023 joint appeal, entitled [Rights groups urge EU officials to act as Bahrain hunger strike enters third week](#).

The August 2023 Jau Prison hunger strike

Reports indicate that a small number of convicted prisoners embarked upon a hunger strike on 7 August 2023 to protest against ongoing poor conditions in prison. Detainees, tens of whom likely faced unfair trials, had been seeking, amongst other demands:

- an end to lock-down policies requiring them to spend up to 23 hours of the day in their cells;
- the suspension of solitary confinement and increased time outside their cells;
- the opportunity for collective, or congregational prayer in Jau Prison's mosque;
- face-to-face meeting rights, without a glass screen;
- health care commensurate with the general population; and
- access to education.

On 18 August, the independent [Bahrain Center for Human Rights](#) also called on the GoB to act on calls to improve living conditions at Jau Prison. By 19 August 2023, a [report](#) indicated that up to 500 prisoners had joined the hunger strike. The hunger strike, [reportedly a proxy for longstanding, nationwide disquiet](#), also highlights the denial of access to medical services in the cases of Abduljalil Al Singace and Hassan Mushaima, who have been jailed since engaging in peaceful protests in 2011.

¹ In preparation of this text, SALAM DHR contacted the EEAS' human rights team by email and a press spokesperson via Twitter, or X. Neither responded.

Bahrain has an estimated population of 1.5 million, of which around 3800 are detained. The UK-based [Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy](#) (BIRD) estimates that 1200 are prisoners of conscience.

On 13 August, Bahrain's (government linked) [National Institute for Human Rights](#) (NIHR) issued a statement (in Arabic) which acknowledged the crisis but made only basic recommendations in relation to adherence to international human rights standards.²

Its timid appeal highlights its lack of independence and failure to adequately defend international human rights standards. More importantly, it belies the GoB's determination to continue violating international human rights standards.

The case of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja

On 9 August 2023, Danish-Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, 62, joined the hunger strikers, drinking only water. He [reportedly](#) protested "*his continued arbitrary detention and [...] denial of access to medical care*". On 11 August 2023, the authorities took him to the Bahrain Defence Force hospital, where he was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit in connection with heart irregularities. He had experienced irregular heart conditions on 28 February but it was not until 1 June that the authorities granted him an appointment with a cardiologist in a hospital outside of the prison.³ Following treatment and the reported stabilising of his condition, the authorities returned him to Jau Prison where he resumed his hunger strike.

The Bahraini authorities arbitrarily detained Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in 2011. He was one of the "Bahrain Thirteen", a group of leading figures in a (then) social movement comprising political and human rights activists. Following the GoB's violent suppression of demonstrations and an unprecedented wave of incarcerations, [the authorities unfairly tried them before a military court](#), the National Safety Court of Bahrain for "*organizing and managing a terrorist organization*," and "*attempt to overthrow the government by force*". The government [tortured and ill-treated](#) members of the Thirteen during their unfair legal proceedings. Following unfair trials, the courts convicted them to prison terms ranging from two years to life imprisonment.

Scores of human rights bodies, including [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), along with national parliamentarians and Members of the European Parliament (MEP) have repeatedly

² The NIHR stated, for example:

وتؤكد المؤسسة حرصها التام على حفظ حقوق الجميع، وعلى الأخص النزلاء في مراكز الإصلاح والتأهيل، أو مراكز الحبس الاحتياطي، بما يكفل لهم التمتع بحقوقهم المنصوص عليها في التشريعات الوطنية والمعايير الدولية ذات العلاقة [...]

That is, that the the NIHR stated: "*The institution affirms its full commitment to preserving the rights of all, especially inmates in correction and rehabilitation centers, or pre-trial detention centers, in a way that guarantees them the enjoyment of their rights stipulated in national legislation and relevant international standards [...].*"

³ According to [Amnesty International](#), the cardiologist at Salmaniya hospital did not "*have access to his medical file nor the necessary equipment to conduct a proper examination, and stated that Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja needed an X-ray and specialized medical monitoring in hospital for several days, which the prison authorities refused to grant.*"

decried their - arbitrary arrest, torture and unfair trials; tens have called for Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's immediate and unconditional release.⁴ UN bodies have expressed analogous calls.⁵

Amongst other human rights activism, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is a co-founder of both the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR). Until early 2011, he worked for Frontline Defenders, an organisation that focused on human rights defenders (HRDs) as MENA Protection Coordinator. In 2022, he was awarded the [Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders](#). What lessons does his case offer?

