



Europäisches Parlament

Prof. Dr. Dietmar Köster

Mitglied des Europäischen Parlaments

31/05/2022

Dear Mrs. Fawzia Abdulla Yusuf Zainal,

I am writing to you in your capacity as the Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain on the occasion of the Exchange of Views at the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, which took place on May 12, 2022. There, all present MEPs had the opportunity to pose questions, related to current political and human rights developments in Bahrain.

During the meeting you highlighted the necessity for further co-operation in different fields between Bahrain and the European Union through enhanced parliamentary diplomacy and closer multilateral relations. In addition, you mentioned that comprehensive development and modernization in Bahrain commenced with King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa's ascension to the throne and emphasized Bahrain's genuine commitment to human rights and democracy.

Regarding the current human rights situation, I am calling on Bahrain to release all political prisoners who are unlawfully incarcerated, following their participation in the peaceful uprising in February 2011. Furthermore, I would like to draw attention to the cases of Mr. Hassan Mushaima, the leader of the political opposition in Bahrain, and Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, the leading human rights defender in the country.

As we unfortunately did not receive a satisfying answer concerning the current status of Mr. Hassan Mushaima and Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace during your presentation at the European Parliament, we would like to ask you to provide us with a detailed response regarding the condition of these two political prisoners and the torture allegations against officials at the Bahraini Ministry of Interior led by Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Alkhalifa. In fact, both Mr. Hassan Mushaima and Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace were solely detained and sentenced to life imprisonment for peacefully exerting their inherent right to freedom of speech and expression.

Mr. Hassan Mushaima has previously served as the Secretary General of the oppositional Al-Haq movement for freedom and democracy and was one of the founders as well as the former Vice President of the Alwefaq Political Society. In addition, he was one of



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the most prominent leaders of the 2011 pro-democracy insurgency, for which he was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment, after being convicted initially by a military court for allegedly “attempting to overthrow the monarchy”.

Since the issuance of the unlawful verdict and his subsequent incarceration, Hassan Mushaima was repeatedly subjected to torture, maltreatment and degradation and humiliating practices. He was incarcerated in Bahrain’s infamous Jau prison, which largely inhabits political prisoners and has gained notoriety for practicing brutal torture and maltreatment. In addition, the prison administration staunchly refuses to provide him with appropriate medical treatment, including regularly check-ups for his pre-existing health conditions, as he previously had recovered from lung cancer. He further suffers from high blood pressure, diabetes and a urinary tract infection, which further exacerbated, following a mass outbreak of Corona infections amongst political prisoners in March 2022.

In May 2021, Mr. Hassan Mushaima was placed in quarantine and developed several severe medical conditions, due to his diabetes and medical negligence, such as abnormal swellings of his feet and legs, chronic knee pain and limping. He was subsequently prescribed medications and doctors insisted that he direly needs regular follow-ups. His health condition steadily deteriorated and neither he nor his family members were allowed to see his medical records. In addition, the Bahraini Ministry of Health published a false statement on Mr. Hassan Mushaima’s health condition, stating that his current status has ameliorated and is constantly being monitored. In July 2021, Mr. Hassan Mushaima was transferred to the Kanoo Medical Center, where examinations revealed his extremely high blood sugar and blood pressure levels. Moreover, he suffers from kidney damage, a cyst on his eye and a heart muscle issue, however, prison authorities constantly denied him appropriate medical treatment, leading to his health condition to continuously aggravate.

On September 15, 2021, Mr. Hassan Mushaima was offered an alternative sentencing that would grant him a conditional release from prison, under the indispensable prerequisite that he would completely refrain from politics and renounce on his right to freedom of speech and expression. However, accepting this offer would constantly expose him to the risk of getting re-arrested and imprisoned on fabricated charges again



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at any moment. Therefore, he staunchly declined the offer conditional release, stating that he prefers prison over humiliating and solely conditional freedom.

Furthermore, Mr. Hassan Mushaima has repetitively been subjected to verbal abuse and psychological pressure, after being transferred to the Kanoo Medical Center, keeping him in there for an extended period, for the purpose of punishing him with isolation for refusing alternative sentencing. He has been constantly denied the right to have calls with his family, his belongings were confiscated and his request to return to Jau prison, as his stay at the Kanoo medical center amounts to solitary confinement, was blatantly rebuffed.

Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace, a professor and leading human rights defender in Bahrain and the region, was also arrested in 2011, due to his peaceful political activism and his participation in the widespread antigovernment demonstrations. In June 2011, Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace was brought to trial by Bahrain's military National Safety Court, where he was charged with allegedly „plotting to overthrow the government“, for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment. The verdict was subsequently upheld in September 2011 by the appeals chamber of the National Safety Court.

In custody, he was reportedly subjected to physical and verbal assaults, beaten on a daily basis, placed in solitary confinement and even severely sexually abused, which further exacerbated his pre-existing health conditions.

Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace suffers from post-polio syndrome since his birth and is therefore dependent on a wheelchair and crutches. In regard to his congenital physical disability, he was additionally humiliated and his prescribed medication which he regularly has to take, was confiscated. Despite his constantly deteriorating health condition, the prison authorities still deny him access to proper medical treatment and blatantly disregard his congenital physical disability.

On July, 8, 2021, Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace began a hunger strike, in order to resist and protest his constant violent maltreatment and the expropriation of his scientific work about Bahraini dialects which the Jau prison authorities still continue to arbitrarily withhold. In addition, the prison staff further suspended his access to weekly video calls with his family. In the course of his hunger strike, Dr. Al-Singace refused to take his necessary medications and vitamins and has lost a significant amount of weight,



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whereby his blood cell count has also sharply dropped, thus, putting him in a life-threatening health condition. He was subsequently transferred to the Kanoo medical center in January 2022, where he further suffered from vertigo, headaches, shortness of breath and severe muscular pain, while still being on hunger strike, in spite of his constantly deteriorating health condition.

Following the continuation of his hunger strike, he has lost more than 25 kilograms and his blood sugar level has significantly dropped, as his current hunger strike solely involves drinking tea, milk and sugar, along with intakes of salt and water portions, which are steadily reduced by the prison authorities. Doctors have further neglected his current condition by only sporadically visiting him, while his request for painkillers is constantly being delayed. Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace however, still refuses to terminate his hunger strike, as the prison authorities are not willing to meet his demands of being able to have video calls with his family, providing him with the prescribed medication and new crutches and handing over his research to his family.

The cases of Mr. Hassan Mushaima and Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace reflect numerous examples of political prisoners in Bahrain, who were solely incarcerated for their human rights activism and their outspoken criticism of the Bahraini government, leading to their unlawful incarceration and liberty deprivation for more than eleven years.

Given the fact that you emphasized Bahrain's genuine commitment to human rights and democracy, freedom of speech and expression should be unrestrictedly ensured and promoted within the country, instead of being criminalized, which further includes the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners.

We, therefore, kindly ask you to provide us with a detailed answer regarding the current status of Mr. Hassan Mushaima and Dr. Abduljalil Al-Singace and the prison authorities' involvement in their torture and abuse as well as their constant refusal of providing both political prisoners with adequate medical treatment and allow them to see their families. We also call on you to join us in calling for their immediate and unconditional release.

Thank you very much indeed.

Yours sincerely,