

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 7, 2013

His Majesty King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa
The Amiri Court, Riffa Palace
P.O. Box 555
Manama, Bahrain

Your Royal Highness,

We write to express our concern and disappointment with the announcement that United Nations Special Rapporteur Juan E. Méndez will not be permitted to visit Bahrain. This is the second time since the outbreak of protests in 2011 that he has been invited, and then disinvited, to carry out his important work.

As you know, serious accusations have been made in recent years against members of the Bahraini security forces, who are accused of torturing detainees with impunity. Many of these reports involve the torture of human rights defenders and political prisoners. In response, groups including Amnesty International, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Redress, the International Federation for Human Rights, and the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims have all called for an independent investigation into allegations of torture and ill-treatment. A visit by UN Special Rapporteur Juan Méndez would have helped address these issues.

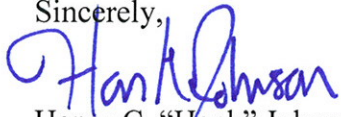
As the UN Special Rapporteur, Mr. Méndez is mandated to submit urgent appeals to states regarding individuals reported to be at risk of torture or who have allegedly suffered torture in the past; to undertake fact-finding country visits; and to submit annual reports on activities to the UN Human Rights Council and the General Assembly. Following the cancellation of his visit to Bahrain, Mr. Méndez made a public statement that he had intended to conduct his visit in the spirit of cooperation and expected the Government of Bahrain to share that approach but, regrettably, this does not appear to be the case.


Torture is universally prohibited under international law. The use of torture contradicts your government's commitment during the 2012 Universal Periodic Review to bring its domestic law in line with the definition of torture under its international obligations. The Government of Bahrain's refusal to allow Juan Méndez to visit the country is also inconsistent with recommendations made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), including that torture allegations be independently investigated, which your government agreed to implement.


We urge you to reverse the decision to deny Juan Méndez and other international observers the opportunity to investigate allegations of torture, and in doing so demonstrate your commitment to help put an end to such abuses.

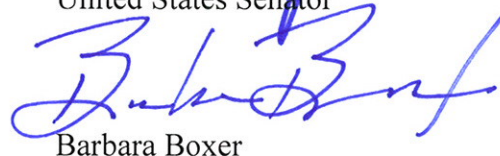
Thank you for your consideration.


Sincerely,

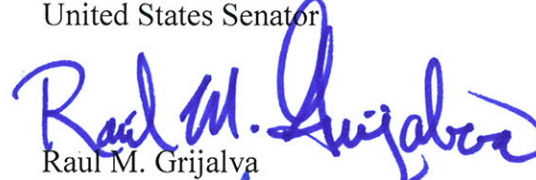

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson
Member of Congress


Ron Wyden
United States Senator

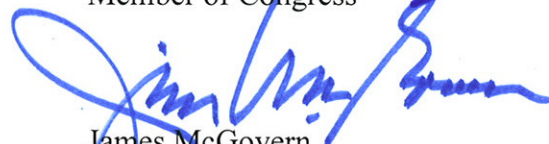

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator


Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Jim Himes
Member of Congress



Raul M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

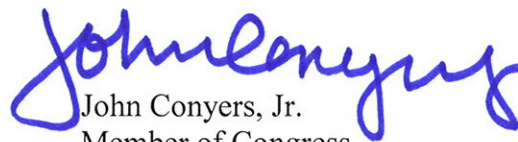

Jim McDermott
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James McGovern
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

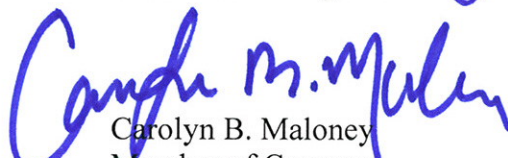

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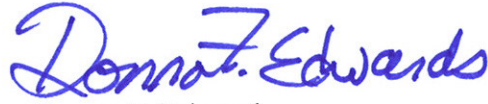
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Keith Ellison
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Donna F. Edwards
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