



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0315

Bahrain

European Parliament resolution of 7 July 2016 on Bahrain (2016/2808(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Bahrain, notably those of 9 July 2015 on Bahrain, in particular the case of Nabeel Rajab¹ and of 4 February 2016 on Bahrain: the case of Mohammed Ramadan²,
- having regard to the statement of 5 July 2016 by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on recent developments in Bahrain,
- having regard to the EU Guidelines on the Death Penalty, on Torture, on Freedom of Expression and on UN Human Rights Defenders,
- having regard to the statement of 31 May 2016 by the Spokesperson of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, on the sentencing of Ali Salman, Secretary-General of al-Wefaq in Bahrain,
- having regard to the statement of 1 June 2016 by the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, on the sentencing of opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman, the statement of 16 June 2016 by the spokesperson of the UN Secretary-General and the statement of 21 June 2016 by the spokesperson of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, both on Bahrain,
- having regard to the EU Strategic Framework and the Action Plan on Human Rights, which aims to place the protection and surveillance of human rights at the heart of all EU policies,
- having regard to the Bahraini Constitution adopted in February 2002, notably Chapter 3 thereof, to Article 364 of the Bahraini Penal Code and to the 1963 Bahraini Citizenship Act,
- having regard to the November 2011 report by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI),

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0279.

² Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0044.

- having regard to the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Arab Charter on Human Rights, to all of which Bahrain is a party,
 - having regard to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly Article 15 thereof,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas Bahrain is a key partner of the European Union in the Persian Gulf, including in the areas of political and economic relations, energy, and security; whereas it is in our mutual interest to further deepen our partnership in order to better respond to future challenges;
 - B. whereas over the past month the Government of Bahrain has intensified its campaign of repression and persecution of human rights defenders and political opposition; whereas freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are indispensable pillars of a democratic and pluralistic society; whereas the Bahraini Constitution adopted in 2002 enshrines fundamental freedoms, including the freedoms of expression and assembly;
 - C. whereas on 13 June 2016 police re-arrested the prominent human rights defender Nabeel Rajab on charges of ‘spreading false rumours in times of war’ and ‘insulting public authorities’ in relation to Twitter posts he published in 2015, which together carry a sentence of up to 13 years; whereas Nabeel Rajab previously served a two-year prison sentence between 2012 and 2014 in relation to his exercise of the right to free expression and assembly, and whereas the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled in 2013 that he had been arbitrarily detained;
 - D. whereas, after 15 days in solitary confinement, Mr Rajab’s experience of poor prison conditions led to a deterioration in his health and he was transferred to hospital on 27 June 2016; whereas he was transferred back to prison on 29 June 2016, despite continuing health problems;
 - E. whereas the Government of Bahrain forced Zainab Al-Khawaja into exile after threats of re-arrest and indefinite detention, and imposed travel bans on a group of rights activists travelling to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva;
 - F. whereas Mr Ramadan and Mr Ali Moosa are still at risk of impending execution;
 - G. whereas the Bahraini authorities continue to use revocation of citizenship as a means of political repression, culminating in the recent denaturalisation of cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim; whereas the Bahraini authorities have stripped over 300 persons of citizenship, including human rights defenders, politicians, journalists and senior religious authorities, rendering the majority of them stateless, in contravention of Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
 - H. whereas on 14 June 2016 the Bahraini authorities suspended the Kingdom’s biggest political group, the Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society, froze its assets and took ownership of its headquarters, and submitted a court request for the expedited dissolution of the political society in July 2016;

