



Ref: MHRSD/66/2012

Date: 25th January 2012

**Mr. Joel Simon**  
**Executive Director**  
**Committee to Protect Journalist**

**Dear Mr. Simon,**

As you are aware, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa established the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) on 29 June 2011 with the task of investigating and reporting on the events that took place in Bahrain in February-March 2011 and thereafter. The Commission, composed of eminent and independent non-Bahraini lawyers, reported on 23 November 2011. On receipt of the Report, the Government of Bahrain committed itself to implementing in full all of its recommendations. That commitment remains.

Since the Report was issued, the Government has taken a number of steps to give effect to the Report's recommendations, starting with the establishment of an impartial and independent National Commission made up of Bahrainis from all segments of society to oversee the implementation process. The formation of this Commission is the Report's first recommendation. The Commission is working to ensure that all of the Report's recommendations are implemented promptly and as intended by BICI.

The Government has also begun adopting a number of legislative amendments on free speech, torture and human rights protection that harmonise Bahrain's laws with international human rights standards where necessary. A number of renowned legal experts have been appointed to assist on issues of institutional reform and human rights compliance, including Sir Daniel Bethlehem KCMG QC, former principal Legal Adviser at the UK's Foreign Office, Sir Jeffrey Jowell KCMG QC, until recently the UK member on the Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy through Law, and Professor Sarah Cleveland, Director of Columbia University's Human Rights Institute and previously Counsellor at the US State Department Legal Adviser's Office. International advisers have also started work on the revision of policing procedures and operating methods. Amongst them, John Timoney from the US is the former Chief of Police of the Miami and New York Police Departments and Commissioner of the Philadelphia and New York forces, and John Yates is a former Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police of

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the UK. Both individuals are now based full-time in Bahrain, assisting with what is an area of the utmost priority and importance, although not without its challenges.

Other measures taken to-date by the Government include the reinstatement of all public sector employees dismissed for free speech activity; the dropping of all free speech related charges in judicial proceedings; and the formation of a committee of civilian judges by Bahrain's Supreme Judicial Council to review all convictions rendered by the National Safety Courts since their formation. This is only a snapshot of the progress made. Many more changes have taken place and continue to take place. A fuller picture of the Government's implementation efforts, including regular updates, can be found at [www.govactions.bh](http://www.govactions.bh).

As part of these measures of reform – to which, I emphasise, the Government of Bahrain remains fully committed – the Government wishes to ensure that it develops and maintains an open and engaged relationship with the human rights community.

As Minister for Human Rights and Social Development, I am co-ordinating the Government's engagement efforts. I wish to facilitate positive interaction with your organisation, including for the purposes of entry into Bahrain and my availability and that of other Ministers and external advisers, to discuss our wide-ranging reforms and more generally to start the longer term process of positive engagement that the Government seeks, for the benefit of all in Bahrain.

I do not suggest of course that you and your colleagues would be restricted in any way to engaging with Government representatives during your visits to Bahrain, or be obligated to do so. However, it is my hope that you will take the opportunity to hold discussions with us, especially regarding any matters of concern. I would also encourage you to meet others based in Bahrain, from the foreign diplomatic community to private organisations, who will have their own views on the Government's efforts.

I look forward to meeting you and your colleagues with our new team as soon as possible. I expect to hold introductory meetings with representatives of all international human rights organisations that we are in contact with regarding human rights in Bahrain. These meetings will require some co-ordination, and I hope that you will send me proposed dates of your next visit to Bahrain, if any, as soon as possible in advance.

Finally, I have established a dedicated point of contact for all of your enquiries going forward, to ensure that we are able to address your requests efficiently. This contact is

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Mitesh Kotecha, an external adviser who will work closely with those in my Ministry as well as with others in Government. Mr Kotecha may be contacted at [hrliaison@social.gov.bh](mailto:hrliaison@social.gov.bh). Please treat him as your first point of contact with the Government on any human rights related issue that you may have.

We are trying in good faith to set in train a positive agenda following the BICI Report. This letter and invitation is a start. I hope that it will find a positive reception.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. Fatima Al Balooshi**  
Minister of Human Rights and Social Development  
Acting Minister of Health

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