



INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL SUPPORTING FAIR TRIAL & HUMAN RIGHTS

Registration No. 2795/2012

OFFICIAL LETTER HEAD OF THE ORGANIZATION

UK OPENED NEW MILITARY BASE IN BAHRAIN DESPITE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



Crown Prince Andrew (Duke of York) and Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa at the opening ceremony of the new naval facility

The United Kingdom recently opened in Bahrain its first [permanent military base](#) in the Middle East since 1971 in an effort to bolster its role as a major player in the region.

Once again the UK leadership chose an inopportune time to highlight the increasing relationship with Bahrain since the Gulf Kingdom's human rights situation in the past years has been deteriorating even more.

Nevertheless, this instance of public affinity between the leaders of the two countries is not new, but part of a larger trend by which the UK demonstrates its real commitments.

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Despite rights groups' alarm and concern over Bahrain's treatment of pro-democracy protesters, civil society members, and human rights defenders, including credible allegations of torture, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary detention, the Queen of England [invited King Hamad to her 90th birthday](#) celebrations two years ago. Then, last year, she accepted a gift of a stallion from King Hamad.

The Queen's gift of the stallion in October 2017 came less than a month after Amnesty International having released a [report](#) stating that Bahrain had refused to implement promised reforms and authorities had dramatically escalated the repression of political dissidents and human rights defenders.

As part of this repression, UK-based Bahraini activists [reported](#) that their families were being harassed, threatened, and detained back in Bahrain, but the UK has not taken adequate measures to investigate such reprisal attacks. In response, Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei (director of advocacy at the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy) said that this gesture from the Queen constituted a reward to the King of Bahrain, despite the fact that he has taken his citizens' family members as hostages in cowardly attempts to prevent UK-based Bahraini people from protesting. This gift was effectively a green light, signalling that the Queen has no issues with the Bahraini royalty.

Britain's close relationship with Bahrain in support of human right violations also extends into other fields. In April this year, Britain was criticized for having [trained](#) Brigadier Fawaz Hassan Al Hassan, the police chief who oversees the facility where authorities abuse and torture political dissidents. As the most senior police officer in the city of Muharraq, he presides over the prison where Bahraini security forces beat and sexually assaulted Najah Ahmed Yousif, a peaceful dissident detained for campaigning on social media. Ebtisam Al- Saegh, another Bahraini woman advocating for human rights on social media, alleges that security forces raped her in the same police station one month later.

The UK frequently justifies its comfortable relationship with Bahrain by claiming that Bahrain's national human rights institutions demonstrate the county's progress in protecting and promoting human rights. However, Bahrain's National Institute for Human Rights does not comply with the [Paris Principles](#) governing national human rights institutions, having [failed](#) to obtain an "A" ranking and earning only a "B" status.

It's failure to obtain an "A" grade stem from its insufficiently transparent member appointment process, lack of independence from the government, its failure to fully support all complaints and



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human rights defenders, lack of satisfactory monitoring of detention rooms, and lack of adequately cooperation with other human rights bodies.

Bahrain's western allies, which include not just the UK but also the US, must stop militarily and diplomatically showing the unabashed support they have been exhibiting towards Bahrain.

Western allies have military bases in Bahrain and make massive arms sales to the Gulf Kingdom. This business and military relationship is further supported by Western leaders' personal friendship with King Hamad.

Their open demonstrations of which side they are on the defence of human rights (for example in the case of the UK, the government's repeated failure to raise concerns about human rights at a high level) only casts doubt on their willingness on the matter. All of this crystal clearly demonstrates the British government's prioritisation of business ties over widespread systematic abuses like torture and executions.