

Resolution on the case of human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in Bahrain

2022/2994(RSP) - 15/12/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 316 votes to 6, with 38 abstentions a resolution on the case of human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in Bahrain.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the Renew, Greens/EFA, The Left, S&D and Members.

Human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, a Danish-Bahraini citizen, co-founder of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and the Gulf Center for Human Rights, and winner of the 2022 Martin Ennals Award, is currently completing his 11th year in prison and serving a life sentence for taking a leading role in protests demanding democratic reforms during the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain. After his arrest, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja's was beaten, tortured and sentenced in an unfair trial that did not comply with Bahraini criminal law or minimum international standards for fair trials. As a direct consequence of his imprisonment, torture and deprivation of access to medical care Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja suffers from a series of chronic and degenerative health problems, including extreme back pain and impaired vision, and is in need of urgent medical attention.

Parliament urged Bahrain to release Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja immediately and unconditionally. All its prisoners of conscience should also be released and charges against them to be dropped.

It also called on Bahrain to:

- end the use of torture and other ill-treatment;
- guarantee fair and due process and that the rights of detainees are upheld, including those of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja;
- restore Bahraini citizenship to the almost 300 individuals who have been stripped of it;
- guarantee a safe space for civil society organisations and independent media and to ensure the right to freedom of expression can be exercised;
- reintroduce a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

Parliament called on EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell, the European External Action Service and Member States to raise the case of Al Khawaja and all other human rights defenders in the country both publicly and privately. Moreover, the use of surveillance technology against Bahraini human rights defenders was strongly condemned.

Lastly, Parliament condemned in the strongest terms any undue influence on the work of the European Parliament, whether directly by foreign countries or indirectly through government-controlled NGOs. In this regard, it urged all EU institutions to further strengthen the Transparency Register by adopting more stringent rules and to establish an independent ethics committee for all EU institutions.