

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 24, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to raise our concerns about the government of Bahrain's troubling human rights record and to better understand your administration's strategy for pressing this issue with our important ally and partner.

For the past decade, the State Department and major human rights advocates have detailed a long list of serious and ongoing human rights abuses in Bahrain. These include, but are not limited to: arbitrary detention, torture, cruel and degrading treatment of prisoners, restrictions on freedom of the press, interference with peaceful assembly, and restrictions on political participation and religious practice. Recent reports by Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain and other organizations indicate that this disturbing record has grown worse since 2011, when Bahrainis took to the streets in peaceful protest and were met with violence.

We are deeply concerned about the impact this violent repression has on Bahrain's citizens and on the country's longer-term stability. We believe the U.S. must hold allies to a higher standard, just as we hold ourselves to a higher standard. Indeed, we have long raised concerns about the situation in Bahrain precisely because Manama is an important ally in a strategic region. And we are particularly concerned that the government of Bahrain's violent, systemic repression will breed resentment and instability, and could ultimately threaten the long-term presence of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and the several thousand Americans living and working on U.S. facilities in Bahrain.

We believe American officials must be willing to speak hard truths when friends and partners lose their way and appreciate that you have spoken of putting human rights at the center of U.S. foreign policy. To help us better understand your administration's policy to improve the situation in Bahrain, please answer the following questions.

- What actions have you taken to raise the government of Bahrain's systemic human rights violations against its own citizens? What has been the response?
- Have you raised concerns about the continued imprisonment of opposition leaders with the government of Bahrain? If so, what has been the response?
- Have you pushed the government of Bahrain to release critics and opposition leaders like Naji Fateel and Hasan Mushaima?

- Have you considered the government of Bahrain’s continued repression and human rights abuses when evaluating sales of defense articles and services to Bahrain?
- Have you considered Global Magnitsky Act authority or other sanctions authorities against members of the government of Bahrain responsible for serious human rights violations?

Bahrainis continue to call for agency and accountability, often at great risk to their safety and that of their families. We stand with them in urging you and the Biden-Harris administration to promote reform and respect for basic human rights in Bahrain and greater stability in the region. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator