

The Honourable Diane Ablonczy  
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Dear Minister of State Ablonczy,

My name is Naser Al-Raas and I am a Canadian citizen trapped in a nightmare of human rights abuse in Bahrain. I am writing with an urgent plea for your help. As you know, for months I have been experiencing serious human rights violations in Bahrain. My situation is now very grave and I need the Canadian government, my government, to stand up for my rights and make it clear to the government of Bahrain that the violations must come to an end. I have to say that right now I feel abandoned by my government. I hope you can change that.

It started in March. I was arrested for no good reason when I was leaving Bahrain after a visit with my fiancée and family. I was imprisoned for a month in terrible conditions and I was badly tortured. The memories of that frightening time still haunt me.

Since then, I have been charged with criminal offences but I have not committed any crime. I have had to go through an unfair trial. I am not allowed to leave Bahrain. My Canadian passport has been confiscated. And I have been sentenced to five years in prison. All of these human rights violations have happened to me over the past eight months. But all I have done is speak out about human rights and democracy, like millions of other people in Bahrain and across the Middle East and North Africa.

My situation is particularly dangerous because of my health. I have been under the care of the Ottawa Heart Institute since 2002 because of heart problems and a blood disorder. This week my doctor in Ottawa wrote a letter to the Bahraini government saying that if I go back to prison my "life will be in jeopardy". But the authorities here do not care about that, they paid no attention to my doctor's letter.

It is a critical time for me now. Yesterday a judge dismissed my request for a court order that I not be rearrested before an appeal of my case is heard, because of my health problems. The judge didn't give any reasons. That appeal is scheduled for November 22<sup>nd</sup>. I am terrified right now. I am terrified that they will order me to go back to prison at any time. I am terrified that my appeal will not succeed. I am terrified that if I do go back to prison I will be tortured again and that I will get very sick or even die because of my health problems. And all of this just because I believe in human rights and freedom.

Minister I have to say that with all of this happening I feel abandoned by my own government. I would have expected that the Canadian government would have immediately told the Bahraini government to stop the human rights violations and let me go. I would have thought that the Canadian government would have told the Bahraini government that they must respect freedom of expression; that they cannot torture people and that the charges have to be dropped. But I have seen no evidence that the Canadian government has made any of those demands. Instead all I have been told is that the Canadian government is watching and monitoring.

And sometimes when I have asked for very specific help it has been refused. I asked the Canadian government to give me copies of all the documents they have received from the Bahraini government about my case. My lawyer here thinks those will be helpful in defending me. But this week I received information from the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs telling me that none of the documents from the Bahraini government could be given to me. I was stunned. It made me feel like the government is more concerned about standing up for the government of Bahrain than standing up for my rights and freedom.

I do appreciate the watching and monitoring that has been done by some of Canada's diplomats based at our Embassy in Saudi Arabia. But in the face of all the human rights violations in Bahrain, watching and monitoring is not enough. I need help. I need political action. I need the government to be an advocate for my rights. And I need that now. I need to know that my government is on my side, not just some neutral observer on the sidelines.

Please Minister, take decisive action now, before it is too late and before I am back in a Bahraini courtroom or a Bahraini jail. Speak up before I am once again at risk of being tortured. I need you to:

- 1) Tell the Bahraini government that they have to drop the charges against me and overturn my conviction.
- 2) Tell the Bahraini government to return my Canadian passport.
- 3) Give me copies of all information the Canadian government has received from the Bahraini government about my case so that I have a better chance of defending myself. Please protect me, not the government of Bahrain.

Minister, I am so desperate that I will be sharing this letter publicly. I do not know what else to do. I do not know any other way to try to get your attention and get my government to come to my aid. I hope that when you read this you will take action immediately. I also hope that you will get in touch with me to let me know what the government is doing. You can reach me by Skype at **Naser.AIRess** Or you can email by fiancée Zainab Ahmed at [zainabahmed45@gmail.com](mailto:zainabahmed45@gmail.com).

Yours sincerely,

Naser Al-Raas

