

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 2, 2012

His Majesty King Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa
King of Bahrain
The Amiri Court, Riffa Palace
PO Box 555
Manama, Bahrain

Your Majesty King Hamad,

We write to urge you to reconsider the recent travel bans on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) seeking to enter Bahrain. As we approach the one-year anniversary of mass protests in Bahrain on February 14, reversing these bans would support your pledge to engage international organizations and individuals "in order to ensure that there is no return to unacceptable practices once the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry has left Bahrain."

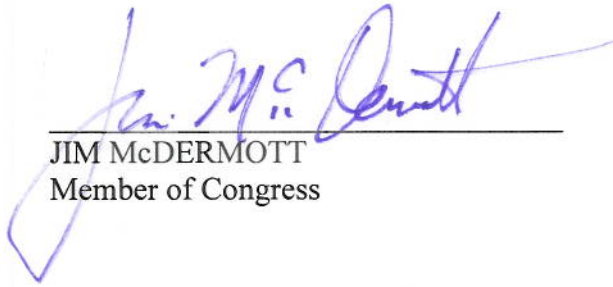
In recent weeks, representatives of NGOs such as Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), Freedom House, and Human Rights First have either been denied entry or instructed to delay their visit to Bahrain. PHR Deputy Director Richard Sollom was denied entry at Manama airport in January, despite having a valid visa. On January 12, the Bahraini Ministry of Social Development issued a statement in response assuring that the Kingdom "welcomes visits by human rights organizations" and its "open-door policy remains in place." Days later, the Embassy of Bahrain instructed representatives of other NGOs to delay their visits. Freedom House's Vice President of Regional Programs, Robert Herman, was told several days before his scheduled departure in January to delay his trip until the end of February, as was Human Rights First's Director of the Human Rights Defenders Program Brian Dooley.

The denial of access for groups that pursue nonpartisan democracy and human rights activities is very troubling. These groups help to advance the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights, and some of them have ongoing projects with the Bahraini people and Bahraini civil society institutions that are critical to the process of reform and the protection of human rights.

We aspire to a strong, mutually beneficial relationship between our countries. Travel bans such as those issued to NGO representatives, however, are a major obstacle to such a relationship. We hope that your government will immediately reverse its position and allow NGOs to enter Bahrain and carry out their important work in Bahrain.

Finally, we hope that the Kingdom of Bahrain recognizes the important role of NGOs in the national reconciliation and reform process.

Sincerely,



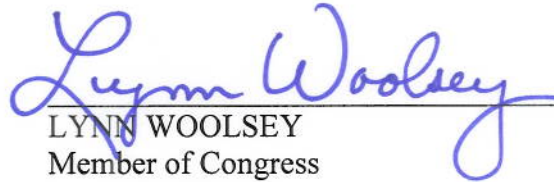
JIM McDERMOTT
Member of Congress



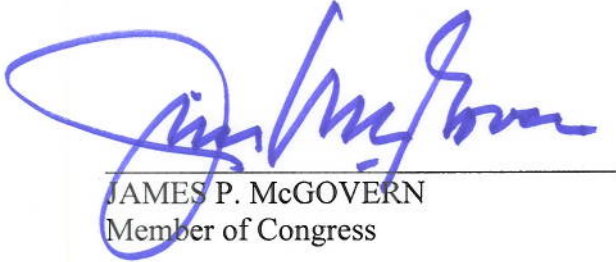
KEITH ELLISON
Member of Congress



DONALD PAYNE
Member of Congress



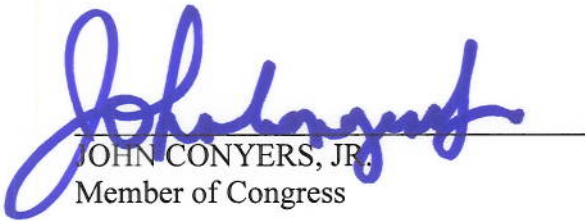
LYNN WOOLSEY
Member of Congress



JAMES P. McGOVERN
Member of Congress



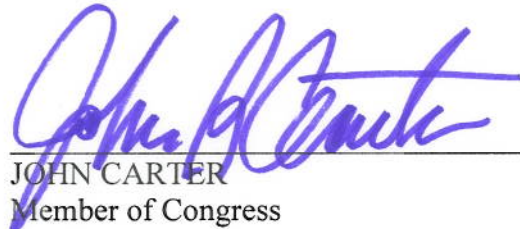
MICHAEL HONDA
Member of Congress



JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Member of Congress



TRENT FRANKS
Member of Congress



JOHN CARTER
Member of Congress



JAMES MORAN
Member of Congress



RON WYDEN
United States Senator

Cc: Her Excellency Houda Ezra Ebrahim Nonoo, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain