

Tom Brake MP

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Carshalton and Wallington



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The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs
King Charles Street
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My Ref: TB86479/C(A)

16 November 2017

It is with alarm that I write to you regarding the following letter from the Embassy of Bahrain dated 23 October. The letter states that three family members of a UK-based human rights defender Mr Alwadaei, were convicted by an "independent Bahraini court", a week before their actual conviction on 30 October.

I believe that this amounts to evidence of the Bahraini Embassy in London colluding in reprisals against the family members (in Bahrain) of a Bahraini human rights defender in the UK. I consider that the Bahraini Ambassador to London, Sheikh Fawaz Al Khalifa, has serious questions to answer regarding this case, which appears to show a pattern of reprisals against Mr Alwadaei and his family. I urge you to call in the Ambassador and seek a frank and clear explanation of his Government's actions.

I hope that you will agree that the reprisals against Mr Alwadaei and his family must immediately cease, and an apology issued from the Bahrain Embassy in London to the Alwadaei family for its conduct should be expected and will be encouraged by your department.

Context of the Letter: Case of Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei and His Family, and the Bahrain Embassy's Involvement in Reprisals

The correspondence I am raising today relates to the case of Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, and his family. Mr Alwadaei himself had suffered arbitrary arrest, severe torture, an unfair military prosecution and imprisonment for protesting and communicating with journalists during the 2011 Arab Spring. He came to the UK in 2012 as a refugee, and since then has worked to end human rights abuses in Bahrain. Mr Alwadaei was stripped of his Bahraini citizenship in 2015, rendering him stateless.

The pattern of reprisals against Mr Alwadaei and his family began in October 2016, when

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the wife of Mr Alwadaei, Duaa Alwadaei, was detained, interrogated and prevented from leaving Bahrain – where she was visiting family – on the same day that Mr Alwadaei attended a protest in London. Human Rights Watch reports that security officers threatened her with reprisals against family members in Bahrain. Mrs Alwadaei was eventually allowed to leave Bahrain, following significant international pressure. At the time, the Bahrain Embassy in London justified Mrs Alwadaei's detention in a statement dated 1 November 2016 and repeated on the Embassy's Twitter page, claiming that she had assaulted a police officer.

In one communication following this incident, the Bahrain Embassy attempted to justify the interrogation of Mrs Alwadaei by claiming Mr Alwadaei had smuggled arms. Amnesty International states this is a "false accusation". If indeed there was any truth to the claims, does your department believe that the Embassy must be questioned as to why such accusations were never brought to the Metropolitan Police.

The threats Mrs Alwadaei received against her family were followed through in March 2017, when Mr Alwadaei's mother-in-law, brother-in-law and cousin were arrested, tortured, and interrogated about his work in the United Kingdom. They were subsequently charged with criminal offences based on confessions allegedly extracted under torture and prosecuted in unfair trials. The Bahrain Embassy sought to justify their prosecution in a 16 March 2017 statement which described Mr Alwadaei as a "convicted criminal," a baseless accusation according to Amnesty International, stating, "it is no secret that Sayed Ahmed Al-Wedaei [Alwadaei] and members of his family have been operating for a long time on the edge of legality."

On 30 October 2017, Hajer Mansoor Hassan, Nizar Alwadaei and Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor were sentenced to three years each in prison. I, along with 26 other parliamentarians, wrote to you on 28 October raising our concern over this as a reprisal for Mr Alwadaei's work. Our voices have been joined by the opinions of six UN experts, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The latter has termed the trial a form of "collective punishment". The Bahrain Embassy in London has again been directly involved, as listed above, with the letter dated 23 October anticipating the convictions.

I am deeply shocked at such "collective punishment".

The Bahrain Embassy's 23 October Letter

In response to a letter I wrote to the Bahrain Embassy in London 19 April 2017, my office received the following attached letter, dated 23 October. The letter relates directly to the three family members of Mr Alwadaei (Hajer Mansoor Hassan, Nizar Alwadaei and

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Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor) and states that the “these are not individuals detained for non-violent political activities, or for their family ties to Sayed Al-Wedaei. Rather, they have been convicted, after trials before Bahrain’s independent courts, of involvement in serious criminal activities with the aim of spreading terror in the civilian population.

