

# MASTER'S DEGREE

## FINAL PROJECT

### *Advocacy and Sports:*

### *Human Rights in Bahrain*

Produced in collaboration with *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain*

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### **Abstract:**

This Master's Degree Final Project is conducted while working with the NGO *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain*. The project is to work on the impact of sponsorship of sports teams as part of a « sportswashing campaign ». The focus of the Final Project will be to understand why sponsoring sport is often used by countries that are conducting human rights violations and why it is important not to see it only as an economic interest. As part of the study, the Final Project will focus on the work done by the Paris Bureau during my internship regarding the Paris F.C and the Bahrain Victorious cycling team. It will elaborate a project for a campaign that could be pursued to denounce sportswashing locally and more internationally.

### **Keywords:**

Advocacy ; Human Rights ; Campaign ; Sports ; Sponsors

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## Acronyms:

ACAT: Action des Chretiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture

*ADHRB*: Americans for Democracy & Human Rights

BICI: Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry

BIRD: Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy

EP: European Parliament

EU: European Union

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

MEP: Members of the European Parliament

MP: Members of Parliament

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NIHR: National Institute for Human Rights

*“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than government in breaking down racial barriers.”*

Nelson Mandela  
(Mandela, 2011)

## Introduction

### Contextualization of the research:

#### *My work in the NGO*

As an intern at the Paris Bureau of *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights* I have had the opportunity to work on numerous projects. From the start of my internship, I have discovered that *ADHRB* was advocating for many different causes on various levels and on various topics. My work was related to Human Rights in the Gulf, but it was also in relation with the *Forum Génération Égalité* that was coming in Paris in June 2021, with COVID-19 pandemic especially in prisons, the social media presence - on Twitter and Instagram for example - and with whitewashing in sports, or “sportswashing” as it will be referred to as in the work here.

At the beginning of my time at *ADHRB*, Mr. Husain Abdulla, my supervisor and the Executive Director of the NGO mentioned the current campaign that the Paris Bureau was handling regarding the recent investment of Bahraini Royal family member Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa was a part of in the Paris Football Club. As a football fan and because I felt there was a cultural impact of sportswashing that could be interesting to work on, I started working on the matter.

My focus was, during the entire internship, on advocating that the City of Paris, who is a fervent support of the Paris F.C, should be extremely careful about the investment coming from Bahrain. As such I have worked on researching what was the impact of the investment, as well as how it would change the image of Bahrain through sport, and especially the Paris F.C.

It was crucial for the NGO that I was able to reach out to officials at the City Council, but also discuss with other actors to alert and raise awareness regarding who Prince Nasser is, what is the situation of Bahrain especially regarding human rights, and how letting this investment without further control would be tolerating violations in Bahrain. Fostering awareness regarding the accusation of human rights violations in the Kingdom and working for a recognition that Bahrain should be sanctioned by the European Union and France, the work of the NGO relied on connections with national and international prominent figures.

*The reason for this topic of work:*

Among the many other campaigns and projects that were considered and approached during the internship, this specific topic of sportswashing, defined in the definition section, was chosen to write this Master's Final Project because of the very impact that sportswashing can have on cultural mediation in conflicts.



Sports are a big part of culture, it impacts millions of people who are supporting their respective teams every weekend, in the stadiums, the streets, making people to wear some different kind of shirts, creating rivalry, hopes and dreams. All this culture is based on the possibility to see one's team being successful. In 2020, Paris Saint Germain reached the Final of the UEFA Champion's League, and the viewership of TF1, the French channel broadcasting the game, reached over 11 million on average (Carp, 2020). This kind of viewership demonstrates the implication of a successful team in football on not only their usual supporters but an international audience.

Mediating and advocating on the field of sports meant being aware that the results of such a campaign could disappoint those supporters from their sports dreams, but it meant more that every actor of the investment - the club, the city of Paris, the fans - were aware and conscious that Bahrain is not a country that is a fan of Paris F.C, but using funds to create dreams and hopes, changing the perspective and the framing that all these people above mentioned have of Bahrain.

This Final Project aims at demonstrating the impact of sportswashing, why it is used, how it is used, but it focuses more on the work that is done at *ADHRB* against this practice. It emphasises the campaigns that have been conducted before the internship, the progress made during the internship, and the possibilities that exist for further advocacy, not only in the campaign against the investment of Bahrain in the Paris F.C, but in any sportswashing campaign. By creating a project that is supporting a coordination of several offices of *ADHRB* in Europe, there is a spirit of collaboration toward a common goal and a will to demonstrate that Bahrain is insidiously opening doors in various sports to be recognized as a major actor.

*Why it is related to the Peace Studies*

Being a student in the Master of International Studies of Peace, Conflict and Development means it is crucial to look for conflicts and how those conflicts are either creating positive or a negative outcome.

In my personal opinion the investment of a Bahraini fund in a football team is creating a conflict because of the relation it entailed, for such a fund to join the capital of a football team is changing the image of the club. But it is also changing the image of the investors and the perspective people have of them. In the case of Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa and Bahrain, being a part of the Paris F.C could mean people would welcome this investor and witness sponsors from Bahrain as a good thing and consider Bahrain as an ally. For many fans of the team, it is a welcome income that is potentially helping the team to reach a next level. For the city of Paris, it creates a potential rivalry between the Paris F.C and the Paris Saint Germain. This is the cultural impact that football, and sports, can have on people's mind. As such it was important for this campaign to raise awareness on the fact that as much as supporter would like their team to win, it is crucial that the club remains clean of any scandals and violations.

Working in advocacy also means that it is important to take into considerations the points of view of all parties and try to carefully attend all the needs and wants of the parties. In this case, the investment of a Bahraini fund entailed not only sponsoring a team for them to be better sport-wisely but also to give a window display on what Bahrain would be like, according to the sponsors' owners. It means displaying a certain reality. For the team, it meant more funds to reach a better sport level, which is the objective of any club, and for the fans it meant the possibility to dream of seeing the club being more competitive, which is what any fan would want for their team. The perspective of the reality of Bahrain given by sports will

be fundamentally different than the reality perceived by NGOs working in human rights. Quoting Lynch, Bahrain is intending to remodel its image by framing “*some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more silent*” (Lynch, 2007).

This campaign was giving a lot of sense to advocating, because it was not only an international-based campaign between nations, but it impacted directly the opinion of thousands of people who were coming to the stadium to support their team. It has an objective of giving a new frame for all those people to see Bahrain not only with the “sports-goggles” but with the “human rights goggles”. It has a purpose of promoting clean sports investments, and sanctioning those who are perpetuating a tradition of human rights violations under the cover of sports.

This MASTER’S DEGREE FINAL PROJECT, on *Advocacy and Sports: Human Rights in Bahraini* is focusing on a practice that consists in laundering the image of a country, in that very example Bahrain, using investments in sports and the positive impact that athletes and teams can have on the general audience. This project will first introduce the notions of advocacy and sportswashing, as well as introducing the work of *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain*. The Royal Family and sportswashing (I) will introduce the reader to the general context of the Al-Khalifa’s practices in whitewashing using sports. The campaign in Paris (II) will shortly elaborate on the actions that have been taken until now by the Paris Office of *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain* regarding the recent development of a relationship between Prince Nasser Al-Khalifa, or Nasser, and the Paris Football Club. Finally, the future of advocacy against sportswashing: a global campaign (III) will elaborate on an inspiring project that could be conducted by *ADHRB* in Europe to work effectively against sportswashing by Bahrain.

## Introduction to Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain:



Source: *ADHRB.org*

*Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB)* is an international non-governmental organisation, with the aim to foster awareness of and support for democracy and human rights in Bahrain and the other countries of the Arabian Peninsula - Yemen, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. All those countries, apart from Yemen, are part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC, *n.d*).

The NGO works in several countries to raise awareness by hosting events with an emphasis on bringing speakers from the Bahraini community as well as experts on the region coming from the countries of every station. In Paris, experts are coming from a large variety of institutions, including but not limited to universities.

*ADHRB* develops relationships between elected representatives and human rights defenders in Bahrain. In Paris the team works closely with several members of Parliament about different campaigns to raise awareness on situations in the Gulf thanks to experts and cooperation of actors there.

*ADHRB* works with French NGOs in Paris and in France when it comes to national campaigns. The Paris Bureau is fostering relations with other actors in order to demonstrate the weight of violations of human rights in the Gulf but also in other regions. Thanks to those alliances there is a better impact on authorities, especially at the Council of Paris.

The main goal of *ADHRB* remains to protect and promote the work of human rights defenders in Bahrain and to denounce the continuous violations of those human rights by the authorities of Bahrain.

