



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign & Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

14<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Foreign Secretary,

**Trial of Bahraini national Nabeel Rajab**

We write in advance of the trial of Bahraini human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, due to resume tomorrow.

As you are aware, Mr Rajab is currently facing up to 15 years in prison for tweeting and retweeting statements in 2015 criticising the conduct of Bahrain's security forces at a prison, for "insulting a neighbourly country" – a charge related to tweets criticising rights abuses by Saudi Arabia, and for retweeting statements critical of Bahrain's part in the war in Yemen.

Mr Rajab faces further charges, most notably one related to an article he wrote which was published in the New York Times, which could further lengthen a prison sentence.

The European Parliament has previously called for Mr Rajab's immediate and unconditional release in an urgent resolution that expressed grave concern over the ongoing campaign of repression of human rights defenders, political opposition and civil society. Bahraini authorities have previously faced criticism from the United Nations and the US State Department over their treatment of Mr Rajab. Both have expressly called for his release.

Other high profile NGOs have called for an end to Mr Rajab's incarceration, including Amnesty International who have labelled his trial as a "barefaced assault on freedom of expression", the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, Human Rights Watch and the International Federation for Human Rights.

We welcome the action the government has taken so far in this case, including representations made to Bahraini officials, and the attendance by an official from the British Embassy in Bahrain at all of Mr Rajab's court hearings.

It is, however, notable that the only one of Bahrain's allies to publicly call for Mr Rajab's release is the United States of America. It is also a matter of fact that the UK has never publicly called for the release of a prisoner of conscience in Bahrain.

We urge you, in advance of the trial tomorrow, to make it clear to Bahraini officials that the United Kingdom wishes to see Mr Rajab's unconditional release from prison, and for the charges brought against him, which are related to his right to freedom of expression and freedom of speech, to be dropped.

Kind Regards,

Margaret Ferrier MP

*Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf*

Andy Slaughter MP

*Vice-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf*

Jim Shannon

*Vice-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf*

Ann Clwyd MP

*Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group*

Mark Durkan MP

*Officer, All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Group*

Dr Tania Mathias MP

Alistair Carmichael MP

Caroline Lucas MP

Tom Brake MP

Drew Hendry MP

Derek Thomas MP

Alan Brown MP

Stewart McDonald MP

Martyn Day MP

Gavin Newlands MP

George Kerevan MP

Mary Glendon MP

Stuart McDonald MP

Tommy Sheppard MP

Nic Dakin MP

David Winnick MP

Paul Blomfield MP

Richard Arkless MP