



ADHRB Files OECD Complaint against Formula One Activities in Bahrain

WASHINGTON, DC – 20 March 2014 – Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) has engaged the services of [Deighton Pierce Glynn](#) solicitors in London to file a complaint against UK-based Formula One management, teams, and sponsors under the Guidelines of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The complaint alleges that the defendant organizations have not mitigated the [human rights impact](#) caused by holding the Formula One Grand Prix race in the country. The complaint has been filed with the United Kingdom Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills in London, which is the UK's National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines.

In 2011, thousands of Bahrainis took to the streets to demand democratic reform and observation of human rights in their country. In March of that year, the Bahrain government responded by [violently attacking](#) protesters, leaving dozens dead and hundreds more wounded. In April of that year, the government [cancelled](#) the scheduled Formula One Grand Prix, citing the instability in the country accompanying the government's crackdown. In 2012 and 2013, however, the Grand Prix [returned](#), but the crackdown remained unabated. In the past two years, the government crackdown on protests in the lead up to the Bahrain Grand Prix resulted in the death of protester [Salah Abbas](#) and injuries to hundreds, as well as the arbitrary detention and torture of hundreds more.

"The death of protester Salah Abbas was an avoidable tragedy," said ADHRB Executive Director Husain Abdulla. "If Formula One management, sponsors, and teams had demanded that the Government of Bahrain protect the fundamental human rights of protesters during the race, or had pulled their support of the race during any number of escalations prior to the event, Salah Abbas would still be alive and hundreds of protesters would not have been jailed or tortured."

According to the [2011 OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises](#), organizations have a responsibility to "... avoid causing or contributing to adverse human rights impacts and address such impacts when they occur." Organizations falling under OECD jurisdiction additionally must "seek ways to prevent or mitigate adverse human rights impacts that are directly linked to their business operations..." and "carry out human rights due diligence..." as appropriate to their involvement with abuses.

"The organizations implicated in the complaint to the OECD have not done enough to mitigate the human rights impact of their activities," said Abdulla. "By lodging a complaint with the OECD, we hope to engage the defendant organizations in a mediated dialogue towards a solution that will not only serve their own corporate interests, but also respect the human rights of the people of Bahrain."

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INFORMATION FOR EDITORS:

What are the OECD Guidelines?

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are recommendations from OECD member governments to multinational enterprises operating in or from adhering countries. Although non-binding, they set standards for responsible business conduct consistent with applicable laws and internationally recognized human rights standards. National Contact Points are designated by each member government to receive and adjudicate complaints against corporations. Decisions are published and corporations held publicly to account for any breaches of the guidelines which are found. These can have a profound impact on future conduct and on companies' reputation and value.

What distinguishes the OECD Guidelines from other corporate responsibility instruments and mechanisms is their international nature, the fact that they are government-backed standards and that they have a dispute resolution mechanism for resolving conflicts regarding alleged corporate misconduct. See <http://oecdwatch.org/oecd-guidelines> for more information.

Against which companies have complaints been filed?

- The Formula 1 group companies in the UK which are responsible for organizing and commercializing the Formula 1 races.
- The UK-based Formula 1 teams: McLaren Mercedes Racing; Williams Martini Racing; Caterham F1 Team; Marussia F1 Team; Infiniti Red Bull Racing; Mercedes AMG Petronas Formula One Team; Lotus F1 Team; and Sahara Force India Formula One Team
- The UK-based team sponsors: Truphone Limited; Unilever PLC; Reading Football Club; Sage (UK); Pepe Jeans London; Royal Dutch Shell; Norton Rose Fulbright LLP; Chelsea FC; Experian; and Diageo (Johnnie Walker).

Is a copy of the complaint available?

It may be made available in due course. However, at present we are awaiting the parties' responses.

What next?

The Department for Business, Innovation, and Skills has confirmed receipt of the complaint. It has also been sent to the defendant organizations. We have asked all parties to provide a response before the F1 Bahrain race scheduled for 4-6 April 2014. However, if the complaint has not been resolved by that time, it will be maintained looking ahead to future races.