### Definitions:

Advocacy is, following the definition of the Cambridge dictionary “the public support of an idea, plan or way of doing things” (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, *n.d*). According to Merriam Webster, it is “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal” (Merriam Webster, *n.d*). In the case of *ADHRB* and this internship the advocacy was for human rights and democracy in the countries of the GCC and Yemen.

According to Merriam Webster “whitewashing” is the action of “gloss over, or cover up” something that would be outrageous without this practice (Merriam Webster, *n.d2*). In this Final Project, the focus is applied to "Sportswashing": a technique by which wealthy heads of state or businessmen try to cover up their bad reputation on the international scene by associating themselves with sports, thus taking advantage of their influence and positive resonance with the general public. Mary Atkinson, recalling the 2015 Sports or Rights Campaign, called “sportswashing” the use of sports to “distract from its human rights records” (Atkinson, 2021). Countries where the human rights situation leaves much to be desired try to make people forget repeated abuses thanks to events with a global impact such as the Olympic Games, the World Cup or the Tour de France. This is confirmed by an interview with Pierre Ferracci, president of Paris FC, for News Tank Football. According to Pierre Ferracci, the official strategy of "Bahrain is to increase its image and its notoriety, to promote the discovery of this small country and to boost tourism" (Paris F.C, 2020)

## What is sportswashing?

There is not that much academic literature on sportswashing. The idea remains quite new and there are not a lot of previous research. As such finding a proper definition of the term, as well as appropriate literature, is challenging for this project. However, the press and many NGOs have been publishing about this practice.

Furthermore, it exists a few documents that are providing examples of what sportswashing can be, and how it used. Those researches are also giving a background for this project, as it is displaying various previous campaigns, successful or not, against the regimes engaged in sportswashing.

In 2020, Hatice Cengiz, the fiancée of Jamal Khashoggi, published an open letter imploring the fans of Newcastle United to stand against the investment of Saudi funds in the club. She stated that this would stain the reputation of the club with accusations of sportswashing (Twitter, 2020). After her indignation and the several accusations over piracy and human rights violations in Saudi Arabia the buyers backed out from the deal. This was a massive victory in memory of the late Jamal Khashoggi.

In an online event on Sportswashing in 2021, Simon Chadwick recognized that campaigning and advocating against this practice could prevent individuals with ties with certain regimes, such as the buyer in the Newcastle United deal, from entering in the sporting world, and thus preventing them from laundering their image (CHADWICK, 2021). This occurrence is relating to the accusations of torture on Nasser Al-Khalifa, and it is providing a theoretical idea that it is possible to create changes through advocacy.

## The famous example of Qatar in Paris Saint Germain

In 2011, a Qatari fund bought the biggest Parisian football team. Qatar Sports Investment made a massive deal to become the head of the club. The team has since then become the most successful French football team in Europe and been a lighthouse for every new and old fans of football. Investing in a team that was not under the spotlight before and making this team the brightest light in the football Ligue 1 created a perspective on Qatar. It was not so much about anything else but the success story of Paris Saint Germain, the recruiting of stars and potential European titles.

At this point, 10 years later, Qatar has become way more impactful on the sport scene, especially being chosen to welcome the 2022 FIFA World Cup. For most people, Qatar is a successful investor, a country passionate about football and is creating an emulation in sport.

However, the reality is darker. Following the definition of “whitewashing” by Merriam-Webster, all those investments and spotlights on sports are covering up for a dramatic situation, but the lights of the teams and events that Qatar is managing through investments are so bright that it distracts the general opinion from the cruel violations of human rights that are constantly happening in Qatar.

What has happened in 2011 with the Paris Saint Germain became a success story, but not only for sports fans. It also became an example that those investments could be a distraction and a public relation communication so important countries would not be considered as dangerous, but rather attractive.

## I. The Royal Family and sportswashing.

### Prince Nasser accused of torture.

After the protests of 2011 in Manama and Bahrain, many victims expressed in their testimonies worrying concerns of the implication of members of the Royal family in violence during their detention. Marc Owen Jones, a professor at the University of Doha in the Middle East Studies department, wrote an article illustrating the several accusations against Sheik Nasser regarding not only torture but also abuse of power and the use of his status to protect himself (Owen Jones, 2012). The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights reported the personal involvement of the Al-Khalifa family in beating and torturing pro-democracy protesters. Victims of torture in detention identified five members of Al-Khalifa as perpetrators of those atrocious acts. In the list of those accused of those violations of human rights was Prince



*Figure 1 Nasser Al-Khalifa Source: ADHBR.org*



Nasser Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa (Figure 1). Mohammed Habeeb Al-Muqdad, a Swedish-Bahraini national was a victim of Nasser Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa. In his testimony he distinctly remembers Nasser telling him his name before hitting him and submitting him to torture.

Furthermore, Nasser expressed publicly on national TV that he wished for the death “*of anyone who called for the fall of the regime*” (Nasser, 2011). He expressly said that any opposition to the regime would be stopped and that there was no possibility for those protesters to escape the power of the authorities.

Nasser targeted athletes in his speech on national television. Being the Head for the Organisation of Youth and Sports, Nasser has a power to ban athletes who would be involved in any political opposition in Bahrain and “*to form an official investigation committee to look into violations committed by some of those who affiliate to the sport movement*” (The Guardian, 2015).

The implication of Nasser in the torture of detainees following the events of 2011 is raising a major question for the possibility to consider the actions of Nasser bin Hamad Al-Khalifa when appearing in public. He is considered as a torturer, and in the United Kingdom his impunity as a member of the Royal family has been lifted and he could be prosecuted for his actions (BBC, 2014).

Nasser remains the face of the Bahraini sports delegations. He is still the Head of the Youth and Sports Committee. He is also involved in many sport representations such as the “Bahrain Victorious” cycling team or the investment in the Paris Football Club.

The allegations of torture have not been investigated in Bahrain, but he is facing potential arrest in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland after he already faced arrest in 2012 during the Olympic Games of London. At the time he was protected by

royal immunity but the lifting by judges of this immunity demonstrates the severe concerns raised by the multiple accusations of torture. In a ruling of 2014, the High Court of Justice decided that there would be no immunity on the charges of torture (BIRD, 2014), following the accusation of personal involvement of Prince Nasser in the torture of prisoners.

In 2019, the Center for Peace and Justice Studies (CFPJS) published an article about whitewashing war crimes in the United States. In this story, soldiers from the US army committed a major war crime in Vietnam in 1968. Yet they got covered by the administration and the story was turned around to make the US Army ringleader Calley the only responsible for this crime. Even then, he received support with a notable song supporting him. Even when committing war crimes, the US army was considered heroes and not responsible for their crimes. The general popular culture made a good image out of the army, and thus their crimes have been forgotten, or under-considered (CFPJS, 2019). This thematic of whitewashing to protect the image of people is applied the same way with sportswashing and Nasser Al-Khalifa. However, the academic field is yet to be fully alerted on that practice to avoid impunity and image laundering through sports.

### A culture of impunity

The Kingdom of Bahrain is often under accusations of human rights violations, notably with the European Parliament Resolution of March 2021 (European Parliament, 2021). Those numerous allegations of torture and mistreatment are putting an emphasis on the systemic and unrestrained violations of human rights in Bahrain. Despite serious breaches of international law, perpetrators continue to escape punishment as accountability mechanisms closely linked to the government repeatedly fail to investigate, prosecute, and convict those responsible. In this context, a culture of impunity prevails in Bahrain, contrary to all international norms of democracy, justice, and human dignity.

The EP Resolution of March 11, 2021, regarding the conditions of rights and the safety of human rights defenders underlined that the situation ever since the uprisings of the Arab Spring and the unrest that shook Manama and the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2011 protests, there has been no clear and independent investigations of the accusations of violations from the authorities. The King created the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), the Special Investigations Unit (SIU), the Ombudsman of the Ministry of Interior, along with other organs to promote external and unbiased investigations. However, the EP is pointing out that since those investigation bodies have been set up, no inquiries have been led in an effective and independent manner. Furthermore, the Parliament is calling out the Kingdom of Bahrain on false pretences of independence while those bodies are actually not unbiased, causing an absence of accountability from the perpetrators of human rights violations during the protests of 2011 and for the past ten years. The Parliament is even pointing the finger at the King, accusing him and his government to have fostered a culture of impunity regarding the violations of human rights, that not only prevent victims from seeking justice, but also compromises any actual attempts to reform the country into one that would be more democratic and respectful of human rights (European Parliament, 2021).

On April 17, 2021, Jau Prison's security forces assaulted several political prisoners from Buildings 12, 13 and 14 that were protesting the way they were being treated, the lack of proper medical care received following the outbreak of COVID-19, the death of Abbas Malallah, and the worsening of the meals' quality and quantity since the eruption of the coronavirus.

