

(English version)

Question for written answer E-004105/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy
Per Clausen (The Left)
(17 October 2025)

Subject: Bahrain's arbitrary detention of EU citizen Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and the consequences for relations with the EU and for regular prison visits by the EU Ambassador to Bahrain

In a letter sent from Jau prison in Bahrain, dated 16 October, Danish citizen and political prisoner Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja wrote to the Commission President, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR), and the Special Representative for Human Rights. In the letter he asked whether the EU considered him to be a human rights defender, an EU-citizen, and whether it agreed with the UN that his detention was arbitrary.

In the letter, he also asked if the EU should consequently demand his release.

1. Could the VP/HR please confirm that as long as Bahrain continues to detain EU citizens arbitrarily as political prisoners, such as in the case of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, thereby clearly violating human rights, there will be no progress made on visa waivers, strategic partnerships, trade or similar negotiations?

2. Will the EU Ambassador to Bahrain be instructed to regularly visit Mr Al-Khawaja in jail, to monitor his situation and, if necessary, criticise the Bahraini authorities?

3. Does the EU consider Mr Al-Khawaja to be both a human rights defender and an EU-citizen, does it agree with the UN opinion of 2012 ⁽¹⁾ clearly describing the detention of Mr Al-Khawaja as arbitrary, and will it demand his release?

Submitted: 17.10.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European
Commission
(5 December 2025)

The promotion and the protection of human rights constitutes a core dimension of the EU's engagement with the Kingdom of Bahrain. The EU uses all available means at its disposal to address the human rights situation in the country.

The EU has consistently raised its serious concerns regarding the situation of political prisoner and prominent human rights defender, Mr Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, with the Government of Bahrain, including through annual EU-Bahrain Human Rights Dialogues and EU Delegation in Riyadh, with Bahrain's National Human Rights Institution, and in the framework of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

EU Special Representative for Human Rights addressed a letter to the Foreign Affairs Minister of Bahrain, pleading for Mr Al-Khawaja's immediate and unconditional release on humanitarian grounds, as did the former EU Special Representative for Human Rights in 2021. The EU has frequently liaised on the matter with the Danish authorities, who hold the main consular responsibility on Mr Al-Khawaja's case as a Danish citizen.

Taking into consideration the conclusions of the United Nations (UN) Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of 2012 ⁽¹⁾, the EU has also been insisting on numerous occasions with its Bahraini interlocutors on the need to respect the UN Guidelines on the Minimum Standards of Treatment of Prisoners ('Mandela Rules'), underscoring the EU's principled position on freedom of expression and association.

¹ <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/WGAD/2012/6>

¹ https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/730786/files/A_HRC_WGAD_2012_6-EN.pdf.