- I. whereas Sheikh Ali Salman, the head of the Al-Wefaq opposition group, has been in prison since July 2015 without fair trial, and his sentence was even extended on appeal in May 2016 from four years to nine; whereas the lack of protection of an accused person's rights is in direct violation of Bahrain's national constitution and of international law; whereas in September 2015 the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had concluded that his detention was arbitrary;
1. Expresses grave concern about the ongoing campaign of repression against human rights defenders, political opposition and civil society, as well as the restriction of fundamental democratic rights, notably the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, political pluralism and the rule of law in Bahrain; calls for an end to all acts of violence, harassment and intimidation, including at judicial level, and to the censorship of human rights defenders, political opponents, peaceful protesters and civil society actors by state authorities and the security forces and services;
2. Respects the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Bahrain and encourages continued dialogue between the Government of Bahrain, the European Union and the EU Member States;
3. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab and other human rights defenders jailed on allegations relating to their rights to free expression, assembly, and association, and for all charges against them to be dropped; calls on the authorities to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Nabeel Rajab and to provide him with all necessary medical treatment;
4. Condemns the imposition of travel bans on the delegation of human rights activists on their way to attend the 32nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva and calls for the government to lift these bans; emphasises that it is unacceptable for representatives of civil society and the media to be prevented from participating in the work of international bodies, and insists that the Bahraini authorities respect the fundamental human and political rights of Bahraini civil society representatives;
5. Reminds the Bahraini Government of its responsibility to ensure the security and safety of all citizens irrespective of their political views, affiliation or confession; believes that long-term stability and security in Bahrain can only be ensured by building a truly pluralistic society that is respectful of diversity, and, in that regard, calls for the release of Sheikh Ali Salman and other activists currently being held arbitrarily in Bahraini prisons;
6. Believes that the free expression of legitimate and peaceful grievances must be allowed; notes with concern the Bahraini Government's suppression of legitimate political opposition, including the extension of Sheikh Ali Salman's sentence, the suspension of the Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society and the freezing of its assets; calls for greater basic freedoms for all Bahraini citizens; insists on an immediate halt to the suppression of different political opinions in the country and the repression of their leading representatives, regardless of their political or religious affiliation;
7. Expresses particular concern regarding the misuse of anti-terrorism laws in Bahrain and, especially, the revocation of nationality as a means of political pressure and punishment; calls strongly on the Bahraini authorities to revoke the decision to denaturalise Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, to amend the country's citizenship law and to restore Bahraini citizenship to those individuals who have been unfairly stripped of it, so as to comply with international standards and international law on the matter;

8. Calls on the Bahraini authorities to ensure the full implementation of the 2002 Constitution and to respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed therein, as well as the international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bahrain; calls in particular for the effective implementation of the recommendations issued by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, the Universal Periodic Review and the national human rights institution, in order to allow for improvements in the human rights situation;
9. Reminds the Bahraini authorities that Article 15 of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment prohibits the use of any statement made as a result of torture as evidence in any proceedings; calls on the Bahraini authorities to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture;
10. Welcomes Bahrain's participation in the international coalition against Daesh;
11. Expresses its concern about Bahrain's return to the death sentence and calls for the reintroduction of the moratorium on the death penalty;
12. Welcomes the measures to protect workers introduced in the Bahraini Labour Law of 2012 and believes that these can serve as an example to be followed by other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council;
13. Commends Bahrain for generally respecting the right of citizens and foreign residents to practise their religion; calls on the Bahraini authorities to live up to the country's constitution, which stipulates that there shall be no discrimination as regards the rights and duties of citizens on grounds of religion and to end any discrimination against the Shia population;
14. Notes the Government of Bahrain's ongoing efforts to reform the country's penal code and legal procedures, and encourages the continuation of this process; urges the Government of Bahrain to uphold international standards on the right to a fair trial; stresses the importance of the support given to Bahrain, in particular as regards its judicial system, with a view to ensuring compliance with international human rights standards; calls for reinforcement of the human rights dialogue between the EU and Bahrain;
15. Calls on the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the European External Action Service and the Member States to persist in raising concerns about attacks against the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly in Bahrain and other GCC countries, both on a bilateral level and using multilateral platforms such as the upcoming EU-GCC ministerial meeting on 18-19 July 2016;
16. Condemns the agreements on trade in weapons and technologies used to violate human rights; calls for the prohibition of exports of tear gas and anti-riot equipment until such time as investigations have been carried out into the inappropriate use thereof and the perpetrators have been identified and brought before the courts;
17. Strongly encourages the establishment of an EU-Bahrain human rights working group, but notes that an EU-Bahrain human rights dialogue is no substitute for a thorough dialogue between government, opposition and civil society in Bahrain itself;

18. Encourages the Government of Bahrain to cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteurs (notably on torture, freedom of assembly, the independence of judges and lawyers, and human rights defenders) and to issue a standing invitation to them;
19. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the Government and Parliament of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council.