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is unique in one important aspect: he is a Danish citizen; a European Union (EU) citizen, after having been granted political asylum in Denmark in 1991.⁶

Politicised context

Bahrain is considered friendly and an ally by scores of governments: the United States and the United Kingdom both maintain military facilities on the island. For the EU, "*Bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the EU are based on their mutual interest for regional stability, security, economic and political cooperation*" and trade between the two totals around €2.5 billion.⁷ While this amounts to only 0.1% of the EU's market, Bahrain mainly exports hydrocarbons to the EU, a priority commodity.

In February 2021, representatives of both parties agreed to a Cooperation Arrangement

Nevertheless, since 2011, the Government of Denmark (GoD) and Danish officials, including parliamentarians, have repeatedly highlighted human rights abuses in Bahrain. The GoD utilised its platform in the European Union and supported the resolutions denouncing Bahrain's human rights abuses in [2014](#) and [2017](#), and in 2022, [intervened in the UN Human Rights Council calling for the release of al-Khawaja](#).

A December 2022 proposal for a [motion](#) by the Left Group, in the European Union's parliament, noted that the GoD has maintained a counterproductive, positive image of good relations with the GoB. It called on the GoD to "*consider its trade and security relations with Bahrain if Abdulhadi Al-*

⁴ For example, an Early Day Motion ([EDM, 27 March 2023](#)) in the United Kingdom parliament marked the "12th anniversary of the detainment of political prisoners in Bahrain" and stated, amongst others things, that it "*condemns reports that many of these individuals including Mushaima, Dr Al-Singace and Al-Khawaja were subjected to torture, some of which was documented in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report; notes reports that many still face the denial of access to timely and adequate medical care; [...] [and] echoes calls made by human rights organisations [...] on the [United Kingdom] Government to use all available leverage, both privately and publicly, to push Bahrain to release the above-named individuals.*"

⁵ In 17 February 2023 [communication](#) to the GoB - reference AL BHR 1/2023 - UN human rights experts from the Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism stated that "*While we do not wish to prejudge the accuracy of these allegations [set out in the letter], we would like to express our utmost concern at the continued arbitrary detention of human rights defender Mr. Al-Khawaja.*"

⁶ While living in Denmark at that time, he founded the Bahrain Human Rights Organisation.

⁷ See the 27 April 2022 EU publication, European Union's Relations with Kingdom of Bahrain, at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/saudi-arabia/bahrain-and-eu_en?s=208

Khawaja is not released". It was not adopted in the [final text of the resolution](#). At the same time, [NGOs](#) and [Maryam Al-Khawaja](#), one of his daughters, called on the GoD to do more.

SALAM DHR echoes her call that the Danish Prime Minister contact - *directly* - Bahrain's Crown Prince to call on the latter to release her father.

The GoD and the EU appear to have decided that relatively low-profile appeals meet a presumed demand by EU-based and other civil society and human rights organisations' demands, aware that more robust calls could strain ties between Denmark and Bahrain, and with the US as well.

Legal context

The GoB is a state party to seven international human rights treaties.⁸ Yet, the GoB engages with the UN's human rights mechanisms in order to operationalise them, that is, use the government's engagement with them in order to show to other governments the GoB's reasonableness and trustworthiness in other areas of diplomatic and economic engagement. It is largely cosmetic and does not provide an enforceable means to ensure that the GoB better implements international human rights standards.

According to the [Bahraini Nationality Law of 1963](#), Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's Danish citizenship has no bearing on his legal status in Bahrain. The law does not recognise dual nationality; it is not even permitted. On the other hand, the authorities have not, as they have in hundreds of other cases, [stipped him of his nationality](#). Nevertheless, Denmark could seek to extend consulate protection to him as provided for by the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.⁹

His daughter, Maryam al-Khawaja told the authors that she requested this of the Danish authorities but they refused. Yet:

"Under international law, states have a right to provide consular protection (referred to as consular assistance in some states' policy and practice) to their detained nationals, in order to ensure that basic needs are met and fundamental human rights are respected. In practice, it requires a degree of recognition and engagement by the state holding the national who possesses this other citizenship."¹⁰

This does not appear to be enshrined in Danish law, but a matter of policy, and untested in the case of Bahrain and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja.¹¹ We argue that the *"difficult experiences of victims*

⁸ These are in respect to torture; civil and political rights; elimination of discrimination against women, elimination of racial discrimination, economic social and cultural rights, the rights of the child.

