

Debate Pack

CDP-0006 (2022)

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11 January 2022

The ongoing detention of Bahraini political prisoners

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Background

A debate on the ongoing detention of Bahraini political prisoners is scheduled for Thursday 13 January 2022 in the House of Commons chamber.

This debate was selected by the Backbench Business Committee and will be led by Brendan O'Hara MP.

Political prisoners in Bahrain

Over the last decade, Bahraini activists, opposition leaders and journalists [have faced imprisonment](#), sometimes after [mass trials](#), for their opposition to the government.¹ Many have been imprisoned for their role in the 2011 protests against the Bahraini monarchy, which were seen as threatening its survival.

There are [potentially 1,400 political prisoners in Bahrain](#), out of a total prison population of 3,200-3,800, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy.²

The prison population was reduced in 2020 and 2021, partly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, those released did not include leading opposition figures and activists—a position [criticised by Human Rights Watch](#).³

Concerns have been raised [regarding prison conditions](#), particularly access to medical treatment, overcrowding and physical abuse.⁴ Some political prisoners have also died after contracting Covid-19. Medical negligence on the part of the authorities has been alleged by NGOs such as the [Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy](#) and [Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain](#), something the authorities deny.⁵

In 2012, the Bahraini authorities established an Ombudsman to investigate allegations of mistreatment. From 2018 to 2019, 289 complaints were submitted to it.⁶

¹ For example, The Guardian, [Bahrain upholds activists' life sentences](#), 7 January 2013 and Reuters, [Bahrain jails 50 for ties to anti-government group: Activists](#), 29 September 2013. All sources accessed 11 January 2022

² Reuters, [Bahrain releases some political prisoners under new law](#), 15 September 2021.

³ Human Rights Watch, [Bahrain: Free leading opposition activists](#), 13 December 2021

⁴ US State Department, [2020 country reports on human rights practices: Bahrain](#), 2021, 'Prison and detention center conditions'

⁵ Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, [Political prisoners remain incommunicado days after assaults by police at Bahrain's largest prison](#), 20 April 2021; Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, [Continued medical negligence claims the life of a political prisoner \[...\]](#), 8 April 2021

⁶ US State Department, [2020 country reports on human rights practices: Bahrain](#), 2021, section 1

In April 2021, the UN Office of the High Commissioner [raised concerns about the use of force by police](#) in response to protests about the lack of medical treatment in Jau prison.⁷

Leading activists remain imprisoned

In the UK Parliament, particular concerns have been raised about the imprisonment of Hassan Mushaima, one of the leaders of anti-government protests in 2011, and Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, an activist also involved in the 2011 protests.

Hassan Mushaima was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2011. In September 2021, he [rejected a conditional royal pardon](#) to release him from prison, stating he would have to accept continuing restrictions on his freedom.⁸ His son, Ali Mushaima, [conducted a hunger strike](#) outside the Bahraini embassy in London in December 2021.⁹

Concerns have been raised for the health of Abduljalil al-Singace, a blogger also jailed in 2011. He has [undertaken a hunger strike since July 2021](#), in protest of alleged harassment by prison guards.¹⁰

On both cases, the UK Government has [raised concerns with the Bahraini Government](#) and encouraged the individuals to raise issues with local oversight bodies.¹¹

Bahrain is a UK priority country for human rights

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has [identified 31 countries where it is particularly concerned about human rights](#). These priority countries include Bahrain.¹²

In its [latest human rights report](#), covering 2020, the UK Government said that the Bahraini Government had “responded progressively” to the implications of the pandemic on the human rights of prisoners, but allegations of torture, unsafe convictions and concerns for the rights and treatment of detainees remained.¹³

⁷ UN Office of the High Commissioner, [Press briefing notes on Bahrain](#), 30 April 2021

⁸ Middle East Monitor, [Bahrain opposition leader rejects “humiliating” royal pardon](#), 15 September 2021

⁹ The Guardian, [Bahraini hunger striker in London told by MPs they will take up case](#), 16 December 2021

