

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 13, 2014

Dear Secretaries Hagel and Kerry,

The political unrest in Bahrain continues with no end in sight. The Bahrain government's reluctance to find a constructive resolution to the current stalemate poses a definite threat to the individual freedoms of the people of Bahrain and their civil society and undermines regional stability and interests of the United States. Given the close relationship the United States shares with Bahrain, we feel strongly that the United States is uniquely positioned to offer assistance in encouraging a long term political settlement to the upheaval. We have identified two important steps the United States can take in bringing peace and security to the people of Bahrain.

First, we must reiterate that political prisoners from the opposition must be included in any dialogue between the government and opposition groups, including those beyond the Al Wefaq group. A range of human rights activists and civil society leaders in Bahrain urge that a dialogue between the government and opposition figures be conducted in this manner in order for a meaningful deal to emerge. President Obama agreed with this sentiment in his May 19, 2011 speech, when he told the Bahraini government that "the only way forward is for the government and opposition to engage in a dialogue and you can't have a real dialogue when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail." However, no senior administration figure has since publicly repeated that position. We urge that this message be restated publicly, clearly, and immediately by the President or a senior administration official, to encourage a wider participation of opposition figures, including prisoners, in a meaningful dialogue.

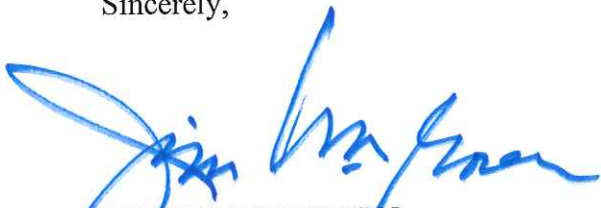
Secondly, the administration should use its strong military relationship with Bahrain to push for greater diversity within the Bahrain security forces. The Bahrain security forces are drawn almost exclusively from the Sunni minority community. This is not an accurate representation of the people of Bahrain and contributes to feelings of resentment and unrest among the population. The Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, commissioned by the King of Bahrain in 2011, recommended that the government of Bahrain "establish urgently, and implement vigorously, a program for the integration into the security forces of personnel from all the communities in Bahrain." This has not yet happened. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom's annual report released on May 1, 2014 noted that "Members of the Shi'a community still cannot serve in the active military, only in administrative positions, and there are no Shi'a in the upper levels of the Bahrain government security apparatus, including the military and police."

We suggest that a positive start would be to encourage the government of Bahrain to produce statistics for the numbers of Shi'a currently in its police and military ranks. This will assist in raising awareness on the extreme lack of diversity, as well as provide specific data for the restructuring process. We have seen in Northern Ireland how, with the help of the U.S.

government, great improvements can be made in diversifying security forces to better reflect the communities they serve. We have no doubt that we can achieve the same results in Bahrain.

While Bahrain's future will be decided by Bahrainis themselves, the U.S. has a crucial role to play in encouraging human rights reform and democracy in the country, in the interests of regional stability. The administration can make an immediate contribution to this cause by addressing the issues mentioned above. We appreciate your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress



HENRY C. "HANK" JOHNSON JR.
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS JR.
Member of Congress



BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress



RAUL GRIJALVA
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