A battalion from the riot police entered Buildings 12 and 13 to put an end to the 2-weeks long protests of these prisoners. The attack on Building 14 occurred when the prisoners in that building started protesting after hearing the screams and pleas of the prisoners in the

other two buildings. Marta Hurtado, Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, shared her concerns regarding the situation following this attack on prisoners in a statement made on April 30, 2021 (Hurtado, 2021)

The NIHR Bahrain was informed about the General Directorate of Reformation and Rehabilitation report and in line with its human rights and oversight role decided to dispatch a delegation to Jau Prison. Supposedly, the NIHR delegation interviewed several the centre's officials, several inmates selected at random and Jau Prison's doctor. Allegedly, they also watched the video recording of the incident, which has not been made public. Following this short visit, the delegation found that the human rights and health situation of inmates was generally reassuring and expressed deep concern over "the allegations aimed at creating a state of uncertainty among the inmates' families". Far from investigating the allegation of violence and the disappearances of many detainees after the attack, the NIHR is framing a reality that is exempting the authorities from any accountability in the events of April 17, leaving the victims and their families without any resort of action or remedies.

## Bahrain Grand Prix in Sakhir:

The Al-Khalifa family has made of sports laundering its preferred tactic to divert public attention from the systematic human rights violations in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It began in 2002 when the King of Bahrain offered a huge sum of money to the Formula One authorities to secure a Grand Prix on his home territory. The first Bahrain Grand Prix was held in 2004 (Figure 2).



*Figure 2 Bahrain Grand Prix Circuit Source: F1technical.net*

In 2011, in the midst of the uprising protesting against the regime, the Bahrain Grand Prix was cancelled by the organisers because of the brutal repression of the prodemocratic movement. However, the races resumed in 2012, and are continuing until now, with the Bahrain Grand Prix being held in Sakhir each year (Batty, 2011). The repression of political opposition did not stop in 2011, on the contrary, the Royal family of the Al-Khalifa forced the opposition party Al-Wefaq in 2016 and shut down press organ Al-Wesat in 2017. The regime imprisoned and continues to detain many opponents to the Royal family such as Hasan Mushaima.

Just as the repression did not stop against the political opposition, the Al-Khalifa family perpetuated and increased their influence in the area of sports (*ADHRB*, 2020).

### Endurance 13

In 2015, Bahrain announced they were recruiting 13 athletes to create an all-star team capable of competing at the highest level from the start. This was the “*Bahrain Endurance 13 Team*”. All the athletes composing this squad, and the athletes composing its twin formation the “*Endurance Racing team*” were not only approved by Prince Nasser Al-Khalifa but handpicked by him. The Prince created his roster of athletes. Out of the total of twenty athletes that are members of the teams, none of them is from the Arabian Peninsula, nor the Middle East and North Africa Region. The criteria to become a member seemed to have been a world-class athlete, and to be able to shed light on the coat of arms of Bahrain when competing on the international stage (Hayes, 2015).

Those athletes stated when interviewed at the creation of the team that they were proud to be a part of such a project. They demonstrated commitment to a cause that was, according to Jan Frodeno (Hayes, 2015), “*going to benefit sports development*”.

On July 2015, the *Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy* (BIRD), along with *ADHRB* and *Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture* (ACAT) co-signed a letter to the athletes, members of the project. They denounced that human rights abuses perpetrated in Bahrain and the allegations of tortures that are still on-going regarding Nasser Al-Khalifa. *ADHRB*, *ACAT* and *BIRD* are pointing out that the team is conveniently called Bahrain 13, while there had been a long-time turmoil in the country due to the arrest of thirteen human rights activists and political opposition members during the unrests of 2011. Being an athlete

in this Bahrain 13 would make them contribute to the dissimulation of the existence of the other Bahrain 13, the activists oppressed by the regime (BIRD, 2015).

As a matter of fact, this example demonstrates how sportswashing can create a veil over violations of human rights. The thirteen athletes recruited in the team were specifically thirteen for a reason, otherwise the seven other members, part of the “racing roster” would be under the same banner. However, Prince Nasser specifically picked thirteen athletes who would be able to be the headliner of the show for Bahrain and be the most looked at research when the terms “Bahrain 13” would be browsed for on the internet. The results of the athletes, picked because of their already-world-class level, were meant to be significant from the start, overshadowing the accusations of violence denounced by and suffered by the “Bahrain 13” (BIRD, 2015).

The “*Endurance 13*” team was indeed an immediate success on the sport stage, winning 11 World Titles since 2015, and becoming the most awarded team in Endurance Racing history (Macca, *n.d*). This glorious success on the sport scene became an immediate lighthouse for any athlete. Being a part of the team seemed to be something so valuable that it completely managed the original plan of overshadowing the Bahrain 13 and create an attractivity so important that Bahrain became a nation recognized for sports, thanks to the triathlon victories.

In May 2021, the triathlon World Cup started in Yokohama, with the participation of the “*Endurance 13*” team. At this occasion the Paris Bureau published on social media about the practice of sportswashing and the role of the team in promoting a better image of the Kingdom that the reality actually was. On Twitter and on Instagram we called out the two French athletes who are part of the team. The objective was to make public the laundering of Bahrain’s image using the “*Endurance 13*” (Figure 3). We intended to alert the French

champions on their position that should be very uncomfortable seeing as they are led by an alleged torturer. We pointed out that despite winning medals and titles sports was about core values and those were trampled by the acts of Nasser Al-Khalifa.



Figure 3 Instagram post on Endurance 13. Source: ADHRB\_fr

## The investment in a Cycling team

In 2017, Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al-Khalifa joined forces with cycling brand Merida to create a new professional cycling team, taking over the World Tour licence from the Lampre team. Since 2017, the "Bahrain-McLaren" team (formerly called "Bahrain-Merida") has been competing in the Tour de France as well as other races organised by the International Cycling Union in its professional calendar. In this way, the Bahraini authorities take advantage of the popularity of races like the Tour de France, which represent a viewership of over a billion people worldwide each year, with a broadcast in almost every country around



the world, to build a positive image of a country that is open and involved in sport and health issues among the general public.

In December 2018, McLaren, which is majority owned by a Bahraini sovereign wealth fund, became a partner in the team which was renamed Bahrain-McLaren from 2020. The investors worked closely with the UCI before making a financial commitment to the sport. The team lost its leader Vincenzo Nibali, while Mark Cavendish, Mikel Landa and Wout Poels were recruited. Despite the 2020 season being a disappointment overall with only nine wins, including two in the WorldTour, the Bahraini team has been present on the major circuits. Landa finished fourth in the Tour de France, Pello Bilbao fifth in the Giro d'Italia and Poels sixth in the Tour of Spain. Jan Tratnik won a stage at the Giro, while classics riders Dylan Teuns and Sonny Colbrelli did not have any notable results. Those races are among the most important when it comes to cycling, and even though the Bahraini team did not score wins, they were omnipresent.

At the end of the 2020 season, McLaren, which is in economic difficulties due to the Covid-19 pandemic, withdraws from sponsorship and the team is renamed “Bahrain Victorious”. Mark Cavendish left the team without a win, while Jack Haig is recruited. The team remains at the top of the cycling competitions as they continue to ride on circuits, including in Europe, and demonstrate their capacities to be shining in the races.

According to Prince Nasser Bahrain is *“in a position now where we want to showcase our country, we needed this. We really needed this. And actually it is working very well.”* (Al-Khalifa, 2017). Nasser is not even hiding that the point of investing in sports is to showcase the power of the country. Despite the criticism and the accusations of violence and torture, Nasser says it is crucial that Bahrain is shown on jerseys around the world. His investments were even despised by sponsors as the Prince was willing to display the slogan “Victorious

Bahrain” or the name of the country more than including sponsors as the most remarkable display. This practice is actually used by Bahrain for every of their sports team: cycling, triathlon, football. It is not an uncommon practice for the countries that are laundering their image using sports. “Qatar Airways” or “Emirates” are also sponsoring that are displaying a country’s influence on jerseys and sports events.