¹⁰ Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, [Timeline: Dr Abdulkalil Al Singace’s hunger strike](#), 5 December 2021, updated 3 January 2022

¹¹ PQ 92956 [[Hassan Mushaima](#)], 5 January 2022

¹² FCDO, [Human rights and democracy: 2020 FCDO report](#), July 2021

¹³ FCDO, [Human rights and democracy: 2020 FCDO report](#), July 2021

Through its Gulf Strategy Fund, the UK [seeks to strengthen ties with the Gulf and support human rights reforms](#). Work in Bahrain includes police reform and strengthening oversight bodies.¹⁴

The APPG on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf has [called for the Gulf Strategy Fund to be suspended](#) (opens pdf). It has criticised Bahraini oversight bodies funded by the UK, arguing that they are “discredited” and fail to properly investigate complaints.¹⁵ The Government [has defended the fund and its work](#).¹⁶

¹⁴ FCDO, [Gulf Strategy Fund: Programme summary](#), 24 June 2021

¹⁵ APPG on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf, [The cost of repression: Secret government funds and human rights abuses in the Gulf](#), July 2021 (opens pdf), p25

¹⁶ HC Deb, [22 October 2020](#), c492WH

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FCDO Human Rights and Democracy report

Human Rights and Democracy: 2020 Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office report

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

8 July 2021

[Extract]

Bahrain

Bahrain responded progressively to the human rights implications of COVID-19, particularly concerning prisoners and migrant workers. The Bahrain Government also began drafting an integrated National Human Rights Action Plan. Challenges remained around freedom of expression and the death penalty.

The death penalty remained a punishment for certain crimes. No executions were carried out in 2020, but Bahrain's Court of Cassation did uphold the death penalty for four individuals, with no further avenue for appeal. The Minister responsible for human rights, Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for the Middle East and North Africa James Cleverly, and the UK Ambassador to Bahrain Roddy Drummond each restated to senior members of the Bahrain Government the UK's firm opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances as a matter of principle.

Despite constitutional guarantees, Bahrain's approach to freedom of expression continued to be of concern, with the country dropping one place to 169 out of 180 countries in the [2020 World Press Freedom Index](#). Protections for journalists and bloggers, and a culture of self-censorship, were the key issues. It was encouraging that Reuters and AFP gained representation in Bahrain. However, challenges persisted for international journalists seeking access to the country. A revised press law, to provide additional protections for journalists, did not gain parliamentary approval, and the timing and detail of the planned legislation remained vague, particularly regarding social media.

Allegations of human rights violations mainly focused on reports of torture, unsafe convictions, and the rights and treatment of detainees. There was increasingly transparent reporting by Bahrain's oversight bodies, including through the Annual Ombudsman Report, and the UK continued to advocate thorough investigations and reports that would meet international standards.

Bahrain's response to COVID-19 demonstrated a welcome focus on protecting the rights of vulnerable people and safeguarding wider society. The Government made access to medical treatment for COVID-19 available free of charge to all Bahrain citizens and residents, including the migrant worker community. In recognition of the economic impact of the pandemic on migrant workers, the Government also introduced a visa amnesty from March to December, resulting in the "normalisation of status" for over 30,000 workers who might otherwise have lost their jobs. It also provided cash assistance to those unable to work. In line with World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, by introducing video calls Bahrain took early action to ensure that detainees continued to have safe access to medical facilities and contact with family members. From April until the end of the year, there were approximately 10,000 (physical and virtual) healthcare consultations in Bahrain's detention centres. We welcomed these actions.

The prison population was reduced significantly, both by 169 royal pardons, and by increased use of alternative sentencing legislation, which led to the release of over 900 prisoners from custodial sentences. By the end of 2020, over 4,200 detainees had benefitted from alternative sentencing. The UK welcomed the release in May of activist Nabeel Rajab from detention into an alternative sentence. After his release, Mr Rajab worked with Bahrain's National Institute for Human Rights, using social media to provide details of his work and accounts of community projects, and to explain his recent experiences in prison. We encouraged the Bahrain authorities to monitor the broader impact of alternative sentencing, such as re-offending rates, and to consider new ways of supporting former offenders.

