



For Immediate Release

**PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR GLOBAL ACTION URGES IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OF KHALIL AL MARZOOQ *held as prisoner of conscience in Bahrain***

New York/The Hague, 25 September 2013.- One week ago, on 17 September 2013, **Khalil Al Marzooq**, an individual who, with many other colleagues, resigned as a Member of Parliament in Bahrain in 2011 in protest at the lack of commitment by the Government, in their collective view, to meaningful political reform, was arrested in Manama on the basis of politically motivated charges of inciting violence and suspicion of links with a terrorist organization.

Having reviewed video-footage of the public speech of Khalil Al Marzooq on 6 September 2013 that prompted the arrest, Amnesty International (AI) and Human Rights Watch (HRW) only found evidence of his statements to an audience of approximately 6000 persons recalling “that political goals and principles shall be pursued with the methods of non-violence and dialogue.” Nothing in the actions of Khalil Al Marzooq appear to justify the reasons for his subsequent detention.

Khalil Al Marzooq served as democratically elected member of the House of Representatives of Bahrain (2006-2010), and was re-elected in 2010 for another 4-year team. In 2010, Khalil Al Marzooq was elected Deputy Speaker of the Parliament. However in March 2011 he, along with the other 18 opposition parliamentarians of the 40-seats lower house of Parliament, resigned in protest at the use of violence by authorities against peaceful activists holding demonstrations in the Pearl Roundabout in Manama and throughout the country.

Between 2006 and until his resignation to Parliament, Khalil Al Marzooq served as member of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) leading initiatives of political dialogue with the government and the opposition to enhance the respect of the rule of law in Bahrain. Khalil Al Marzooq has worked tirelessly promoting the ratification by Bahrain and other countries in the Arab region of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Given his leadership and constructive contribution to Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), Khalil Al Marzooq was recognized by the membership of PGA and was subsequently elected as a member of our Executive Committee.

PGA stands in solidarity with Khalil Al Marzooq and with his personal commitment to peace by non-violent means. We remain convinced that his stance – shared by so many others – holds the best prospect for a better future and stronger rule of law in Bahrain. Khalil Al Marzooq has been a staunch defender of genuine civil participation in decision-making, non-discrimination, equal opportunity and security for all in Bahrain, for enhancing the space of participation for civil society and for the promotion of free media in his country. At the international level, Khalil Al Marzooq has been a spokesperson for PGA in the Middle East region to end impunity and to take measures to prevent the victimization of civilian populations, including through the ratification and domestic implementation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

PGA believes that the situation in Bahrain continues to offer the international community a space to promote democracy and human rights. A proper management of the conflict, strongly supporting, in particular, increased opportunities for non-violence activists, can effectively prevent the escalation of the conflict and, more generally, possibly mark the beginning of a new era of democracy and human rights in the Gulf region.

Khalil Al Marzooq is one of the nearly 600 political prisoners currently held in Bahrain for exercising their freedom of expression: Amnesty International has called him a “prisoner of conscience” and has demanded his immediate, unconditional release.

Parliamentarians for Global Action hereby reiterates its call for the immediate release of Mr. Al Marzooq, and other political prisoners, and for the halting of the persecution of all peaceful activists in Bahrain.

This statement and more information available on: www.pgaction.org/bahrain/releaseKhalilAlMarzooq