## Football and the impact in Paris

In 2020, the Royal family began to invest in football, first by trying to partner with Spanish club Córdoba C.F and then by taking a stake in French second division club Paris F.C. In July, in an official statement posted on the club's social networks, Paris F.C officially announced that it had reached an agreement with the Kingdom of Bahrain. In exchange for 5 million euros, the Kingdom of Bahrain has acquired a 20% stake in the Parisian club and has also signed a sponsorship contract with Paris F.C. This sponsorship contract is particularly evident on the new home and away shirts of the men's team (in Ligue 2 BKT) and the women's team (D1 Arkéma). Indeed, on these new shirts, below the logo where the name of the city appears in capital letters, as well as the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of the city of Paris and its history, the words “Victorious Bahrain” are visible. According to Jean-Baptiste Guégan:

*“their strategy is primarily economic. Their aim is above all linked to the country's brand image that they are trying to impress abroad. Basically, Bahrain is trying to bring in tourists and make the country known in a good way” (Le Gall, 2021)*

This action of investing is demonstrating a determination to display the country through sports, despite not being as influential as Qatar (Le Gall, 2021). And for good reason, it seems that the objective of the Bahraini Royal family is to ensure that the name “Bahrain” is

globally associated with popular sports such as football, cycling or Formula 1 rather than with human rights abuses, numerous reported cases of torture by government officials or the violent repression of any political or religious opposition. This repression of all political and religious opposition by government forces has increased in particular since the pro-democracy movement of 2011. Following this movement, many political and religious leaders, as well as citizens who participated in the protest against the regime, were arrested, detained, tortured and sentenced to spend a long time in prison, sometimes more than their lives.

As part of the Ligue 2 BKT, Paris F.C is wearing a new jersey in front of their home crowd in the capital. Seeing the Paris F.C players wearing this shirt for an entire season in Paris is far from insignificant. At home and away, the athletes have been caught on camera in the different games of the Ligue 2 competition wearing the logo of Bahrain.

Indeed, on this jersey, under the logo where the name of the city appears in capital letters, as well as the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of the city of Paris and its history throughout the world. The words "Victorious Bahrain" are displayed on the Parisian club's shirt, thus concretising the agreement between the Bahraini state and Paris F.C. The main sponsor of the team is now "Explore Bahrain", and the stadium is covered with advertisement for the good image of Bahrain.

This agreement, announced in 2020 by the club in an official press release, is part of a more global policy of financial investment in the world of sport by the Gulf country.

This practice is not disinterested, and if at first one could think that the goal is economic, *"to be profitable (...) if one day the PFC goes up to the Ligue 1"* (French first division), other realities are hidden behind this partial purchase of the club. In April 2021, Nasser was in Paris and met with Paris FC president and reiterated his support toward Paris

F.C following the recent performances of the team, as it is highly possible for the team to be promoted to Ligue 1 (BNA, 2021).

By associating the name Bahrain to the Paris F.C, a successful team both in the men and women competitions, the country is getting a good position in the mind of the supporters and the people around the club, but also on television as the team is displaying his Bahraini sponsor on the jerseys at every game.

## II. The campaign is Paris

### The actions taken in Paris

In October 2020, *ADHRB* was in contact with Pierre Rabadan, deputy mayor for sports at the City Council of Paris. This contact led to more discussions until February 2021 to discuss the relation between the City of Paris, Paris F.C., and the Bahraini fund. On those occasions, Mr. Rabadan affirmed that the club and the Bahraini fund would not become more than a partnership at the height of a 20% investment.

Starting in March with the beginning of the internship, there has been a lot of communication done regarding the implication of Nasser in the affairs of Paris F.C., and the allegations of human rights violations against him.

Unfortunately, the city officials declined any involvement of *ADHRB* and the allied organisation when they were asked to discuss the relation between Bahrain and the Paris F.C. The usual methods of calls and emails did not allow to pursue a discussion on the matter and *ADHRB* was, at the time of the writing, unable to act as an independent surveillance that the agreement would not be favouring Bahrain in their campaign for sportswashing.

As it seemed that the officials were no longer open to discuss with *ADHRB* despite the attempts of sharing the expertise of the NGO with them, especially regarding the position that Nasser Al-Khalifa is holding in the negotiation. The position of the representatives of the Council of Paris were that Bahrain should never become a major part in the funds of the Paris F.C. However, *ADHRB*, as explained in the research, is worried about the image already displayed with only a minor share of the Paris F.C.

On June 13<sup>th</sup>, Jérôme Gleizes told *ADHRB* that the discussions regarding the investment of Bahrain were still ongoing and there would be a following meeting at the city hall to investigate the matter.

## Communication



Figure 4 Tweet denouncing sportswashing in Bahrain. Source: [twitter.com/ADHRB](https://twitter.com/ADHRB),

picture by Hanifa Dahel

During the 8<sup>th</sup> week of the internship, we issued communications on social media (see Figure 4) regarding the practice of sportswashing. The Paris bureau issued a series of tweets in French as well as a publication on Instagram to foster awareness, denouncing the actions of Bahrain and Nasser Al-Khalifa.

To further communication on the matter of sportswashing, I took in charge a communication campaign in May regarding the violations committed by Nasser Al-Khalifa and his implication in sports events. The point of the communication campaign at that time

was to create awareness about the existence of the “EU Magnitsky” regime. This communication campaign was focused on Nasser, but it included a large chapter on the implications of the Al-Khalifa family in sports.

### Attempts to contact authorities

During the internship I worked with a coalition of other French NGOs to denounce the practices of Nasser Al-Khalifa. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, with *ACAT*, the *Ligue des Droits de l’Homme*, *Avocats Sans Frontières*, and the *Fédération Internationale des Droits de l’Homme*, we had a meeting that aimed at creating a letter to get in touch with Pierre Rabadan regarding the relations between Bahrain and Paris F.C.

This meeting produced a letter that was later transmitted to the City Council, however no communication was established with Pierre Rabadan, despite many attempts. The Council of Paris did not answer to our several calls and emails.

The team in Paris alerted the senators the practices of sportswashing conducted in France, especially regarding the investment in the Paris F.C. There were also questions sent to the government using members of Parliaments favourable to helping our work. We sent a Question to the Government to Ms. Béatrice Piron, President of the French-Bahrain Parliamentary Friendship group. This question aimed at drawing the attention of the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs on the increasing of Bahraini investments in sports in France. By this question, the point was to make public the situation of human right defenders in Bahrain and looking for sanctions to be applied on the country, especially concerning their freedom to invest in France without any control. The question was aiming particularly at Nasser Al-Khalifa, being the figure of those investments and acting in Paris as an envoy of Bahrain to discuss sports and the Paris F.C despite being under severe allegations of torture.

On May 7, 2021, Béatrice Piron contacted me to welcome the information provided by the Paris Bureau and affirmed that she would be asking the question to the Minister for Sports, Madame Maracineanu (Figure 5). These questions are biding, the Minister to whom they are asked are forced to provide the MPs who asked them with an answer.

MP Piron is concerned about the recognition of Nasser bin Hamed Al Khalifa as an important actor in sports events without considering the implications of torture allegations.

MP Piron would like to ask what actions the Ministry of Sport is taking to ensure that sports teams and their owners comply with human rights standards and to prevent the whitewashing of human rights violations with French sports teams and events.

*Figure 5 Extract of the Question submitted to Béatrice Piron (English translation)*

The question is not only an attempt to have a political reaction from the Ministry for Sports, but also a way to have the Members of Parliament all made aware of the situation, as the question is public. It is a tool to alert the political bodies about the investments of Nasser Al-Khalifa and the allegations against him. Once the Parliament is fully aware of that, it becomes easier to discuss the situation and try to advocate against it.

As a lot of actions taken were not finding success, there are other possible ways to influence public opinion. In order to broaden the awareness regarding the practices of Bahrain to launder their image using sports, a new campaign plan could be developed on a larger scale, and this is what this Final Project is about.



### III. The future of advocacy against sportswashing: A Global

#### Campaign

##### The reason for the campaign

Executive Director Husain Abdulla mentioned during the internship the importance of having coordinated actions between the different offices to conduct a Global Campaign regarding human rights to create awareness on a larger scale and multiplying the possibilities of interactions between countries. As a project to be created, the capacity of *ADHRB* to communicate between each Bureau in Europe is giving numerous opportunities. As of the time of this internship, the global project that is planned is not on sportswashing. However, it is this Final Project objectives to provide a framework for a potential campaign to be conducted on the matter in the future.

Populations are vastly impacted by sports. Sports is having an impact on people because of the spirit of supporting a team, but cities are also transformed with billboards featuring slogans, and thus sports are transforming the reality and the perception one has on the world. In Europe the UEFA, the European Football associations, are creating over 3 billion euros every year, including during the pandemic. It peaked with 4.5 billion euros in 2016 with the Euro Cup according to David Lange for Statista (Lange, 2021). According to a study conducted on the Paris Saint Germain, a club within which the investments of Qatari funds have been massive over the years, the economic impact, meaning the inflow of money that result in benefiting a community, over the Ile de France, for the season 2018-2019, was of almost 200 million euros. It also creates thousands of jobs, with 2150 daily jobs directly with the club (CDES, 2021).