Under the chairmanship of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Bahrain's High Coordination Committee for Human Rights began the process of drafting Bahrain's first National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP). This involved seeking the views and active participation of domestic and international stakeholders, in a series of thematic human rights workshops. Participants included Lord Ahmad and Jennifer Townson, UK Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy, and a range of senior officials from the UN and other international bodies. In December, Rita French, UK International Ambassador for Human Rights, visited Bahrain virtually and discussed the NHRAP, and engaged on issues including women's rights and migrant labour. In 2021 we look forward to the finalisation and implementation of the NHRAP, to deliver further reforms in Bahrain.

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US Department of State report

2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Bahrain

Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour

US Department of State

30 March 2021

[Extract]

Political prisoners and detainees

In November 2019 the Public Prosecutor’s Office announced the release of 75 prisoners, most of whom were considered political prisoners, under the country’s alternative sentencing law. Prominent political opposition figures serving life sentences did not benefit from application of the alternative sentencing law and were held separately from the general prison population.

The alternative sentencing law was applied to the sentences of dozens considered political prisoners, including female inmates, who were all released. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights and opposition groups welcomed application of the alternative sentencing law. In November 2019 human rights activist Ebtisam al-Saegh posted a photograph with released prisoner Mujtaba al-Abbar and said he was the first political prisoner to receive an alternative sentence.

In June the government released prominent human rights activist and president of Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) Nabeel Rajab, who was sentenced in 2018 to five years in prison on charges of “inciting hatred against the regime.”

Leader of the Amal opposition Society Khalil al-Halwachi was arrested in 2014, convicted of “possession of a weapon” and “insulting the judiciary” in 2017, and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Authorities refused to grant al-Halwachi an alternative noncustodial sentence, and his family continued to call for his release on humanitarian grounds amid concerns over his health.

During the year two persons were charged with “colluding” with Qatar and were sentenced to three to five years in prison. This was the second time the government charged citizens with “collusion,” following prior prosecutions of three members of a dissolved political society.

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Press and media articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[Leading prisoner of conscience facing slow death in Bahrain](#)

Tehran Times
Sondoss Al Asaad
10 January 2022

[Bahraini hunger striker in London told by MPs they will take up case](#)

The Guardian
Patrick Wintour
16 December 2021

[Bahrain: Free leading opposition activists](#)

Human Rights Watch
13 December 2021

[French MPs condemn 'human rights violations' in Bahrain](#)

Al Jazeera
4 October 2021

[US senators urge State Dept to confront Bahrain's 'repression'](#)

Al Jazeera
24 September 2021

[Bahrain releases some political prisoners under new law](#)

Reuters
Lisa Barrington
15 September 2021

[From uprisings to executions: The death penalty in Bahrain, ten years on from the Arab Spring](#)

Reprieve
Jeed Basyouni
27 July 2021

[Death sentences in Bahrain 'dramatically escalated' since 2011](#)

Al Jazeera
13 July 2021

Bahraini prisoners allege brutal crackdown in response to Covid protest

The Guardian
Ruth Michaelson
22 June 2021

Bahrain political prisoner Husain Barakat dies of COVID-19

Al Jazeera
9 June 2021

'There are no political prisoners in Bahrain'

The Daily Tribune – News of Bahrain
12 May 2021

UN Officials Concerned by Bahrain's Treatment of Protesting Prisoners

VOA News
Lisa Schlein
2 May 2021

I have been tortured and jailed in Bahrain for seven years. Does the UK support that too?

The Independent
Ali Alhajee
15 August 2020

Bahrain to execute two activists despite concerns over torture

The Guardian
Patrick Wintour
13 July 2020

Bahrain: Free imprisoned rights defenders and opposition activists

Human Rights Watch
6 April 2020

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PQs

[Hassan Mushaima](#)

05 Jan 2022 | 92956

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what recent dates the Government has raised the case of Hassan Mushaima with authorities in Bahrain.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the independent oversight bodies. We encourage those with concerns about their detention to raise them with the oversight bodies.

