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SANS FRONTIERES**
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M. François HOLLANDE
President
Elysée Palace
55 rue du Fg Saint Honoré
75008 Paris

Paris, July the 26th 2012

Purpose: Concerns following the unannounced visit of King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain on the 23rd July

Dear Mr Hollande,

We are writing to you following your meeting on Monday, July 23 with King Hamad bin Issa Al Khalifa of Bahrain. This visit was not announced on the Elysée's website and no official statement was issued by your office after the meeting. Apparently, journalists were also not aware of this meeting.

We are concerned about the quasi-secret character of this meeting and we wonder if it reflects an intent to avoid commenting on the deterioration and the gravity of the human rights situation in Bahrain today. We knew King Hamad was preparing to come to France and that your office was assessing whether to respond positively to his request for a meeting.

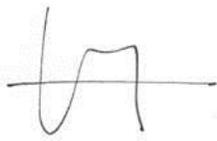
This visit could have been a timely opportunity to express publicly as well as to King Hamad directly France's concerns about the human rights situation in Bahrain. The government of Bahrain, as you are aware, asserts that you had only praise for the government's claimed political reforms.

We wonder if the secrecy around this visit signals political embarrassment on your part -- embarrassment that may be warranted given the continuing repression by Bahrain's ruling family, whose security forces in the past received training and assistance from France. In this regard, the announcement, relayed by the Bahrain News Agency, according to which bilateral military cooperation will be consolidated, is of great concerns.

The signatory organisations call on your office to issue a statement clarifying France's stance in the meeting with King Hamad, and to state clearly that France deplores Bahrain's failure to date to implement the most important recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, namely to free those jailed solely for exercising their rights to free expression and peaceful assembly, and to hold accountable senior officials implicated in torture and other serious human rights violations.

We respectfully hope our message will be taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Jean-Marie Fardeau
France Director
Human Rights Watch



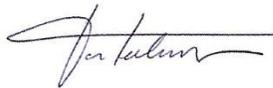
Souhayr Belhassen
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Pierre Tartakowsky
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