



18 April 2011

Mrs. Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Bxl 12/202
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Dear Mrs. Ashton

We are witnessing an historic moment where people in the Arab countries are protesting against all forms of oppression and dictatorship. They are seeking their basic Human Rights and striving to build democratic regimes where people can live in freedom and dignity.

We appreciate your continuous engagement with the developments in the Arab region and the support that you are giving to its people. We highly appreciate your statement last week concerning the situation in Bahrain where you asked the government to stop its using violence against the peaceful protests and to release the political detainees.

The Bahraini government denies it is using torture. Yet it was reported last week that two political detainees died in custody (Zakaria Rashid Hasan El Ashiri; 40 Years old and Hasan Jasem Mohamed Makki; 39 years old). The official account says that the first one died due to a shock he received by accident and the second one due to anemia. Bahraini officials state that investigations will be conducted in order to assure that political detainees are not being tortured.

We believe that your meeting with GCC leaders on the 20 April in Abu Dhabi is an important opportunity for the EU to clearly indicate its support for the popular aspirations in the region for peaceful transformations towards political, social and economic inclusion. We also understand that you will be visiting the kingdom of Bahrain during your presence in the gulf. We consequently urge you to meet with civil society representatives

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who are living under very difficult conditions. It would not only be a great gesture of solidarity, but also an important occasion to listen to their perspective about the situation in the country.

We are sure of your deep concern and willingness to protect civilians, and we feel that involving civil society organizations in your talks will help in promoting a peaceful transition towards a democratic regime.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Stocker', with a stylized, cursive script.

Simon Stocker
Director
Eurostep

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ziad Abdul Samad', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ziad Abdul Samad
Director
ANND

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roberto Bissio', with a stylized, cursive script.

Roberto Bissio
Coordinator
Social Watch