[Abduljalil AlSingace](#)

05 Jan 2022 | 92955

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, on what recent dates the Government has raised the case of Dr Abduljalil AlSingace with authorities in Bahrain regarding (a) Dr AlSingace's ongoing hunger strike and his demands for his confiscated research to be given to his family and (b) his immediate and unconditional release from prison.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the independent oversight bodies. We encourage those with concerns about their detention to raise them with the oversight bodies.

[Abduljalil AlSingace and Hassan Mushaima](#)

05 Jan 2022 | 92954

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if Ministers in her Department will meet with Ali Mushaima, who is on hunger strike outside the Bahraini Embassy in London, to discuss his request for the immediate release of (a) Hassan Mushaima and (b) Dr Abduljalil AlSingace from prison in Bahrain.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

There are no plans to meet with Mr Ali Mushaima. We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima and others as necessary, with the Bahraini Government as well as with relevant oversight bodies.

[Abdulhadi al-Khawaja](#)

09 Dec 2021 | 85210

Asked by: Andy Slaughter

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the hunger strike by former political opposition leader, Abdulhadi AlKhawaja, in Bahrain, and reports that Mr AlKhawaja has been denied family visitation rights and phone calls, if she will make representations to her Bahraini counterpart for Mr AlKhawaja's phone calls and family visitation to be reinstated.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK has a continuing dialogue with the Government of Bahrain in which we raise individual cases, when and where we have concerns.

[Ali Hajji](#)

09 Dec 2021 | 85208

Asked by: Andy Slaughter

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to reports of the discontinuance of dental treatment for political prisoner Ali AlHajee, on what date the Government last raised the case of Ali AlHajee with the Bahraini authorities; and if she will make representations to her Bahraini counterpart for the immediate continuation of Ali AlHajee's dental treatment.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Responsibility for the provision of medical care to Ali Al Hajee lies with the Government of Bahrain, who have made clear that access to medical care for those in detention is guaranteed. We welcome these assurances from the Government of Bahrain. We encourage those with concerns about his detention to raise them with the oversight bodies.

Abduljalil al-Singace

09 Dec 2021 | 85205

Asked by: Andy Slaughter

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, in the context of reports that political prisoner Dr Abduljalil AlSingace has had his phone calls punitively suspended by authorities in Bahrain and with reference to his ongoing hunger strike that began on 8 July 2021, what representations the Government plans to make to its Bahraini counterparts on (a) the reinstatement of Dr AlSingace's phone calls, (b) his confiscated research to be given to his family and (c) his immediate and unconditional release.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We will continue to monitor and raise the case of Dr Abduljalil al-Singace with the Bahraini Government. We encourage those with concerns about his detention to raise them with the oversight bodies.

Bahrain: Political and Human Rights

26 Oct 2021 | 702 c131

Asked by: Margaret Ferrier

Over a decade after pro-democracy protests were crushed and oversight mechanisms, which the UK helped to fund, were adopted, cosmetic reforms have failed to remedy Bahrain's deep-rooted problems. Will the Government show their commitment to Bahrain and publicly call for meaningful and inclusive political dialogue there, and for the unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Dr al-Singace, Hassan Mushaima, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, and Sheikh Ali Salman?

Answered by: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The United Kingdom enjoys a constructive relationship with Bahrain, which means that where there are areas of concern we are able to bring them up directly. I myself have done so in bilateral meetings I have had with Bahraini officials, both here in the UK and on my trips to Bahrain. We continue to monitor the cases the hon. Lady raises, and others as necessary.