⁹ See the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, at:

https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/conventions/9_2_1963.pdf - Article 36, on

"Communication and contact with nationals of the sending State" states in article (1a) that *"consular officers shall be free to communicate with nationals of the sending State and to have access to them"* while 1c states that *"consular officers shall have the right to visit a national of the sending State who is in prison, custody or detention, to converse and correspond with him and to arrange for his legal representation"* It also added, however that (2) The rights referred to in paragraph 1 of this article *"shall be exercised in conformity with the laws and regulations of the receiving State, subject to the proviso, however, that the said laws and regulations must enable full effect to be given to the purposes for which the rights accorded under this article are intended."*

¹⁰ This text is derived from *Redress: Beyond discretion: The protection of British nationals abroad from torture and ill-treatment*, January 2018, at: https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/3CADP-Report_FINAL.pdf

¹¹ [Redress adds](#) that: *"Consular protection or assistance can act as a humanitarian safeguard and provide a crucial – and sometimes the only – link between the detainee and the outside world. It can help prevent human rights violations,*

[Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja] and their families merits a review of the current approach”¹² Moreover, “although consular assistance is primarily preventative and protective in individual cases, it is also more than that, as it can and should lay the ground for redress which might be pursued at a later stage.”¹³

On page 14 of its May 2022 [Joint Communication to the European Union and the Council](#), entitled *A strategic partnership with the Gulf* (discussed below), the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy stated that “*Consular protection is increasingly relevant given the rising number of EU citizens that reside in or travel to the Gulf. Better cooperation between the EU and its Member States and authorities in the Gulf could build on the established arrangements, including on consular crisis preparedness and responses.*” The case of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja serves as a test on this issue.

The Danish and EU authorities could and should promote accountability in respect to GoB’s conduct and use consular access to advance this principle. While Bahrain is a state party to, amongst other international treaties, the [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) (the Torture Convention), and has previously acknowledged the principle of accountability, in practice, it has evaded it and systematically refused to provide redress for torture and ill-treatment. For example, Article 14.1 of the Torture Convention states that:

“Each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependants shall be entitled to compensation.”

Consular access may be the only way to promote a culture of accountability: if Danish officials were able to meet with Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in a context that meets international standards, they could learn from him directly what exactly is taking place in Jau Prison and which official - or officials - may be responsible. The Danish authorities could then raise this matter with the EU body responsible for imposing sanctions upon people, or take other legal action on his behalf. The GoD could, in principle, insist “on the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the violations committed against its national, in line with international standards such as the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and CIDTP (Istanbul Protocol)”¹⁴

including torture or other prohibited ill-treatment. States can enforce the rights of their nationals to consular assistance and to redress for human rights violations suffered abroad through diplomatic protection, a means for a State to take legal or related action against another State in respect of the injury caused to one of its nationals.”

¹² This line, addressed to the UK context, is taken from *Redress: Beyond discretion: The protection of British nationals abroad from torture and ill-treatment*, January 2018, at: https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/3CADP-Report_FINAL.pdf Redress adds that: “*The provision of consular assistance is recognised in international treaty law and as part of customary international law*” and that “*At a practical level, the need for consular assistance arises when the individual concerned is still abroad, and serves mainly a preventive and welfare function, whereas diplomatic protection becomes particularly relevant where violations have already occurred. Despite the clear theoretical distinctions between consular assistance and diplomatic protection, the two concepts are often blurred in practice.*”

¹³ See also pages 12 and 13 - *Redress: Beyond discretion: The protection of British nationals abroad from torture and ill-treatment*, January 2018, at: https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/3CADP-Report_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ Page 14, *Redress: Beyond discretion: The protection of British nationals abroad from torture and ill-treatment*, January 2018, at: https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/3CADP-Report_FINAL.pdf - This is in reference to the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, 9 August 1999, setting out minimum standards States have to comply with when

The long standing character of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's unfair imprisonment and associated reports of ill-treatment - the GoB's assertions of criminality notwithstanding - along with equally long standing reports of ill-treatment in Jau Prison in general, as well as conditions possibly amounting to torture, suggest that the GoD and EU must escalate the character of their intervention if their own commitments have any meaning.

The EU must act in accordance with their own standards in relation to Bahrain

The [EU's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, 2020-2024](#), as well as the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy's [2022 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World](#) sets out five broad themes to guide and assess the EU's engagement on human rights on a global scale.