*ADHRB* has offices in Brussels, Geneva, Dublin, London, Rome, Stockholm, Paris, Madrid, Berlin in Europe. Those cities are all home to various sports teams and are capital cities of countries that are very important regarding sports. This project can thus connect many important countries in the field of sports.

Conducting a global campaign regarding the sportswashing practices of Bahrain would require a general effort from several teams of people. The coordination would be key, and it would require dividing the process of the general campaign into several parts to make the best advocacy possible.

The first part would be planning a communication campaign. Advocacy relies on creating awareness to the general public, and the audience is usually not used to knowing the position of investors in sports, their impact and what lies beneath the money.

The second part would be the creation and sharing of a petition, simultaneously to the communication, to give not only the general opinion some knowledge about the situation of Bahrain and their use of sports to launder their image, but also to give the people a tool to act and protest would they disagree with the human rights violations being covered by sports events.

The last point would be an action on a political level. Using the audience and the turmoil that communication and petitions can create, it would be the role of *ADHRB* to promote human rights at a European level, using the recent Regime on Human Rights violations. Advocating to foster awareness to the general public is important, but an actionable action using the legal tools created by the European Union could be a way to instantly put a stop to the abuses of Bahrain and demonstrate that the EU does not stand still when it comes to violations.

The goal of a campaign like this one is developing on multiple layers. The ultimate goal would be to cause a change in the policies of Bahrain, that the public opinion in the countries targeted by the campaign would have a major impact that it would stop the Al-Khalifa family to perpetrate human rights violations. However, it is unrealistic to believe that a campaign against sportswashing could have such an impact. Thus, it is the role of an advocacy officer to know what would be the demands and objectives that are reachable by an action.

### Preparation and evaluation of the campaign

In order to evaluate the feasibility of this campaign, there is a preparation using tools to assess the different factors of each chapter of the campaign. If during the evaluation process the chapters seem feasible it would be a plan that could be put into force. If the evaluation process demonstrates weaknesses or high risk of failure, then the whole project is not viable to conduct (Annex 1).

The evaluation process also allows a consideration of whether every chapter is viable according to the original idea or if it is not viable to consider one or several of the options.

Regarding the costs, all three chapters - Communication, Petition and Legal action - are low, they do not require any financial expenses since they rely on the appropriate technology already in use in the day-to-day business of *ADHRB*.

In terms of time spent on the project, the communication chapter requires the less time. It is not low, as it requires efforts to produce emails and social media posts, but as it is very common in the work of *ADHRB* it is fairly reasonable. It is also using databases that are pre-existing to the campaign, which saves time from research. The petition is more time consuming. It is not something usual by the NGO, it requires sharing it and advertising it and

it also requires the framing of an effective petition that would appeal to the general opinion. Lastly the legal action is really time consuming. It requires contacting a lot of representatives and having potential meetings with them to expose the reasoning behind the legal action following the Human Rights regime of the EU.

The priority for the support of the policy makers for the different chapter would probably be medium for the communication and the petition, with maybe less inclinations to support a petition as it is demanding an action to correct some current issues. However, considering the legal action, it would be likely that they would consider it a high priority, seeing how they issued a Resolution in the EU on Bahrain, and that it has been discussed at the UN at the same time earlier this year. The political conjecture might make of this chapter a priority.

There are very low or moderate risks regarding the social impact of the global campaign.

By advocating from the European Union and using the resources that are used everyday by *ADHRB* there is a really low chance that any of the chapter would actually create a social issue in Bahrain.

The viability of the chapters depends on the chances of success and the efforts put into them. The communication would be very likely to succeed and thus have a high viability rate since the goal is to alert and inform the public and the authorities. Getting knowledge is unquantifiable but by spreading messages it would be considered a success. The chances of success compared to the efforts put for the petition and the legal action are lower, however they have a chance of impacting decision-makers that remains quite high.

On the contrary, it would be quite certain that the institutional viability would be really high considering it involves partners at political and non-political level that are institutionalized and ready to participate in campaigns to protect and promote human rights. *ADHRB* is used to have contacts with MPs, and they are often reactive when it comes to promoting human rights. These chapters of the campaign might have a good audience to them.

The gender impact of the project is medium. By involving women athletes, we could consider that there is a positive gender impact on the consideration for women in Bahrain. However, the impact is not as big since the aim of the campaign is for Bahrain to stop sportswashing and engage in real reforms.

There would be low engagement with local resources. The day-to-day information from the country's vulnerable victims of the regime is the main resource to promote the end of the sportswashing policy. However, it remains still at a rather low point consider the promotion is happening in Europe. For that reason, the local resources harnessed are not high, but the impact of the beneficiary group is. They are the source for the communication, and in a minor engagement, for the petition. For the legal action they would be less involved as it would be an action taken in Europe.

This evaluation leads to the conclusion that the chapters would be more efficient if they unfold one after another, starting with the communication, the petition and then the legal action to give more weight to each chapter rather than acting independently.

#### A. A communication campaign

The project is to coordinate every office in the different country so that they can get in touch with different sport teams. The idea is to reach out to target major teams that are either

directly related to sportswashing or that are taking position against the investments of countries of the GCCs in teams. In addition to the teams and the sphere around them, with the supporters and potential sponsors, it is possible to alert local and national authorities and representatives about the situation of whitewashing.

A potential axis of this project is also to make aware players and athletes about the situation. Some investments are leading to wearing brands or sponsors on a daily basis with their outfits. As such, it would be important to foster awareness among those athletes because their voices can also help sharing the messages of human right protection.

One of the risks that this campaign is facing is the absence of consideration of the situation by teams and clubs as they could value more financial agreements rather than ethical behaviours. This risk can be the same for players and authorities. But it is a common risk for advocacy work. As such the risk is minor. Furthermore, multiplying the contacts among athletes is also a way to be more aware of potential communications rather than focusing only on bigger entities such as sports teams.

This project could be based fundamentally at first using social media in order to raise awareness. Many teams and athletes are very present online. They use the social medias to share their work, and it could be a good way to raise awareness. Furthermore, during COVID19 period the physical events are limited.

After COVID19, the communication on the campaign could be reinforced using banners and slogans at sports events.

## What would it take?

### *Schedule*

The first step of a common campaign led by several offices is to be in contact with each team that is going to take part in the action. The different Bureaus of *ADHRB* in Europe are not well-connected. For this project to start correctly, there should be a meeting organised under the chaperonage of the Executive Director to oversee that every Bureau has at least one representative.

According to the different schedules of each team and considering the sanitary situation, it would seem realistic to plan potential meetings at the beginning of June. There would be contacts beforehand to come up with a list of topics to discuss, especially since the communication campaign is not the only chapter of the Global Campaign.

If the communication regarding the three chapters of this Global Campaign were to be sent to all offices by May 21<sup>st</sup>, it would be appropriate to have the first meeting on June 4<sup>th</sup>. This delay would give time for each team to prepare a set of points, questions and possible ways to conduct the campaign.

The second step of the Global Campaign would be for every Bureau to find possible targets for the Communication campaign. Those targets can be sports teams, sponsors, city councils, national authorities, athletes themselves. By the third week of June, it would be possible to have an extensive list of people to reach out to. On June 18<sup>th</sup>, every Bureau would be expected to have filled a document in which there would be the names, contacts and roles of the targeted people.

Once every Bureau has filled in the sheet, there should be a coordinated email sent to every actor considered. It is important that emails are sent to sponsors, clubs, authorities and are creating an understanding of the violations committed by the countries of the Arabian

Peninsula. The targeting should be specific enough to not only mention the entire region but focus on a specific investor acting in the region.

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, all European Offices would be invited to start a 2-weeks campaign on social media to alert the general opinion and directly address athletes, who are numerous to use Instagram, Twitter or Facebook as means of communications to their fans. The delay between the sending of emails to authorities, sponsors and clubs and the social media campaign will give some time for authorities to be made aware and eventually answer and show their support. Once starting the public campaign, it is important that every Office is publishing in their own language, tagging certain athletes that had been considered more active than others on the topic of Human Rights.

With the start of the Olympic Games in Tokyo and the Opening Ceremony on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of July, this would mean the end of the intensive social media campaign. On that day it would be mostly appropriate to repeatedly alert every national delegation, as well as the Olympic Games Committee about the presence of the Bahraini delegation, under the command of the Al-Khalifa family, accused by the European Union and the United Nations of violating the international law and cover human rights violations perpetrated by members of the family as well as a systemic violence.

#### *Costs and risks*

The cost of this campaign would be inexistant. As it would be only conducted online due to COVID-19 and the principles of the campaigns as to raise awareness on the situation of sportswashing by the different countries of the Gulf, but mostly focusing on Bahrain.

Considering that online platforms for communications among the different Bureaus are free and that interns are not paid by *ADHRB*, an online campaign has a cost of 0.



This absence of costs is also making more valuable a coordinated action lasting for this long as it would be possible for every office to dedicate one member for this topic in the division of tasks. It would not be a waste of humanpower and it no create a broad risk regarding the absence of any answer from any of the contacts made during the 2-months period.

As there is no cost, the financial risk is null. Because there would be no financial outcomes, there is no risk that there is a financial loss if there was an absence of reaction to this communication, from people contacted by direct emails and warnings, or from the public on social media. The absence of costs makes it possible that in the assumption that there is no success in the communication the risk is very limited and would be only resulting in time loss. However, it is very much possible to consider that such a massive communication to authorities, elected representatives, athletes, sports organisations, and the general public on social media could not entirely be a failure as it aims at educating and fostering awareness. As little as the impact could be on people, since it would have no cost, it would immediately be a success for advocacy.

### *Impact*

The quality impact of a project using communication can be considered with the impact that it has on the general opinion.

### *Influence of beneficiaries*

First it is important to consider that such a communication campaign would include direct and indirect sources about the situation in Bahrain, especially regarding human rights violations. *ADHRB* works with multiple agencies and contacts in the Kingdom to have information and share it. It would thus include the participation of the direct beneficiaries of a change in policies by the Royal family. By using testimonies and statements made by victims

of the oppressing regime the social media campaign as well as communication to foster awareness of political leaders and sports-events organisers, the impact on the audience would be broaden. It would also allow the political opposition to express themselves using a tribune that they do not have in the country due to the absence of freedom of expression.

If such testimonies can change the opinion of the audience in Europe, it could cause an impact on the way Bahrain is behaving. By denying Nasser, and the entire Royal family, the constant impunity from which they are benefiting until now, there is a chance that they decide to rightfully implement new measures or suffer the consequences of the absence of those.

#### *Policy and general support*

Secondly, the impact of a communication can be measured by the policy support. As of the time of the writing of this final project, many members of Parliaments in several countries have warned their ministries about human rights violations in Bahrain. Campaigning about the sportswashing that is perpetrated by the Al-Khalifa family could receive a similar support from the political bodies. Seeing that many sports athletes are also committed to human rights and support to communities, fostering awareness about the situation that they are in because of the existence of investments purely out of political interest, could also bring some support to the campaign and enlarge the targeted audience.

#### *Technology available*

To conduct the campaign, the different offices of *ADHRB* working on it would use the media they are already using to advocate for human rights. *ADHRB* has a Twitter account regrouping over 10,000 followers, and many offices, including the one in Italy and the one in France, have Instagram account on which the teams are organising communication campaigns to advocate for different causes and create awareness. Furthermore, the teams are used to use

emails to contact members of parliaments in the different countries. The technology is easily usable by the teams, and it is appropriate to reach out to a major audience without having to create a lot of more channels.

As part of the campaign, it could be interesting to create virtual conferences for the audience to attend, with the appearances of human rights defenders so that they could directly interact with the audience. To that end, considering the use of a platform such as Clubhouse would be appropriate. This application allows the creation of debates and can give the audience the opportunity to discuss and hear speakers about the situation in the Gulf and especially in Bahrain.

#### *Social and cultural impact*

On a social and cultural aspect, the change regarding sportswashing in Europe can be directly linked to the audience and the athletes refusing to be used as tools for the sportswashing of Bahrain. If the general opinion changes regarding the investments, it would change the way the country is considered and there would be a major impact on what Nasser Al-Khalifa and the Royal family can do to continue pretending being clean of all allegations of human rights violations. Furthermore, calling out the behaviours of the Bahraini leaders directly to influential people such as athletes as well as the general audience could create new voices advocating to stop those violations, and accept the enquiries of the international community to investigate. If the Bahraini government is willing to continue to use sports to launder their image, they need athletes and the general audience to believe in their good behaviour, if it was otherwise, they would be submitted to more pressure.

#### *Gender equality:*

Considering both male and female sports during the campaign would give a gender equality chapter to the campaigns conducted under the creation of this project. As a matter of facts women are oppressed by the Bahraini government, however they still sponsored the Paris F.C feminine team, and those players are wearing jerseys with the name of Bahrain on it (Figure 6). Calling out sports actors, especially women, on the situation of their Bahraini counterparts could create an important impact. The communication campaign should focus on situation of women and address this issue as is directly tied to the investments made in Paris. Yet, it is certain that there are other examples, within the Bahrain Endurance 13 example.



Figure 6 Paris FC jersey Source: Paris FC shop (Paris FC, n.d)

By considering the fate of women in Bahrain and the investments in sports, include feminine sports, there is an important chapter of the campaign to conduct to create awareness on the differences between what is done in Europe and what is the reality in the Kingdom.

### Objectives of the Communication campaign

The communication campaign has a goal of fostering awareness among the public. By reaching out on social media and alerting authorities the objective is that the supporters of the teams that are involved in sportswashing process, as well as elected representatives on a national level, with members of Parliaments and local level when teams are actually locally-based, are made aware of the different human rights violations committed by the Al-Khalifas and the Kingdom of Bahrain. Denouncing the violations would shed light on how the country actually is behaving towards its citizens, and how they should be considered by the audience.

Furthermore, alerting on human rights violations goes along with explaining to the audience of the communication campaign how their vision of sports is changing the way they perceive a country, often turning a blind eye on situations that they do not realise exist, or they realise exist but are not looked at because athletes are shining on the sports stage.

The objectives of the communication chapter of the global campaign are the basics of advocacy work and *ADHRB*. It fosters awareness regarding a certain situation, and the result is not quantifiable by itself as it aims at changing the perception by every individual and the way they behave regarding Bahrain once they are made aware of the situation.

Communicating on Paris F.C and the investments in the club by a Bahraini fund and Nasser Al-Khalifa, an alleged torturer, could, for instance, change the attitudes of fans when they want to buy a jersey that states “*Victorious Bahrain*”. This is the kind of impact that is aimed at when fostering awareness. It creates room for small initiatives from the audience of the communication.

## B. Petition

During the first steps of the communications with members of Parliaments, deputies and Senators, it would be important to make them aware about the will for them to interrogate their ministers regarding the situation. It is an action that is usual for *ADHRB* to create questions for elected representatives to ask to certain ministers (See Annex I). This question to government would be a way to involve elected representatives into the process of asking the executive power of their considerations for Human Rights violations and foreign investments. As the executive representatives would answer, or fail to answer, it would be important communicate on that.

The public would be made aware of the situation of Bahrain, and other countries, and their use of sportswashing. The communication campaign would aim to that.

In addition to this communication, this chapter of the campaign would not only be making the public aware that despite the numerous violations and the calls by the European Union and the United Nations that Bahrain stops their actions. It would give them a possibility to reach out to the executive power via the use of a petition. The goal of the petition is to make aware that once people are aware of the terrible behaviours of people investing in sports in Europe, they have a direct action possible to ask their representatives to control more the inflow of money in sports, especially following the EU regulations.

For a petition to be successful it is important that it echoes to the reality that the potential signatories are living. This is the reason why this chapter on the campaign is very much related to the communication chapter. It is important that the petition is targeting something that is hitting close to home for the signatories. As such, following up on sports investments by the Arabian Peninsula countries and denouncing the investments made by Bahrain would aim at alarming the people and making them aware that many sports events that they usually follow and enjoy are used by Bahrain to launder their image.

The petition could also aim at asking for the liberation of political prisoners and the end of the oppression of freedom of expression in Bahrain. By asking for the withdrawal from investments of Gulf funds and actions to be taken for human rights in the Gulf, the petition would give an overview of why it is so important that Bahrain and other countries in the region are not allowed to invest in sports, as they persecute individuals and violate human rights.

Associating the sharing of a petition to a communication campaign would be an interesting way to build a movement by not only make the audience of the communication campaign more aware of the situation of human rights violations in Bahrain and the sportswashing acts that are concealing those violations, but it would create a democratic action, impacting the decision-makers of sports events after they see that their communities are reluctant to the participation of Bahrain in any way.

The topic being thoroughly explained in the social media and communication campaign the petition would be easy to read and understand, it would include the major points of the communication and be linked directly to it for the potential signatories to have more information easily. As such, it would also be shared during the communication for it would give an extra audience to it.