Hassan Mushaima

22 Sep 2021 | 50623

Asked by: Alistair Carmichael

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the case of Bahraini political prisoner, Hassan Mushaima, and representations from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the EU Parliament for his immediate release, if the Government will make representations to the Government of Bahrain on the immediate release of Hassan Mushaima from prison.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We continue to monitor and raise the cases of Hassan Mushaima, Husain Moosa, Mohammed Ramadhan and others, with the Bahraini Government as well as with the Oversight bodies. We understand that the Bahraini Government is in contact with the UN regarding its human rights reform effort.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

28 Jun 2021 | 21160

Asked by: Andrew Gwynne

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 9 June 2021 to Question 10405, whether the Government has taken steps to verify the Government of Bahrain's assurances that medical care is provided to inmates of Jau Prison in accordance with the constitution of Bahrain.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We welcome the assurances that any prisoner who falls ill has the same free access to treatment and care as any other citizen or resident in the Kingdom, and assess that that is reinforced by, for example, the absence - with one exception - of Covid-related deaths in prison. The British Ambassador and other international representatives visited Jau prison on 3 May to see the medical facilities available. We continue to monitor conditions including through our regular contact with the oversight bodies, with which we discuss health and covid-19 in prisons and which actively monitor the Covid-19 situation through inspection visits (NIHR and PDRC) and investigations into prison conditions (Ombudsman). We encourage anyone with concerns about medical treatment in prison to get in touch with the oversight bodies directly

Bahrain: Prisoners' Release

28 Jun 2021 | 21159

Asked by: Andrew Gwynne

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the risk posed by covid-19 to prisoners in Bahrain, if he will make urgent representations to his Bahraini counterpart for the immediate release of vulnerable political prisoners with pre-existing medical conditions in that country, including (a) Hasan Mushaima, (b) Abdulhadi AlKhawaja, (c) Sheikh Ali Salman, (d) Dr Abduljalil ALSingace, (e) Abduljalil AlMuqdad and (f) Abdulwahab Husain.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We regularly discuss the challenges of managing Covid-19 in prisons with senior members of the Bahraini Government, which we assess to be dealing with it effectively and in line with international norms via vaccination and other protocols. Nevertheless we continue to raise the cases of specific individuals with senior interlocutors, as well as with the independent human rights oversight bodies. We encourage those with concerns about treatment in detention to raise the matter with these oversight bodies.

Bahrain: Human Rights

09 Jun 2021 | 10515

Asked by: Martyn Day

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 185465 on Bahrain: Political Prisoners, whether they will now answer the question put, namely, what representations he will make to his Bahraini counterpart on (a) inviting the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit and (b) allowing (i) Human Rights Watch, (ii) Amnesty International and (iii) other human rights organisations and monitoring bodies to enter Bahrain.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We regularly raise human rights matters with the Government of Bahrain and continue to encourage both the Government of Bahrain and the UN to engage with each other on human rights issues. We understand that the Government of Bahrain has taken steps to engage with the United Nations, and that the Ombudsman has reached out to Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, noting that they are keen to work cooperatively on concerns raised. We support and encourage all such engagement.

Bahrain: Human Rights

08 Jun 2021 | 7836

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the visit by the Rt Hon Member for Braintree to Bahrain in March 2021, whether the Government raised human rights issues during that visit, including (a) capital punishment, (b) torture, (c) political prisoners, (d) the abuse and detention of juveniles and (e) cases of individuals including (i) Mohammed Ramadhan, (ii) Husain Moosa, (iii) Hassan Mushaima, (iv) Dr Abduljalil ALSingace, (v) Abdulhadi ALKhawaja and (vi) Sheikh Ali Salman.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

I visited Bahrain in March 2021 to participate in the Bahrain-UK Joint Working Group. Discussions covered a range of issues, including specific human rights themes and cases.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

08 Jun 2021 | 7834

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, for what reason the UK Ambassador to Bahrain did not meet families of Jau Prison inmates who were subject to reported (a) abuse, (b) enforced disappearance and (c) incommunicado detention in Bahrain following a reported attack by police in that prison on 17 April 2021.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Activists and others we understand to be family members of Jau prison inmates came unannounced to the British Embassy in Manama on 4 May to hand over a letter. They did not ask to meet the British Ambassador.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

25 May 2021 | HL20

Asked by: Lord Carlile of Berriew

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to impress upon the government of Bahrain the need to comply with international law in connection with the detention of political prisoners.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

Defending human rights and promoting democracy around the world is a core priority for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and its diplomatic network. The UK government monitors events closely and we regularly engage with senior members of the Bahraini government to discuss matters of importance, including human rights.

