



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Briefing

Bahrain: Repression and the Consequences for Reconciliation

Thursday, February 11, 2016

11 AM – 12 PM

902 Hart Senate Office Building

Panelists



Brian Dooley is Director of Human Rights Defenders at Human Rights First. He first worked on the Hill in 1984 as an intern to Senator Ted Kennedy, researching what eventually became the Anti-Apartheid Act. He is the author of several books of US politics and half a dozen reports on Bahrain. His commentary appears regularly in national and international media on human rights issues.



Maryam Al-Khawaja is a Bahraini Human Rights Defender, and currently the Co-Director for the Gulf Center for Human Rights (GCHR). She served as the Acting President of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) until July 2014 when the President, Nabeel Rajab, was released from prison. In Bahrain, Al-Khawaja played an instrumental role in the democratic protests taking place in the Pearl Roundabout in February 2011, which triggered a government response of widespread extra judicial killings, arrest, torture, discrimination, sackings and fear to suppress dissent and quell voices for reform. She is the daughter of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, the founder of BCHR and GCHR, who went on a 110 day hunger strike protesting human rights violations and was among a group of high-profile activists and opposition leaders sentenced to life imprisonment in June 2011. In August 2014, Al-Khawaja made a trip back to Bahrain to visit her father who was on a life threatening hunger strike. She was held back at the airport, assaulted, and then detained for 19 days. Due to international pressure, she was released and able to leave the country a week later, then sentenced to one year imprisonment on the 1st of December on trumped up charges. Despite being abroad, Al-Khawaja remains very connected to events on the ground and has emerged as a leading voice for human rights and political reform in Bahrain and the Gulf region. She has been influential in shaping official responses to the atrocities in Bahrain around the world by engaging with prominent

European and American policymakers in her advocacy efforts. Al-Khawaja and the BCHR have received numerous awards for their human rights work, including the Rafto Prize. The Al-Khawaja family was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013 by an EU Parliament Member.



Kate Kizer is the U.S. advocacy officer at Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain. She manages the group's relationships with the U.S. government to develop legislative and advocacy strategies to advance U.S. policies supporting democracy and human rights in Bahrain and the rest of the GCC.

Moderator



Cole Bockenfeld is the Deputy Director for Policy at the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED). He has studied the Middle East and global diplomacy at the University of Arkansas, Georgetown University, and the University of London. Prior to joining POMED, he worked for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) on electoral assistance programs in Iraq, Lebanon, Morocco, and the West Bank and Gaza, including fieldwork in Beirut and Baghdad. He also conducted research with the Center for Islam and Democracy (CSID) in Amman. His writing on Middle Eastern politics and U.S. foreign policy has been published by the Washington Post, Foreign Policy, and The Christian Science Monitor. He has spoken on Middle East affairs with numerous media outlets including the New York Times, NPR, The Boston Globe, The Christian Science Monitor, Al-Jazeera, and Alhurra.