



Ana GOMES

Dear Chairman Jagland and Members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee:

I, Ana Gomes, as a Portuguese Member of the European Parliament, am pleased to nominate Abdulhadi Abdulla al-Khawaja and his daughters Zainab al-Khawaja and Maryam al-Khawaja of Bahrain for the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize.

The al-Khawaja family—Mr. al-Khawaja and his daughters Zainab and Maryam—have devoted themselves, at great personal risk and hardship to peacefully advocating for human rights and political reforms in Bahrain. All three have played a peaceful role in Bahrain's on-going popular protests and have served as voices of non-violent resistance calling on the Bahraini monarchy to respect human rights and pursue peaceful political reform.

Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, 51, is a prominent human rights defender who has worked for more than 20 years to advance human rights in Bahrain. As a result of his tireless advocacy, the Kingdom of Bahrain has repeatedly detained Mr. al-Khawaja and subjected him to torture and inhumane conditions of confinement. In 2002, Mr. al-Khawaja founded the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) with a number of other Bahraini activists and served as its president. Although banned in 2004, the BCHR and its members have continued to support peaceful democratic reform, promote fundamental freedoms, fight against discrimination, and protect human rights in Bahrain. Mr. al-Khawaja also worked for Front Line Defenders as its Regional Protection Coordinator for the Middle East until February 2011.

In April 2011, as popular anti-government protests swept Bahrain, Mr. al-Khawaja publicly criticized the royal family for its crackdown on protesters in a speech in Manama's Pearl Roundabout and demanded that they face charges for torture and corruption. Several days later in a pre-dawn raid, 15-20 masked policemen without identification or warrant stormed Zainab al-Khawaja's apartment, breaking down the door with a sledgehammer. Police dragged Mr. al-Khawaja down the stairs by his neck and beat him until he lost consciousness. Mr. al-Khawaja would later require a four-hour surgery to repair four fractured bones in his jaw as a result of this beating.

Nearly a month after his arrest and after suffering torture and ill-treatment in detention, Mr. al-Khawaja was charged with a number of security-related charges, including financing and participating in terrorism to overthrow the government and spying for a foreign country. Mr. al-Khawaja was tried before a military tribunal and sentenced to life imprisonment. Mr. al-Khawaja embarked on a 110-day hunger strike to protest his sentencing and inhumane treatment in detention. After tremendous pressure from the international community, the Bahraini Court of Cassation ordered a retrial of Mr. al-Khawaja's case in civilian court; however, the court upheld his conviction and sentencing.



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In the wake of their father's arrest, both Zainab and Maryam al-Khawaja have bravely continued to call for peaceful political reform in Bahrain and hold the Bahraini government accountable for its human rights violations as it continues to crackdown on protests and imprison those who criticize the regime—particularly members of the BCHR.

Since the protests began in early 2011, Zainab has become a central figure in the Bahraini opposition calling for peaceful protests against the Bahraini government and documenting and disseminating information about human rights abuses, particularly police brutality against protestors. As a result of her activism, Zainab has been arrested seven times and spent several months in prison for her participation in non-violent protests.

As the BCHR's vice-president and head of its foreign policy office, Maryam has become the international face of the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain appearing before numerous political bodies and international organizations, including the European Parliament, US Congress, and UN Human Rights Council. She uses these appearances and interviews with the media to urge greater international attention to the plight of Bahraini citizens and increased international pressure on the Bahraini government to respect human rights and seek a peaceful political resolution to the ongoing crisis.

The al-Khawajas have bravely dedicated their lives to pursuing greater respect for human rights in Bahrain. As a result, the Bahraini government has subjected Mr. al-Khawaja to torture and life imprisonment, and both Zainab and Maryam face public smear campaigns by state media and the constant threat of arrest. Despite the grave personal hardships that they face, they remain committed to peaceful reform in Bahrain. Conferring the Nobel Peace Prize on the al-Khawaja family would draw attention to Mr. al-Khawaja's continued unjust detention and enable the international community to strongly stand for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of Bahraini citizens as the Bahraini government and members of the political opposition seek to find a lasting political solution to the crisis in Bahrain.

Sincerely,

Ana Maria Rosa Martins Gomes

Member of the European Parliament