How can these be assessed in respect to the case of Bahrain and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja?

1. ***Protecting and empowering individuals*** - While the EU has addressed the death penalty in Bahrain, the August 2023 visit by the EUSR for the Gulf pointedly failed to address:
 - (1) Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
 - (2) Human Rights Defenders; and
 - (3) Freedom of religion or belief. The EU has refrained from, in the case of Bahrain, from (1.3 in the Annual Report);
 - (4) Promoting fundamental freedoms and strengthening civic and political space and has chosen not; to
 - (5) Support the rule of law and the fair administration of justice (1.5 in the Annual Report).

2. ***Building resilient inclusive and democratic societies*** - By remaining silent on the GoB's policy of restricting participation in public life, in contrast to obligations under Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the EU has rejected
 - (6) "*enhancing democratic, accountable and transparent institutions*" (2.1 in the Annual Report); and failed to
 - (7) Monitor "*electoral processes to consolidate and deepen democratisation*". The EU has not
 - (8) "*strengthened accountability networks among civil society*" in Bahrain; nor
 - (9) (2.2 in the Annual Report) "*promoted responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making*"; or
 - (10)(2.3) "*supported an independent and pluralistic media, access to information and the fight against disinformation*".

In respect to:

3. ***Promoting a global system for human rights and democracy*** - The EU may have encouraged (3.1) Multilateral cooperation, notably in respect to UN bodies, but its commitment to its own objectives in respect to

- (11) Human rights dialogues with Bahrain have been flawed; while the EU has not adequately provided direction in respect to
- (12) Civil society and national human rights institutions; or
- (13) Compliance with international human rights and international humanitarian law.

4. ***New technologies: harnessing opportunities and addressing challenges*** - The EU can and must do more in Bahrain in respect to (4.2)
- (14) *“Promoting human rights and democracy in the use of digital technologies, including artificial intelligence”*; and
 - (15) *“Support to Human Rights Defenders in the Digital Sphere”*.

SALAM DHR has no particular assessment of the EU’s fifth objective, in respect to ***Delivering by working together***.

Apart from these human rights priorities, in its 18 May 2022, publication, a [Joint Communication to the European Union and the Council](#), entitled *A strategic partnership with the Gulf*, the European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy observed that:

“While human rights, democratisation and rule of law related challenges remain, the EU can cooperate with the GCC in accompanying such reform efforts, building on bilateral human rights dialogues with GCC countries [...]”

And that the EU would facilitate: *“[...] people-to-people contacts, especially for young people, to deepen mutual understanding and promote trust between societies in both regions around successful cooperation activities.”*

Moreover, the Commission and High Representative assert that the *“[...] the EU will share its experience in promoting inclusive dialogue with civil society. The EU is keen to support the work being done by the GCC countries, including through EU cooperation instruments, to strengthen respect for the rule of law and good governance, in order to support transparency, accountability and trust in the institutions.”*

And yet, where are the fruits from *“such reform efforts”*; the *“people-to-people contacts”* or that arising from the *“experience in promoting inclusive dialogue”*? Has any Gulf country - Bahrain, in particular - improved its human rights record as a result of such lofty aspirations? There is no evidence of any substantive reform; people-to-people contact is either banned and could lead to arrest and dialogue is dangerous. Staff of the EU’s own External Action Service (EEAS) have privately acknowledged that the bilateral human rights dialogues are a waste of time, since there is no political will.

The Commission and High Representative assert that:

“the EU strongly encourages GCC countries to live up to their international commitments on human rights, including to ratify relevant UN human right treaties, actively support the work of the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Special Procedures, fully cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms and ratify and implement International Labour Organization conventions and recommendations.”

...but it will do almost nothing to act meaningfully on these aspirations.

The EU's words far outstrip its deeds in respect to promoting and protecting international human rights standards in relation to Bahrain, including in relation to EU citizen, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja.