## What would it take?

### *Schedule*

Ideally, the petition would be ready on June 4<sup>th</sup>, because it would coincide with the first meeting between all the different Bureau of *ADHRB* taking part in this campaign. It would be introduced to the different teams for them to be able to translate the petition in their own language as it is crucial for every potential signatory to understand the petition without the struggle of language barriers. By June 11<sup>th</sup>, the petition should have been translated in every language, and been made accessible on social media.

Since the theme of sportswashing is already a facet considered by the advocacy at *ADHRB* it would be appropriate to have it shared on the website and on social media even before the beginning of the communication campaign. Furthermore, it would coincide with

the sending of letters to partners, authorities, and sports companies. This occasion would be great to alert them of the existence of such a petition and encourage them to share it to their own partners and audience.

While the social media communication is shared during the two weeks of July it would be important to remind the audience of posts that they have a way of action if they agree that human rights violations should not be concealed using sports and that those violations should stop being tolerated by Western societies for the sake of financial profits and investments in sports.

The petition would remain open until the end of August, closing it for signatures on August 31<sup>st</sup>. After the closing to signatures, it would be important to reconvene a new meeting with all teams from *ADHRB* to discuss the outcome and the number of signatures obtained. This meeting would aim at contemplating the possible communication and actions to take with the petition.

On September 1<sup>st</sup> it is important that there is an article published on the *ADHRB* website, in every language of the countries having taken part and that social medias are active regarding the outcome.

The petition should then be shared with sport-events organisers, elected representatives, athletes. It is the final step of the petition, to make sure that the people involved in sports are aware of the opposition by the audience and the public.

Using internet platforms to create a petition such as Change (Change, *n.d*), it would be possible to follow the number of signatories and the platform independently deals with the General Data Protection Regulation. The practicality of a platform like Change would be to be able to choose the topic, the demands and the targeted audience before spreading it to the



highest number. It would allow to be assured of an ethical process and use of personal data, the security of a platform that is very often used with over 200 millions people in all countries of the world being able to create and follow petitions on this website.

#### *Costs and risks*

As for the previous chapter, one of the advantages of *ADHRB* financial plan is that it is always necessary to consider the low-cost campaigns because of the absence of financial incomes. Interns being unpaid there is no costs coming from humanpower, and launching a petition online is not something that is costly, as it is *per se* an accessible mean to make voices be heard thanks to the power of number, not money.

This chapter of the campaign would thus be having a cost of 0. As there is no cost, the financial risk is null. Because there would be no financial outcomes, there is no risk that there is a financial loss if there was an absence of reaction to this petition campaign. If there was not a lot of signatures and the petition could not be sent with enough weight to political decision-makers, sports organisations and lobbies around the sport scene, then the absence of costs would still be not a too high risk. It is possible that in the assumption that there is no success in the sharing of the petition and the signature the risk would be very limited and would be only resulting in time loss. However, the possible reward of having a massive audience engaged in the message of the petition to authorities, elected representatives, athletes, sports organisations and the general public on social media could not entirely be a failure as it aims at educating and fostering awareness. As little as the impact could be on people, since it would have no cost, it would immediately be a success for advocacy.

## *Impact*

### *Participation and ownership by beneficiaries*

Quality factors of the impact of a project are based on some criterion that are easy to assess. The participation and ownership by beneficiaries would be limited since the victims of human rights violations are not necessarily those who would sign a petition demanding for changes in the way Bahrain invests in sports. However, a petition could, and should include if possible, reports and testimonies of athletes that have been affected by the policies of the Al-Khalifa reigning family in terms of sports.

The beneficiaries of such a petition, with a chapter on the withdrawal from sports investments and the demands of the release of political prisoners, would be the latter. As the petition is asking for their release they would be direct beneficiaries, but they would also be indirectly affected by the part of sports, as their situation is indirectly linked to the tolerance applied by Western countries to the regimes oppressing them.

### *Policy support*

A petition is aiming at policy support and could be shared by members of political bodies that are supporting the idea that Bahrain should not be allowed to continue to perpetrate human rights violations and be seen as a usual actor in sports. As such, and using the contacts already established by *ADHRB* in other campaigns, there could be pretty important policy support as the NGO has many contacts in the political bodies. Many of those supports are already sharing constantly their concerns about the activities of the Royal family, reaching out for support regarding a petition for the sport-events organisers and executive bodies is a task that is achievable.

### *Appropriate technology*

Petitions became quite common over the years, the internet being a useful tool to share them fast and on a long term. Many platforms are offering easy access to the creation of petitions, and they can be shared on social media where *ADHRB* is active but also using the contacts among NGOs in every country where the campaign would be conducted. *ADHRB* could use the means of communication they always do to share the petition. Since it is created simultaneously to a communication campaign it could be shared on the website, on social medias, and via emails to reach out to as many people as possible.

### *Social and cultural aspect*

There would be a social and cultural impact of a campaign using a petition as, as an expected result, there would be changes in the policies of Bahrain. Either they would withdraw from the investments on the sport scene, impacting the teams, the athletes, the supporters, or they would vow to hold to international standards regarding human rights in the country, which would have the best impact for everyone.

Would Nasser and the Al-Khalifa family continue to invest in sports and improve the image of Bahrain, they would need to allow international investigations on allegations of mistreatments and torture and abide by the demands of international organisations. In the resolution of March 2021, the European Parliament “[c]alls for the immediate and unconditional release of all human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience” (European Parliament, 2021). One impact of the campaign could be the application of this demand and the impossibility for Bahraini funds to invest in sports as long as the prisoners of conscience are not fully and unconditionally free. The campaign could also lead to the review of the different death sentences that are currently established in the Kingdom.

## Objectives of the petition

The petition is aiming at changing the impunity culture that is surrounding the Al-Khalifa family and Prince Nasser more specifically. Until now, it has been considered perfectly legitimate that Bahrain could have teams promoting the greatness of the Kingdom with slogans flocked on jerseys and billboards in stadiums.

By reaching out to the audience, the petition's goals are to create a popular protest of this impunity, asking for the end of investments and the suppression of any advertisement in favour of Bahrain as long as the Kingdom would not abide by international laws, treaties they are signatories of, and they do not accept unbiased investigations regarding the outstanding number of allegations of human rights violations in the country.

If this petition is a success, it would mean that any team owned by, or sponsored by, a Bahraini fund, would see their sponsors removed from the view of the public. If supporters and officials are asking for teams to renegotiate the partnerships between Bahrain and their teams, there would be a need to satisfy the general public. Furthermore, the petition would alert the public about the conditions of human rights in the Kingdom and how the Royal family is laundering their image using sportswashing.

### C. A legal campaign: EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (“EU Magnitsky Act”)

*What is the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime?*

The Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act was enacted in the US in 2012 following revelations about the torture and subsequent death in prison of Mr. Sergei Magnitsky, a lawyer who had publicly exposed large corruption cases among Russian elites.

Individuals involved are blocked from entering the US and accessing US financial markets, while property and assets would be seized if they come under US jurisdiction.

Even before the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, or EU Magnitsky Act, was adopted in December 2020, the EU has long used sanctions to punish perpetrators of human rights violations and other crimes (Russel, 2020). The EU can impose sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes on individuals in response to UN or EU decisions. Other restrictions include arms embargoes and suspension of development aid and trade privileges. However, this new act does not focus on country-based sanctions that target a wider range of society but on those individuals and entities responsible for human rights violations. This new policy makes it easier to add individuals and entities to an existing and uniform framework. Inspired partly by the US 2016 Global Magnitsky Act, the act was first proposed by the Netherlands in 2018 and approved by the Council of the EU in 2020. The decision to implement a Human Rights sanctions regime for the EU was also motivated by serious human rights violations worldwide, such as the tragic assassination of human rights defender Jamal Khashoggi. The EU grounded the work for the regime on a Resolution from 2018 (European Parliament, 2018).

The Council decision defines serious human rights violations as “*genocide, crimes against humanity, torture and inhuman treatment, slavery, extrajudicial and arbitrary killing, enforced disappearance, and arbitrary arrest and detention*”. Lesser human rights violations that can also result in sanctions if they are systematic and widespread include “*human trafficking, gender-based violence, and attacks on freedom of expression, opinion, assembly, association, and religion*”. The Council emphasizes the importance of international law in defining human rights, including such treaties as the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights, the Convention against Torture, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Council of the European Union, 2020).

The current mechanism relies on an intergovernmental process, based on officials' will and not on civil society or even NGOs' direct demands. However, it was reported that calls by several MEPs and Dutch and German MPs to amend the mechanism in this regard have been issued, especially for the sake of NGOs' work of documenting human rights violations. The fact that some MEPs advocated for the inclusion of CSOs in the process might be interesting leverage.

