



Rue de la Linière , 11 • 1060, Brussels, Belgium • tel: +32 (0) 2 60 94 415 • contact@ecdhr.org • @ECDHRbxl

Dear Member of the Danish Parliament,

We at ECDHR are deeply concerned about the Government of Bahrain's use of the 2023 Formula 1 (F1) Grand Prix to whitewash the deteriorating human rights situation in the country. We would like to draw your attention especially to the controversial implications of a Danish company sponsoring the event in a country that has illegally detained and abused for over a decade a Danish-Bahraini human rights activist, Mr. Abdulhadi al-Khawaja.

Since the violent crackdowns on the peaceful pro-democracy protests in 2011, the Kingdom of Bahrain has increasingly [turned](#) into a police state where activists and civil society actors can no longer freely voice their opinions. It is in the wake of these protests that Mr. Al-Khawaja was arbitrarily [arrested](#) and sentenced to life in prison on [unfounded](#), terrorism-related charges. Throughout his incarceration, Mr. Al-Khawaja [has been](#) subject to torture, beatings, verbal abuse, threats of sexual assault and long periods of solitary confinement. This severe treatment has taken a toll on his health, forcing him to undergo medical surgery multiple times. He protested the denial of [proper medical](#) care and [restrictions on family visits](#) by undertaking [six hunger strikes](#).

One of the main sponsors of F1 and Bahrain's International Circuit is the Danish company *DSV A/S: Global Transport and Logistics*. As Qatar's World Cup [has already proven](#), hosting such prestigious international competitions like the F1 Grand Prix in countries where human rights are systematically violated is at least highly controversial. By sponsoring Bahrain's 2023 Grand Prix, DSV A/S is indirectly facilitating the Bahraini government in covering the abuses faced by Danish citizen Mr. Al-Khawaja and its negative international reputation.

This not only contrasts with DSV's own commitments to adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as expressed in their [Code of Conduct](#). It also acts in disregard of [The Danish Action Plan on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles of Human Rights](#), which establishes the State duty to protect human rights and sets out expectations to all businesses within Denmark's territory and/or jurisdiction to "take responsibility to respect human rights when operating abroad- especially in developing countries where there can be an increased risk of having an adverse impact on human rights."

The [obligation](#) for all large, state-owned Danish companies to report on human rights [has not been followed](#) thoroughly according to the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Moreover, the [motion](#) for a legislation on mandatory human rights due diligence and corporate liability has not proceeded further

since its proposal in 2019. Finally, despite claims about the adoption of a legal framework concerning corporate human rights due diligence at the end of 2021, no such proposal [has been presented](#) yet.

While commending Denmark for such efforts, we have to acknowledge that they have proven to be insufficient. This is why we call on you in your capacity as a MP to build upon them and, in accordance with the principles and obligations contained in both the Danish Action Plan and [the renewed EU Strategy 2011–14 for Corporate Social Responsibility](#), to:

- Call on the Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs to coordinate with the EU Delegation to and Member States' representations in Bahrain to request a visit to Al-Khawaja and ensure consular protection is applied to him;
- Call on *DSV A/S: Global Transport and Logistics* to raise concerns about the conditions of Danish-Bahraini citizen Mr. Al-Khawaja with its F1 partners;
- Call on *DSV A/S: Global Transport and Logistics* to comply with the human rights commitments contained in its Code of Conduct and in the Danish National Plan, especially with respect to its business relations involving countries implicated in serious human rights violations;
- Call on *DSV A/S: Global Transport and Logistics* to publish an official statement assessing its potential negative impact on human rights in Bahrain;
- Call on *DSV A/S: Global Transport and Logistics* to expand its Code of Conduct as to conditionalize any business partnerships upon a thorough and independent evaluation of the human rights situation of the countries that would be involved by those relationships;
- Call on the Danish government to ensure appropriate measures are taken in case *DSV A/S* does not comply with the existing human rights due diligence requirements as well as the aforementioned requests;
- Demand the Danish government that human rights reporting requirements are properly implemented within large, state-owned Danish companies, and that such requirements are extended to all Danish companies, especially those operating in developing countries, preferably by adopting adequate legislations.

We thank you for your consideration and remain available to provide you with any further information you may need.

Sincerely,

European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights staff.