Bahrain: Prisoners' Release

25 May 2021 | HL19

Asked by: Lord Carlile of Berriew

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the recent COVID-19 outbreak in Jau prison in Bahrain, whether they will make representations to the government of Bahrain to guarantee the safe, unconditional release of prisoners of conscience, including Hassan Mushaima.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We regularly discuss the challenges of managing Covid-19 in prisons with senior members of the Bahraini Government and continue to engage with the Government of Bahrain to support its reform agenda, and to deliver on its international and domestic human rights commitments. We continue to monitor and raise the case of Hassan Mushaima and others, as necessary, at senior levels with the Bahraini Government.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

21 May 2021 | 599

Asked by: John McDonnell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, pursuant to the Answer of 20 April 2021 to Question 178778, what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the treatment of prisoners in Jau Prison during the covid-19 pandemic.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We regularly discuss the challenges of managing Covid-19 in prisons with senior members of the Bahraini Government and continue to engage with the Government of Bahrain to support its reform agenda. 70% of prisoners are vaccinated and, since February, visits from vaccinated family members have been allowed in person.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

17 May 2021 | 753

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the Answer of 26 April 2021 to Question 185912 and with reference to the (a) findings of the United Nations Committee Against Torture that Bahraini oversight bodies are (i) not independent and (ii) not effective and (b) 9 April 2021 publication from Amnesty International which stated that Bahraini oversight bodies are ineffective in safeguarding human rights and punishing violations, what assessment the UK Government has made of the efficacy and independence of Bahraini oversight bodies' investigations into the 17 April 2021 incident at Jau Prison in Bahrain.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO considers a range of information regarding human rights in Bahrain, including reports by the United Nations Committee Against Torture and Amnesty International. We welcome action taken by the Ombudsman to investigate allegations, including the Ombudsman's unannounced visit to Jau prison in May 2021 and subsequent report. We continue to encourage the oversight bodies in Bahrain to carry out thorough and swift investigations into any, and all, such claims.

Bahrain: Political Prisoners

17 May 2021 | 751

Asked by: Brendan O'Hara

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, with reference to the (a) United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights' statement that there was unnecessary and disproportionate use of force by police against inmates in Jau Prison on 17 April 2021, (b) publication from Amnesty International on 9 April 2021 which stated that authorities failed to respect minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners in Jau Prison and (c) Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy report that stated over 50 political prisoners were subjected to enforced disappearance following the 17 April 2021 police attack on Jau Prison, on what basis the UK Ambassador to Bahrain stated on 6 May 2021 that Jau Prison in Bahrain is a well-run facility.

Answering member: James Cleverly | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The FCDO considers a range of information regarding human rights in Bahrain. The visit to Jau prison on 3 May enabled the UK Ambassador and other international representatives to see the facilities at Jau prison first hand, understand the Covid-19 measures implemented, and raise human

rights matters with the government of Bahrain. We continue to raise specific cases as and when we have concerns.

6

Early Day Motions

Over 100 days of Dr ALSingace's hunger strike in Bahrain

EDM 578 (session 2021-22)