This letter states the three relatives of Mr Alwadaei were “convicted” a full week before their actual conviction on 30 October. I am concerned that if the Government of Bahrain could say how the trial would conclude a week before its actual conclusion reveals the absence of an independent judiciary and the political nature of these trials. Given the UK Government’s close relationship with Bahrain, I am sure that you will share my concerns regarding this serious revelation. I am aware that this could have been caused by a clerical error, but given the potential ramifications of this letter being published before the 30 October, I am sure you will agree with me that this is an important issue which must be raised with the Bahraini Ambassador.

Furthermore, on 2 November, the Bahrain Embassy published a public statement on the case which largely reproduced the content of the 23 October. However, this statement also included key additions which defamed Mr Alwadaei and his family. The public statement claims that Mr Alwadaei’s family were convicted based on DNA and material evidence, contradicting the Bahraini police’s own findings in the case. Through contact with the Alwadaei family, I understand that the Ministry of Interior’s own forensic report found no DNA or physical evidence connecting the three defendants to the “fake bomb” incident. Amnesty International state the convictions were based on confessions extracted under torture. Human Rights Watch, who reviewed the forensic reports in the case, state “The forensic investigation, including DNA samples and fingerprints of the defendants, failed to establish a link between the defendants and the mock explosive objects that police say they found.”

The statement says, “with regards to allegations of torture, firstly, the Ombudsman Office initiated an investigation on information in the news and media that Mr. Nazar Nema Baqer Ali Al-Wedaei has been subjected to torture, and have interviewed him. The case was referred to the Special Investigation Unit (SIU). The SIU’s investigation is still ongoing but all evidence thus far does not substantiate the allegation.” It goes on to say, “the SIU also opened an investigation into Mrs. Hajer Mansoor Hassan Ali and Mr. Mahmood Marzooq Mansoor Hassan Ali, following allegations of torture raised by Amnesty International. The first investigation was closed due to lack of evidence (including injuries) to substantiate the allegation, and the second is still ongoing but all evidence thus far does not substantiate the allegation.”

Mr Alwadaei’s work campaigning for human rights is protected in the United Kingdom under

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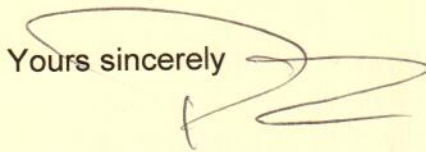
our laws guaranteeing the freedom of expression, association and assembly. I hope that you will join me in condemning any actions that seek to constrain these rights and agree that it is intolerable of any country to disrespect these fundamental rights on British soil.

I would appreciate it if you could urgently take immediate steps to stop the Bahrain Embassy in London from defaming Mr Alwadaei, misleading on the case of his family, and directly participating in the reprisals against his work based in the United Kingdom.

I expect you will want to call in the Ambassador, Sheikh Fawaz Al Khalifa, and impress on him that the reprisals against Mr Alwadaei and his family must cease with immediate effect, they must be released from prison immediately and all charges dropped and an apology issued to Mr Alwadaei and his family for the Embassy's conduct.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Yours sincerely



Tom Brake
Liberal Democrat MP Carshalton and Wallington

Lib Dem Spokesman for Exiting the European Union and International Trade and First Secretary of State

Whilst Tom Brake MP will treat as confidential any personal information that you pass to him, he will normally allow staff and authorised volunteers to see it if this is needed to help and advise you. He may pass on all or some of the information, unless requested otherwise, to agencies such as the Jobcentre Plus, HM Revenue and Customs or the Local Council if this is necessary to help with your case. Tom Brake may wish to write to you from time to time to keep you informed on issues that you may find of interest. Please let him know if you do not wish to be contacted for this purpose.

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