(English version)

Question for written answer E-004195/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Per Clausen (The Left)
(24 October 2025)

Subject: EU citizens imprisoned in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries

In her answer to Question E-002427/2025 ([1]), Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Kaja Kallas highlights the Commission's engagement in human rights dialogue with the GCC while avoiding any mention of specific mechanisms to secure the release of EU citizens imprisoned in GCC member states on political grounds.

We again draw attention to the case of Danish-Bahraini citizen and human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja who has been imprisoned in Bahrain since 2011. As stated in the VP/HR's response to the previous question, the defending of human rights is a core value of the EU. His case has been repeatedly raised by the Parliament.

1. Will the Commission set the release of EU citizens imprisoned on political grounds as a prerequisite for moving forward in trade and strategic partnership agreements with the GCC countries?

2. If not, how does it justify proceeding with negotiations while EU citizens remain imprisoned, in contradiction of core EU values?

3. Will the Commission guarantee that any agreements will include binding and enforceable human rights conditionality clauses, including the possibility of cancellation in case of violations, and how will it ensure transparency and accountability in how it raises individual cases so that Parliament and the public can be assured that EU citizens' rights are being effectively protected?

Submitted: 24.10.2025

Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Kallas on behalf of the European Commission
(5 January 2026)

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 imprisoned EU citizens, including during the regular annual EU-Bahrain Human Rights Dialogues. Moreover, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights engages actively on individual cases of political prisoners, including the mentioned case.

Such an enhanced political and human rights dialogue is a key tenet of the future bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the EU and the Kingdom of Bahrain, reflecting the shared commitment to promote regional stability, prosperity and human rights in the country.

The SPA shall aim to promote EU interests, while upholding its core values as a principled and value-based actor on the international stage.

The European Parliament also plays an important role in ensuring that values-based diplomacy remains central to the EU external action, combining principled advocacy with enhanced practical cooperation to promote gradual but sustained reforms in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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[1] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-10-2025-002427-ASW_EN.html