Paula Barker

25 October 2021

That this House is deeply concerned by the ongoing hunger strike of 59-year-old human rights defender and academic Dr Abduljalil ALSingace, in Bahrain; raises alarm that his hunger strike began on 8 July 2021 and has exceeded 100 days; expresses concern that Dr ALSingace has been hospitalised since 18 July 2021 and has lost at least 20kg; notes that ALSingace is protesting Jau Prison authorities' ill-treatment and confiscation of four years' worth of his apolitical research; decries Dr ALSingace's life sentence for his peaceful leading role in Bahrain's 2011 pro-democracy uprising; unreservedly condemns Dr ALSingace's torture in 2011 by Bahraini officials, as documented by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry; further condemns that Dr ALSingace has spent over a decade unjustly imprisoned, throughout which mistreatment and medical negligence against him has been reported by UN experts; further recalls the Government's 2012 expression of deep dismay at Dr ALSingace's conviction; echoes calls from UN experts, the EU Parliament, 101 academics and 77 cross-party UK parliamentarians, trade unions, lawyers and rights groups for Dr ALSingace's release; calls upon the Government to urgently secure the return of Dr ALSingace's research, impose Magnitsky Act Sanctions on those responsible for his unlawful imprisonment; and to call for his immediate and unconditional release; and further calls upon the Government to urge for the release of all political prisoners in Bahrain, including Hassan Mushaima, Sheikh Ali Salman, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja and Ali Alhajee.

Hassan Mushaima and political prisoners detained in Bahrain

EDM 284 (session 2021-22)

Andy Slaughter

5 July 2021

That this House is deeply concerned by the decade-long detention of 73-year-old Hassan Mushaima in Bahrain who was sentenced to life imprisonment for his peaceful role as a political opposition leader in 2011; decries that Mushaima was brutally tortured, subjected to protracted medical negligence and that his condition continues to severely deteriorate; profoundly regrets that since April 2021 two political prisoners and Jau Prison inmates, Husain Barakat and Abbas Malallah, died at Jau Prison; emphasises that Jau Prison authorities' failure to prevent covid-19 outbreaks amongst inmates puts the lives of vulnerable prisoners like Mushaima at serious risk; notes that the European Parliament recently called for the release of Mushaima and others;

is concerned that the UK Ambassador to Bahrain recently praised Jau Prison as a well-run facility with good medical provision despite the UN, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy expressing concern at authorities persistent failure to provide adequate medical care in Bahrain's prisons; unreservedly condemns Bahraini authorities' perpetration of systematic medical negligence against vulnerable prisoners; further condemns false assurances provided to this House by the UK Government regarding the provision of medical care to political prisoners in Bahrain; and calls on the Government to use all available leverage to press Bahrain for the immediate and unconditional release of all Bahraini political prisoners detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to free expression, association and assembly, with particular reference to political leaders with heightened vulnerability to covid-19, namely Hassan Mushaima, Abduljalil Al-Singace and Abdulwahab Husain.

Torture and enforced disappearance of Bahraini political prisoners

EDM 96 (session 2021-22)

Alistair Carmichael

24 May 2021

That this House views with serious concern the attack by Bahraini police on political prisoners in Jau Prison on 17 April 2021; condemns the enforced disappearance of over 60 inmates for a period of 19 days after the attack; notes that the attack was in response to a sit-in by inmates protesting deteriorating prison conditions and the death of political prisoner Abbas Mallallah; is aware that police officers involved in the incident were led by top prison officials, Hisham Abdulraheem and Brigadier Abdulsalam AlArifi; is deeply disturbed by first-hand accounts provided to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy that inmates were severely beaten and subjected to torture and cruel and degrading treatment; expresses concern that Saeed Abdulemam was beaten unconscious, requiring hospitalisation; abhors reports that the attack's victims were subjected to religious discrimination and denied medical treatment; echoes the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) condemnation of the use of unnecessary and disproportionate force by police; supports OHCHR's calls for a thorough and effective investigation; condemns the Bahraini Ministry of Interior's whitewash of abuses against inmates; condemns further whitewashing by UK-funded oversight bodies, including Bahrain's Ministry of Interior Ombudsman and the National Institute for Human Rights which issued false and misleading statements about the attack and subsequent abuse; urges the Government to suspend technical assistance to Bahraini oversight bodies; and calls upon the Government to oppose the criminalisation and prosecution of the attack's victims and ensure that they are not subjected to further reprisals.

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