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Copy to: Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), Formula 1 Racing Teams 2025

**Urgent - Bahrain GP: Ongoing Human Rights Concerns Linked to the Upcoming Race
9 April 2025**

Dear Mr Domenicali,

As the Bahrain Grand Prix (11–13 April 2025) approaches, I am writing to express serious concern over Formula One's continued failure to address human rights abuses tied to its presence in the country.

Despite the serious human rights violations during or around the race in Bahrain, I regret that past engagement efforts, both from [rights groups](#) and [UK parliamentarians](#), have been met with silence from F1.

Bahrain has systematically dismantled independent media, closed civic space, and severely curtailed freedoms of expression and assembly. It ranked among the ten worst countries for press freedom in Reporters Without Borders' [2024 World Press Freedom Index](#) and in the bottom 20 countries on the Economist's [Democracy Index 2024](#). Over 350 political prisoners remain behind bars, including leading political activists imprisoned solely for their role in the 2011 Uprising and death row inmates, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD).

Bahrain also continues to use heavy-handed repression to suppress any dissent during and around the F1 races. On the final day of this year's pre-season testing (28 February 2025), human rights defender Ali AlHajee was [summoned](#) by Bahraini authorities for his human rights advocacy and interrogated over his social media posts exposing abuses against political prisoners in Bahrain. He was [detained](#) for 11 days under investigation on baseless charges of "misusing social media to spread false information" and remains at risk of further prosecution.

Ali AlHajee's targeting was not an isolated incident, but part of a troubling pattern of harassment and persecution of activists and peaceful protesters by Bahraini authorities linked to F1 races in the country. Last year, on 25 March 2024, prominent Bahraini activist Ebrahim Sharif was arbitrarily [arrested](#) after criticising Bahrain's [full ownership](#) of the McLaren Group in a series of social media [posts](#) on X. On 5 March 2023, four Bahraini



activists were [arrested](#), threatened, verbally abused, and forced to sign a plea restricting their right to protest — simply for peacefully demonstrating near the Grand Prix Circuit in Bahrain.

While F1 has previously [stated](#) that they “have always been clear with all race promoters and governments [...] worldwide, including Bahrain, that [they] take violence, abuse of human rights and repression very seriously,” there remains no transparency over what steps F1 has taken to mitigate human rights risks and protect those targeted in connection with its races.

I have also written to the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), raising alarm about [recent regulations](#) that restrict and penalise the free speech of drivers.

In light of the upcoming race in Bahrain, I remind you of your responsibility to protect human rights and to ensure that F1 does not contribute to the infringement of the rights of those who exercise freedom of speech and assembly.

In the spirit of transparency, I invite you to come on the record and share:

- What steps will you take to ensure that fundamental rights are protected and that individuals exercising those rights do not face reprisals by Bahraini authorities during the race this weekend and in future races?
- What due diligence has been conducted by F1 regarding its human rights impact that shows that its presence does not contribute — directly or indirectly — to human rights abuses in the country?

Kindly note that we intend to communicate this letter publicly and hope that you will share your response.

Yours sincerely,
Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei
Advocacy Director
Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD)