Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt, Rt Hon Alistair Burt, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)

King Charles Street

Whitehall

London

SW1A 2AH

2 October 2018

Dear Ministers,

We are writing to request that you condemn the appalling treatment of Hassan Mushaima, a 70-year-old Bahraini political opposition leader and a [*“prisoner of conscience”*](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde11/7743/2018/en/) who is being denied his basic rights. We are disappointed with the Foreign and Commonwealth’s (FCO’s) inaction towards the case and the 46-day hunger strike launched by Mr Mushaima’s son, Ali, outside the Bahraini embassy in London to demand his father be treated humanely. Ali continues to protest outside even though he has paused his hunger strike. So far, you have refused to meet him.

As Mr Burt confirmed at the [Westminster Debate](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-09-11/debates/D741EBB4-DB9C-4F66-AF85-B0E1043E5214/Bahrain?highlight=bahrain#contribution-5C71E97B-5231-4F13-98F3-9881AE03FDF5) on 11 September, the FCO continues to rely on *“categorical assurances”* by the Bahraini Government, which deny the ill-treatment against Hassan Mushaima, in particular his access to medical care. The [Ministry of Interior Ombudsman](https://twitter.com/ombudsman_bh/status/1038067202753277952?s=12) and the [National Institute for Human Rights](http://www.nihr.org.bh/EN/Administrator/MediaHandler/GenericHandler/documents/Statements/07Aug2018.pdf) (NIHR), which Mr Burt referred to during the debate, have once again proven to be [deceptive and inaccurate](http://birdbh.org/2018/09/bahrain-uk-trained-watchdog-ombudsman-whitewashes-degrading-treatment-of-political-prisoner-hassan-mushaima/) by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), and have only attempted to sanitise the abuse against Mr Mushaima. Both bodies have been condemned by the [UN](http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsqYPuFZC34VM6MoD0MvS%2bS%2bhcJl3TUrOvvF%2fGuWWUtDMNTj4lYASRqLw7nbC8IcS25V04LGI8FMQttufqvlxyVSqBsgx3LVglkkCx%2bAgXg%2bL) for being ineffective and lacking independence. Nonetheless, the UK is accepting these statements as unquestionable facts, while dismissing widespread international concern about the case.

Mr Mushaima continues to be [denied](https://twitter.com/AMushaima/status/1044588141590409218) access to adequate medical treatment. Two of his appointments with a diabetes specialist and ENT specialist, which became necessary after the injury he sustained from the torture he endured in 2011, have been cancelled within one week. Furthermore, one month has elapsed since Mr Mushaima underwent his cancer scans. He is yet to receive the results, despite the process usually taking no longer than one day.

Prison authorities continue to impose arbitrary restrictions on medical appointments and family visits, which Mr Mushaima refuses as he considers them to be degrading and a violation of his human dignity. According to UN standards on the treatment of prisoners ([Mandela Rules](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/GA-RESOLUTION/E_ebook.pdf)), these measures amount to [*“ill-treatment”*](https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/30/bahrain-end-degrading-treatment-activists) when imposed on elderly prisoners who pose no flight risks.

He continues to be denied access to reading material, with his collection of 100 books arbitrarily confiscated. Prominent international writers have [written](https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2018/09/authors-send-letter-to-his-royal-highness-hamad-bin-isa-al-khalifa/) to the King of Bahrain, attempting to help guarantee Mr Mushaima these basic rights; unfortunately these efforts have yet to yield any results.

As the most relevant ministerial representative from your government, we urge Mr Burt to meet with Ali to discuss his father’s case, especially since Ali has spent 46 days on a hunger strike with the hope that his message will be heard. We regret that no support was offered to Ali from the government after he endured an [assault](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/08/jailed-bahraini-politician-son-extends-hunger-strike-protest-180814154640291.html) committed by the Bahraini embassy on 12 August. Furthermore, in his response to Ali’s local MP, Mike Freer MP, Mr Burt stated that “*this case has attracted a large amount of attention from colleagues across the House… I am afraid I do not believe a meeting with your constituent would be of any further assistance at present*”. We believe that it is of vital importance to consider the account of the victim, by listening to the first-hand testimony of Hassan Mushaima’s son.

This nation has consistently sought to be at the forefront of human rights protection and promotion. The case of Ali’s father, Hassan Mushaima, must be at the top of the UK government’s agenda with Bahrain, especially given the multi-million pound technical assistance programme that is provided to the country to implement human rights reform, which so far has yielded no substantive results. We invite you to reconsider the FCO’s position and to meet with Ali to discuss his grievances.

To our great concern, as well as those of his fellow activists and doctors, Ali will [resume](https://twitter.com/AMushaima/status/1044588141590409218) his hunger strike in the near future, thereby putting his life in further danger. We are committed to taking this case forward with the greatest scrutiny so that Ali does not resume his hunger strike and may end his protest outside the embassy.

Mr Burt has previously [condemned the verdict](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-dismayed-at-verdict-in-bahraini-activists-appeal) upholding the sentences of 13 political activists in 2013, including Mr Mushaima, because it violated due process and was based on confessions through torture; we expect the FCO to resume this position and ensure Mr Mushaima is given the humane treatment that he deserves, and ultimately advocate for his release.

The UK must end its political and financial support to Bahrain, starting by suspending any funding to the Kingdom until human rights conditions and clear [performance markers](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmfaff/874/874.pdf) are in place. In particular, we urge the FCO to:

* Publicly acknowledge the inhumane treatment of Hassan Mushaima and compel Bahraini prison authorities to remove arbitrary and abusive constraints on inmates;
* Ensure Hassan Mushaima has access to adequate medical treatment, family visits and books;
* Meet with Ali Mushaima to discuss his father’s case; and
* Advocate for the unconditional release of Hassan Mushaima and all political prisoners in Bahrain who were imprisoned for their peaceful activities.

Yours Sincerely

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Paul Farrelly | Jim Cunningham | Ronnie Campbell |
| Roger Godsiff | Andy Slaughter | Tom Brake |
| Alan Brown | Lord Scriven | Edward Davey |
| Caroline Lucas | Christine Jardine | Lloyd Russell-Moyle |
| George Howarth | Helen Hayes | John Grogan |