Dear Representative/Senator \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

I write to ask that you support human rights in Bahrain by speaking up on behalf of Sheikh Mohammed Habib al-Miqdad and all prisoners of conscience currently suffering from torture and mistreatment in the country. Al-Miqdad is a prominent Bahraini-Swedish religious leader, scholar, social activist and the president of the Al-Zahra Charity Institution for Orphans. He is well-known for speaking out against injustices related to corruption, discrimination, arbitrary detention and torture.

In February 2011, thousands of Bahrainis took the streets to peacefully call for democracy, freedom, and political reforms as part of a broader movement in the Middle East. The authorities in Bahrain responded with a violent and brutal crackdown that resulted in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries, and thousands of arbitrary arrests. Since then, the government has only continued to crack down on human rights by the recently criminalizing the rights to freedom of assembly, association, and speech, while fostering a culture of impunity for human rights abusers. Arbitrary detention and torture continue unabated, while the government reduces the sentences of convicted human rights offenders.

Among those arbitrarily arrested and tortured was Sheikh Miqdad, a 51-year-old religious cleric and charity worker, who was detained in April 2011 “by a group of 50-60 people wearing civilian clothes and masks” at his home. During his imprisonment, al-Miqdad claims he was blindfolded, handcuffed, and repeatedly tortured by Sheikh Nasser Bin Hamad, the son of the Bahraini King. Sheikh Nasser is currently under investigation in the United Kingdom for allegedly torturing another Bahraini prisoner who has sought asylum there.

Before his trial, al-Miqdad tried to inform the presiding judge about the various acts of torture and sexual harassment that he and other prisoners were subjected to. He showed the judge more than 50 instances of electric shock on his body, and the wound left by a drill piercing his leg. On June 22, 2011 al-Miqdad was sentenced to life in prison.

Last year, al-Miqdad began experiencing difficulty ingesting food. Bahraini authorities refused to grant him access to proper medical treatment, in direct contravention of human rights conventions on the treatment of prisoners. When the Interior Ministry finally allowed al-Miqdad to seek medical treatment, doctors confirmed that his difficulty ingesting food was a direct result of severe torture and injury to the abdomen.

As your constituent, I ask that you call for Sheikh Miqdad’s unconditional release and petition the Government of Bahrain to ensure that he is receiving medical treatment on par with international standards for the injuries he has sustained in prison. The United States Government has an obligation to ensure that its allies in the region uphold basic human rights such as the rights to peaceful association, assembly and speech.

For that reason, I ask that you, in your capacity as a public figure, bring attention to Sheikh Miqdad’s situation, and send a strong signal that the United States does not condone the arbitrary detention and maltreatment of peaceful demonstrators and human rights activists.

Sincerely,

Name Address