Conclusions and recommendations

The GoB is, alone, responsible for events at Jau Prison and the wellbeing of prisoners held there. According to press reports available to the authors at the time of writing, the GoB has not taken any action, engaged with prisoners' calls, or sought to bring the hunger strike to an end. It has ignored substantive recommendations by UN treaty bodies, its Special Procedures and scores of recommendations made in the peer-led [Universal Periodic Review](#) (UPR). There is little point in re-stating those, which are relevant in this instance since it appears, once again, that the GoB will ignore such appeals. They are not, in any case, subject to any independent judicial enquiry in the country. We nevertheless echo, amongst others, the calls made by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. Their calls, along with other calls, urge the GoB to:

To the Government of Bahrain

- Release, immediately and unconditionally, all those convicted in connection with the peaceful expression of their conscientiously held beliefs; as well as all those convicted following unfair trials, including those in which torture formed a pivotal characteristic of the case against them, where there is no prospect for a fair re-trial;
- Act by implementing, in a fair and transparent manner, measures aimed at ensuring that all detainees have reasonable access to good quality medical care, commensurate with the levels of access enjoyed by everyone in the country; and
- Address, systematically, the substance of the detainees' complaints and concomitant demands;
- Allow UN rapporteurs to visit, unimpeded, prisons and confidentiality meet affected prisoners to convey their demands to obtain their rights.

We believe that the Government of Denmark must [continue further actions to obtain the release of its citizen](#), as well as promote and protect international human rights standards by the GoB. We urge the Danish authorities to:

To the Government of Denmark¹⁵

- Redouble efforts to find a workable and meaningful way to protect its citizens, including Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, including by consulting with his daughters on the ways that he and they would like to see acted upon;
- Revise, re-evaluate and thoroughly update the current policy on consular assistance with the aim of achieving an accessible, clear, and well-publicised policy that puts the protection of all Danish (and dual) nationals from human rights violations abroad at the centre of Danish consular assistance;

¹⁵ Most recommendations here are taken and derived from *Redress: Beyond discretion: The protection of British nationals abroad from torture and ill-treatment*, January 2018, at: https://redress.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/3CADP-Report_FINAL.pdf

- Recognise unequivocally, across all relevant policy documents, that a primary role of the Danish government's consular assistance is to ensure that Danish nationals detained abroad are being treated in accordance with international human rights standards;
- Introduce an obligation to exercise diplomatic protection in cases of torture and related international crimes, or the threat thereof, where the individuals concerned request it, to enhance the protection of all Danish nationals detained abroad;
- In all cases where Danish nationals, including dual nationals, are detained abroad, insist on regular consular access and private visits;
- Publicly commit to making vigorous complaints with regards to breaches of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations where the detainee consents and consider bringing cases before the International Court of Justice and other relevant fora if they continue;
- Commit to publishing detailed information on action taken in individual cases – subject to data protection concerns - to uphold the human rights of all Danish nationals detained abroad;
- Support Danish nationals who have suffered human rights violations abroad, in their quest for justice, including reparation.

Denmark, as a smaller member of the European Union, can and should engage with the EU on the substance of these recommendations. For that reason, we appeal to the office of the EU's High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, as well as the office of the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, to:

To the European Union

- Echoing a [24 August joint civil society letter](#), *“leverage its close security and trade partnership with Bahrain and urge Bahraini authorities, both publicly and privately, to immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained solely for their political beliefs, on abusive charges, or after grossly unfair trials, including human rights defenders Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and Abduljalil Al-Singace, and in the meantime, ensure they are provided with life-saving adequate medical care, in accordance with their wishes and with their informed consent, to prevent an imminent tragedy”*
- Take action to address the 15 specific shortcomings identified above, with a view to bringing EU action in line with its written commitments, including in relation to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of international human rights standards;
- Ensure that EU human rights priorities form part of the mandate of the EU's Special Representative (EUSR) for the Gulf region, and require his office to address the EU's assessment in respect to the five, broad-based themes it has set out in its annual report and action plan;
- Implement concrete measures, that include measurability and accountability, in respect to the aspirations and goals set out in the 18 May 2022, [Joint Communication to the European Union and the Council](#), entitled *A strategic partnership with the Gulf* (discussed above);
- Target beneficiaries of the Erasmus program so that human rights defenders and those who act to advance goals of inclusion, respect and respect towards international human rights standards may become recipients;
- Ensure that the Chaillot Prize for human rights activities in GCC countries is awarded to a truly independent NGO that serves to advance human rights in the Gulf, rather than as a tool to advance EU objectives; and
- Ensure that at least one joint EU-GCC project - notably, for these purposes, Bahrain - under the “Enhanced EU-GCC Political Dialogue, Cooperation and Outreach” project includes at

least one pan-GCC human rights initiative that can strengthen participation in public life, as per Article 25 of the ICCPR, to which states in the region are a state party.

//end//