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15 FEB 2016



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Office

King Charles Street
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15 February 2016

Our reference: MIN/92920/2016

Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your e-mail of 22 January to the Foreign Secretary on behalf of your constituent, regarding the human rights situation in Bahrain. I am responding as the Minister responsible for the Middle East.

The UK takes the matter of human rights in Bahrain seriously and we continue to raise this issue with the Government of Bahrain. I discussed human rights with the Bahraini Foreign Minister, Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, at the sixth UK-Bahrain Joint Working Group meeting in London on 25 November 2015. The statement on Bahrain at the Human Rights Council on 14 September 2015, which the UK supported, called on the Government of Bahrain to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments.

We have noted the report by Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, which assesses the progress the Government of Bahrain is making against the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry Report (BICI). In June 2014, the UN Human Rights Council presented similar findings by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. That is why we continue to encourage the Government of Bahrain to ensure full implementation of the BICI recommendations, as well as those accepted in their UN Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review, and we are offering UK assistance to help them achieve this.

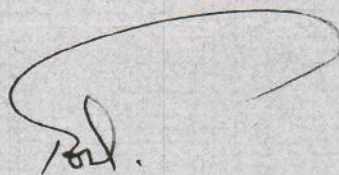
Our support to the Government of Bahrain in delivering its ambitious reform programme has a particular focus on the protection of human rights. We are supporting the Ministry of Interior Ombudsman, the Prisoners' and Detainees' Rights Commission (PDRC) and National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR), all of whom provide independent oversight of the behaviour and standards of the police and detention facilities.

On the matters of self-determination and legitimate government, we believe that governance of Bahrain is a matter for all political parties in Bahrain. That is why we encourage all political parties, including Al Wefaq who boycotted elections in November 2014, to engage constructively in political dialogue in order to reach an inclusive political settlement. Although we were disappointed by the opposition's decision to boycott the 2014 elections, we commended the participation of a broad

range of candidates which saw 14 independent Shia candidates win seats, of which three were women.

We are aware of, and have raised, the case of Hassan Mushaima with the Government of Bahrain. The UK encourages Bahrain to respect the rights of all peaceful opposition figures. We call on the Bahraini Government to act proportionately in all such cases to protect the universal rights of freedom of expression and assembly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'T. Ellwood', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval shape.

TOBIAS ELLWOOD
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State