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H. E. Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Conservative Party  
The Rt Hon Theresa May MP

Brussels, 4 December 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

The Bahraini High Criminal Court of Appeals upheld on 22 November the two-year jail sentence against Nabeel Rajab, co-founder and President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. Mr. Rajab is a leading figure in the protests that started in 2011 during the Arab Spring and has been accused of speaking out against Bahrain's extremely poor human rights record, namely its ban on journalists and human rights workers. He has been in detention since 13 June 2016 and has received humiliating treatment.

Mr. Rajab was convicted of "spreading false information and malicious rumours about domestic matters with the aim of discrediting the State" of Bahrain. He is also facing a further 15 years in prison regarding tweets in which he allegedly denounced various human rights violations in the country. There is no proof that he sent those tweets. His next hearing will be held on 31 December 2017.

According to the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, on 25 October 2017, Nabeel Rajab was transferred to Jau Prison; upon arrival, prison authorities immediately singled him out, confiscating his books, toiletries and clothes, and raiding his cell at night. He is also forced to share a three-by-three metre cell with five inmates. Mr. Rajab is 53 years-old and suffers from poor health conditions, which have only deteriorated since his imprisonment.

Bahrain is a strategic partner for the United Kingdom, as demonstrated by the fact that the UK has chosen to open its first permanent military base in the Middle East in 40 years, in Bahrain - despite serious ongoing concerns about Bahrain's human rights record. Since 2012, through its Conflict, Security and Stability Fund, the UK has already invested more than GBP 5mn<sup>1</sup> on public order training for Bahrain's security forces, whilst insisting that it is helping delivering human rights reform in the country. Inclusively, the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office has stated that "UK support to Bahrain's reform programme is the most constructive way to achieve long-lasting and sustainable reform". Which, in fact, is not happening. The UK continues to ignore the endless accusations of torture, ill-treatment and unlawful imprisonment in Bahrain, asserting in turn that all allegations are

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/06/uk-bahrain-london-arms-fair-family-exile-arrested-government>



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independently investigated by the Ombudsman and the Special Investigations Unit; these assertions, according to Amnesty International, are “apparently designed to deflect criticism of Bahrain’s human rights record in the UN”. The new Royal Navy base in the country, opened in 2016, raises concerns over the UK’s commitment to promote human rights dialogue in Bahrain. There continues to be multiple human rights violations against well-known human rights defenders, political activists, or their relatives, lawyers, journalists and Shi’a clerics - some of whom were based in the UK before their unjust arrest, torture and mistreatment. Nabeel Rajab is undoubtedly one of those.

I therefore urge you and the UK Government to engage with the Bahraini authorities regarding Nabeel Rajab’s case, in order to ensure that all forms of ill-treatment and harassment are put to rest and that Mr. Rajab is treated with dignity; to unequivocally condemn all such cases of abuses and maltreatment of activists, protesters and journalists alike; and to ensure, above all, that when accused, the Bahraini state provides them with a fair trial.

Sincerely,

Ana Gomes MEP

Julie Ward MEP

Soraya Post MEP

Barbara Lochbihler MEP

Javier Nart MEP