

# Human Rights Watch

## Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

**<https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/11/21/joint-letter-secretary-state-clinton-regarding-reform-bahrain>**

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The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton

Secretary of State

U.S. Department of State

Washington, DC

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are writing to you out of concern with ongoing developments in Bahrain. We agree with your recent statement that, meaningful reform and equal treatment for all Bahrainis are in Bahrain's interest, in the region's interest, and in ours.

As we await the report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) on November 23, we are also pleased to hear that the administration will review the Commission's findings carefully and assess the Government of Bahrain's efforts to implement the recommendations and make needed reforms.

We are hopeful the BICI report will thoroughly document human rights violations committed in Bahrain that have been independently verified by international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Human Rights First, Amnesty International, Physicians for Human Rights, and many others since protests began in February. Furthermore, we hope the implementation of reform and accountability mechanisms for human rights violations will lead to a process of substantive political reform that is responsive to the legitimate democratic aspirations of the Bahraini people.

As you noted recently, mass arrests and brute force are at odds with the universal rights of Bahrain's citizens and will not make legitimate calls for reform go away. In order to restore public confidence and deliver on its promises to uphold human rights and accountability, the U.S. Government should urge the Government of Bahrain to:

While we hope the BICI report will comprehensively address the range of past and ongoing human rights abuses, the Government of Bahrain's commitment to reform should be demonstrated by concrete efforts to quickly implement serious reforms. The democratic demands of the Bahraini people are based on a universal desire for dignity and self-determination. Such demands include, but are not limited to:

These concerns have been articulated in documents such as the National Action Charter of 2001, the Manama Document of October 2011, and points laid out by the Crown Prince of Bahrain in a speech on March 13, 2011.

After considering the recommendations of the BICI report and previous reports by international rights organizations, we hope that, as you have stated, the U.S. Government will hold the Bahraini Government to these commitments and to encourage the opposition to respond constructively to secure lasting reform.

We were pleased to see the delay of the recently proposed sale of arms to Bahrain, and we hope that no sale of items that could be used to repress the Bahraini people will move forward until reforms are agreed to, implementation has begun, and the Bahraini government has clearly ceased using torture and violence against its own people. As we also recognize the need for dialogue, reconciliation, and concrete reforms, we look forward to a comprehensive reconciliation process that restores respect for human rights and holds violators accountable. We hope that process will be a first step that can lead to a meaningful, substantive national dialogue, which includes all parts of the peaceful opposition, to produce concrete political reforms that meet the democratic aspirations of the Bahraini people.

Sincerely,

**Stephen McInerney**, *Project on Middle East Democracy*

**Elisa Massimino**, *Human Rights First*

**Hans Hogrefe**, *Physicians for Human Rights*

**Michele Dunne**, *Atlantic Council*

**Elliott Abrams**, *Council on Foreign Relations*

**Steven Heydemann**, *Georgetown University*

**Matthew Duss**, *Center for American Progress*

**Jean-Francois Julliard**, *Reporters Without Borders*

**Robert Naiman**, *Just Foreign Policy*

**Diane Randall**, *Friends Committee on National Legislation*

**Toby Jones**, *Rutgers University*

**Laurie A. Brand**, *University of Southern California*

**Lisa Schirch**, *3P Human Security*

**James E. Winkler**, *General Board of Church and Society, The United Methodist Church*

**Tom Malinowski**, *Human Rights Watch*

**David J. Kramer**, *Freedom House*

**Shawna Bader-Blau**, *Solidarity Center*

**Jennifer L. Windsor**, *Georgetown University*

**Andrew Exum**, *Center for a New American Security*

**Cathy Feingold**, *AFL-CIO*

**Ted Piccone**, *Brookings Institution*

**Juan Cole**, *University of Michigan*

**Jamie M. Fly**, *Foreign Policy Initiative*

**Suad Joseph**, *University of California, Davis*

**Jon Rainwater**, *Peace Action West*

**Charles Butterworth**, *University of Maryland*

**Husain Abdulla**, *Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain*

**Ehtisham Abidi**, *Universal Muslim Association of America*

**Zachary Lockman**, *New York University*

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