28 January 2015

HM King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa
Office of The King
The Amiri Court, Rifa’a Palace, Manama, Bahrain
Cc: Lt. General Sheikh Rashed bin Abdulla Al-Khalifa, Minister of Interior
H.E Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Joint Appeal of Parliamentarians Calling for the Immediate Release of Sheikh Ali Salman

We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned by the arrest and arbitrary detention since 28 December 2014 of Sheikh Ali Salman, the respected Secretary-General of Bahrain’s largest opposition society, Al Wefaq National Islamic Society, notably for the charges of “incitement to promote the change of the political system by force, threats and other illegal means;” “disrupting public order” and “publicly inciting others to disobey the law”1. Salman was also elected member of the Bahraini Parliament in 2006 and served for four years until 2010.

We express our undiminished solidarity with and support for our colleague Salman, who has consistently called for peaceful protest, condemned all forms of violence and advocated for a fair and just democratic political system in Bahrain through the establishment of a genuine constitutional monarchy. The accusations made by the Ministry of Interior against Salman of seeking to change the political system through forceful means are without merit and are being used as a smokescreen for a politically-motivated attack on the right to freedom of expression. Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and other human rights organizations including Amnesty International have analysed the speeches and statements of Mr. Sheikh Ali Salman2, which confirm his enduring and profound dedication to non-violence, democracy and the rule of law.

Over the past four years, Sheikh Salman has met with government representatives in an attempt to begin a process of national dialogue to end the ongoing political and human rights crisis in Bahrain. His arrest and ongoing detention undermine these efforts and are contributing to heightened tensions that can only set the country further along the dangerous path of disunity. As highlighted by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in a statement released on 30 December 2014, “Opposition parties are fundamental pillars of any democracy and Sheikh Salman’s arrest risks intensifying the fraught political scene that has seen anti-government protests for nearly four years.”

2 see also article above as well as http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=15461&LangID=E
- http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/7215
We call upon the Bahraini authorities to ensure the safe and immediate release of Sheikh Ali Salman, as well as all other people arbitrarily detained in Bahrain simply for expressing their right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The arbitrary detention and prosecution of Salman and other outspoken activists, along with the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters and the blanket ban on protests, invalidates the claims of the government of Bahrain that it is implementing the recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and the UN’s Universal Periodic Review, and compromises any chances of reconciliation and unity in Bahrain.

We therefore also urge our own governments to demand that Bahrain complies with its obligations under international human rights laws and stops any further threats against the peaceful opposition leaders and human rights advocates, who should be able to carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Signatories (109 parliamentarians from 43 countries):

Members of the European Parliament: Bart Staes, MEP, (Belgium); Claude Rolin, MEP (Belgium); Frédérique Ries, MEP (Belgium); Jeppe Kofod, MEP (Denmark); Christel Schaldemose, MEP (Denmark); Heidi Hautala, MEP (Finland); Sylvie Guillaume, MEP, (France); Barbara Lochbihler, MEP (Germany); Maria Heubuch, MEP (Germany); Helmut Scholz, MEP (Germany); Nessa Childers, MEP (Ireland); Marian Harkin, MEP (Ireland); Ignazio Corrao, MEP (Italy); Brando Benifei, MEP (Italy); Patrizia Toia, MEP (Italy); Nicola Caputo, MEP (Italy); Marco Valli, MEP (Italy); Eleonora Evi, MEP (Italy); Fabio Massimo Castaldo, MEP (Italy); Laura Ferrara, MEP (Italy); Pierricola Pedicini, MEP (Italy); Laura Agea, MEP (Italy); Dario Tamburrano, MEP (Italy); Elly Schlein, MEP (Italy); Judith Sargentini, MEP (Netherlands); Ana Gomes, MEP (Portugal); Ivo Vajgl, MEP (Slovenia); Ramon Tremosa i Balcells, MEP (Spain); Ernest Urtasun, MEP (Spain); Iratxe García-Perez, MEP (Spain); Javier Nart, MEP (Spain); Soraya Post, MEP (Sweden); Alynn Smith, MEP (United Kingdom); Julie Ward, MEP (United Kingdom); Jean Lambert, MEP (United Kingdom); Anneliese Dodds, MEP (United Kingdom).

Members of National Parliaments: Manuel Garrido, MP, Argentina; Margarita Stolbizer, MP, Argentina; Laurie Ferguson, MP, Australia; Melissa Parke, MP, Australia; Tony Zappia, MP, Australia; Alan Griffin, MP, Australia; Jill Hall, MP, Australia; Andrew Leigh, MP, Australia; Claire Moore, Senator, Australia; Christine Milne, Senator, Australia; Lisa Singh, Senator, Australia; Penny Wright, Senator, Australia; Lee Rhiannon, Senator, Australia; Gavin Marshall, Australia; Petra Bayr, MP, Austria; Israfil Alam, MP, Bangladesh; Mohd Ali, MP, Bahrain; Alain Destexhe, Senator, Belgium; Dirk Van der Maelen, Belgium; Francoise Schepmans, MP, Belgium; Wouter De Vriendt, MP, Belgium; Lisa Shoman, Senator, Belize; Emmanuel Nkengurutse, Senator, Burundi; Chief Paul Nji Tumasang, MP, Cameroon; Norman George, MP, Cook Islands; Paul Dehé, MP, Cote d'Ivoire; Yacouba Sangare, MP, Cote d'Ivoire; Dieudonné Sunguma Kangimbi, MP, Democratic Republic of Congo; Emery Okundji Ndjovu, MP, Democratic Republic of Congo; François Bemba, MP, Democratic Republic of Congo; Sebastien Lonalisa, Senator, Democratic Republic of Congo; Minerva Tavarez Mirabal, MP, Dominican Republic; Oraz Tynkkynen, MP, Finland; Alban Bagbin, MP, Ghana; George Loh, MP, Ghana; Richard Winfred Anane, MP, Ghana; Simon Desras, Senator, Haiti; Sarhäng Mohammed, MP, Iraq; David Norris, Senator, Ireland; Jim Walsh, Senator, Ireland; Sergio Lo Giudice, Senator, Italy; Mario Marazziti, MP, Italy; Roberto Rampi, MP, Italy; Lia Quartapelle, MP, Italy; Sim Him, MP, Malaysia; Bréhima Beridogo, MP, Mali; Loubna Amhair, MP, Morocco; Prakash Mahat, MP, Nepal; Ek Nath Dhakal, MP, Nepal; Ramesh Lekhak, MP, Nepal; Harry van Bommel, MP, Netherlands; Crossley Tatui, MP, Niue; Naved Qamar, MP, Pakistan; Ibrahim Martin Bangura, MP, Sierra Leone; Bernadette Lahai, MP, Sierra Leone; Urko Aiartza Azurtza, Senator, Spain; Carles Campuzano, MP, Spain; Jordi Xucla, MP, Spain; Ruth Wijdenbosch, MP, Suriname; Margareta Cederfelt, MP, Sweden; Désirée Pethrus, MP, Sweden; Jonas Sjöstedt, MP, Sweden; Dr. Pindi Chana, MP, United Republic of Tanzania; Yusuph Nassir, MP, United Republic of Tanzania; Isieli Pulu, MP, Tonga; Souad Abderrahim, MP, Tunisia; Yusuf Irbec, MP, Turkey; Peter Okeoyoh, MP, Uganda; Beatrice Atim Anywar, MP, Uganda; Caroline Lucas, MP, United Kingdom; Felipe Michelin, MP, Uruguay; Ali Asnal, MP, Yemen; Fungayi Jessie Majome, MP, Zimbabwe.