Also, given that it is the prerogative of the Council of the EU to issue the ban, and that it is composed of ministers from Member States, it seems that the initiative of condemnation relies on them (and probably on Foreign Affairs and Defense Ministers).

The Common Foreign Security Policy for the European Union states that *"To influence policies violating international law or human rights, or policies disrespectful of the rule of law or democratic principles, the EU has designed sanctions of a diplomatic or economic nature."* (EEAS, n.d)

The Political and Security Committee (PSC), presided by Sofie From-Emmesberger, is responsible for the implementation of this policy and of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). Its role is further detailed in Article 38 of the Treaty on the European Union and on the above copied link. The PSC is a Committee of the Council of the European Union (which issued the sanctions regime).

It is under the responsibility of the Council and of the High Representative. The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Mr. Borrell) is mentioned in the Decision, but it is said that it was enacted *'Having regard to the proposal*

*from the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*’ which does not specify his role in the process.

In line with his mandate, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights (Mr. Eamon Gilmore) will be guiding the effective implementation of the Action Plan.

The new human rights sanctions mechanism (Figure 7) was first used on 2 March 2021 against four Russian officials involved in the arbitrary arrest and detention of opposition



Figure 7 Infographics produced by the Paris Bureau for the Twitter campaign: May 2021

leader Alexei Navalny and subsequent crackdowns on peaceful protests. The agreement came after France, Germany, Poland and the Baltic states urged the 27-member bloc in order to send a message to Putin. On 22 March 2021, the EU announced sanctions against 11 other individuals and four entities involved in a range of human rights abuses around the world, including the arbitrary detention of Uighurs in China, oppression in North Korea, the military coup and crackdown in Myanmar, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Libya, the torture and repression of LGBTQIA+ people and political opponents in Chechnya, Russia, and torture, arbitrary executions and killings in South Sudan and Eritrea.



The process leading to the adoption of sanctions is opaque. Because the sanctions imposition process originates usually with the Council working groups, and its framing remains exclusively in the hands of the Council and Commission, it is difficult to trace the genesis of individual sanctions regimes. Due to the exclusion of the European Parliament, civil society has less direct access to the policy process than in other domains. Instead, external partners such as the US have easier access to the articulation of sanctions regimes and to the proposal of designations than civil society. Designees are often chosen on the basis of information provided by representations of the Member States – and also of the EEAS – in the target country. While it is difficult to think of consistency as a criterion for listing human rights abusers, given the political nature of the exercise, the quality of evidence on which designations are made has improved considerably.

#### *Why would it be relevant for Bahrain?*

As mentioned before the Royal family is directly tied to perpetration of torture. Not only Nasser bin Hamad, but multiple other members of the Al-Khalifa are facing accusation from human rights organisations. Noura Bint Ebrahim al-Khalifa was accused of torture during the protests of 2011 as she was working in the police forces (BBC, 2013). Under the consideration that those allegations are not followed by sanctions in the Kingdom of Bahrain, they should be scrutinized by other countries. If Nasser is facing a suspension of immunity in the event of being prosecuted in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it is important that there is a global call for EU sanctions under the new legislation of 2020.

The process might be complex seeing, as explained, the civil society is not a part of the process of choosing the people who could be targeted by the legislation. However, the concept of a campaign to avoid the intervention of human rights violators in the sports stage, can allow an advocacy targeting those culprits by demonstrating their crimes and why the

European Union should ban them. Many Members of the European Parliament are aware of the violations in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as they voted the EU Resolution of March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021. By advocating in favour of sanctions against the same people that are accused of violations in Bahrain, the project could lead to the forbidding of actions on European soil, and thus clarify which actors can invest in sports, avoiding the concept of sportswashing.

In April and May 2021, I participated in the creation of a communication campaign calling for sanctions under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime for Prince Nasser, especially after he was welcomed in Paris in April to discuss the future of the Paris F.C. This communication paved the way to a public understanding of what Nasser is accused of and how it is possible to act, as the European Union to sanction him and any individual under allegations of human rights violations.

## What would it take?

### *Schedule*

This third chapter of the campaign would gain from the publicity of the different violations committed by Nasser Al-Khalifa and the support of a petition asking for changes in the way Bahrain can impact sports funds in Europe.

It would be understanding to start this part of the campaign only once the petitions are sent to sports organizers to demand the end of advertisement of the Bahraini fund in sports events. As such, the advocacy work for the application of the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime would start in October 2021, to give a month to share the petition and call out sports actors on the matter.

Using the contacts *ADHRB* has among members of Parliaments and Members of the European Parliament, each team should notify their representatives to call them out about the possible and necessary action to be taken against Nasser Al-Khalifa. Using the documentation produced during the campaign and the vast number of proofs that are existing already the advocacy would consist in warning the different European bodies about triggering the EU Magnitsky Act. *ADHRB* has the competence and the possibility to act on the European level. On March 2021, *ADHRB* was an actor in the promotion of the Resolution produced by the European Parliament. The advocacy work produced and the contacts that are maintained between the NGO and EU representatives is allowing to create work on the human rights violations perpetrated in Bahrain. This role of whistle-blower and advocate for human rights can lead to actions. In October 2021 it would be interesting to contact national representatives for them to sign and transmit to their EU counterparts a letter asking for immediate action. Transmitting this letter would be an opportunity to remind the March 2021 resolution on Bahrain.

In October and November there would be a need to continue denouncing the acts of Nasser Al-Khalifa. The culmination of this campaign on Human Rights Sanctions Regime would be December 10<sup>th</sup>, on International Human Rights Day. On that day, emails to alert every MEP from each country involved in the campaign would be sent, asking for their support. Following letters sent by national MPs and this alarm rang, the objective of warning the European Union that they have a responsibility to end impunity in Bahrain would be achieved.

### *Costs and risks*

As for every other chapter of the global campaign, most of the activity would be online, especially since it is still complicated to plan physical meetings with Members of Parliament and Members of European Parliament.

This absence of costs is also making more valuable a coordinated action lasting for this long as it would be possible for every office to dedicate one member for this topic in the division of tasks. It would not be a waste of humanpower and it no create a broad risk regarding the absence of any answer from any of the contacts made during campaign.

The absence of cost is a great asset for weighting risks. Without expenditures the risk of sacrificing financial capacity is null. In the event of the European representatives not taking action following our campaign then the loss would be only of humanpower from the advocacy teams around Europe, but it would not endanger the stability of *ADHRB* as a whole. Furthermore, campaigning and alerting European members of the situation of Bahrain and of the tools at the disposal of the Union to sanction them is always a gain. As such, even though the legal impact was minimal, and no sanctions were actually taken there would be a creation of awareness regarding the situation and the inactivity of the European Union. Fostering awareness remains the major action of *ADHRB*, and this campaign would prove efficient on that side.

### *Impact*

The impact of a legal campaign would be considered with its success or failure to create a legal precedent.

### *Participation and ownership by beneficiaries*

In the case of campaigning for the sanctions of the Al-Khalifa family, and in particular Nasser, there would not be a direct participation and ownership by the beneficiaries. Those who would benefit from the end of the impunity of the Bahraini Royal Family would not be a primary actor in the campaign. However, it is by using their testimonies, the proof of their oppression that there is a possibility to demonstrate the importance of a reaction by the European Union to end the culture of impunity that allowed so many infringements to international laws.

### *Policy support*

*ADHRB* has a strong political support. In France the Paris bureau is in contact with numerous Senators and Deputies from the Parliament. Those political actors are special partners with whom we have the possibility to work on letters for the European representatives. Using the contacts in the Parliament would give weight to the demands made to the European Union. Béatrice Piron, member of Parliament and President of the France-Bahrain Friendship Group at the Assemblée Nationale is a special partner that is aware of the actions of *ADHRB* and has been asked to interrogate Sports Minister on the actions of Nasser during a session. Her role is prominent in the contact between *ADHRB* and the political bodies.

### *Appropriate technology*

To reach out to the different political bodies the *ADHRB* offices in Europe would use the usual channels of communication, emailing the lists of those representatives and calling their offices to ask for meetings. In the current situation, the meetings to discuss the drafting of a letter addressed to European elected would be online, using platforms that are used on a daily basis by the teams. This would make sure that the advocacy teams are aware of the func-

tioning of the technology and avoid loss of time and money in renewing an already appropriate technology.

### *Social and cultural impact*

There would be a social and cultural impact with the end of the possibility for the Royal family of Bahrain to travel to Europe. It would be a massive change in policies between European actors and Bahrain and it would be a promotion of the values defended by the different treaties of which the countries of the Union and the Union itself are parties to.

### Objectives of the legal action

The legal action conducted with the use of the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime aims at forbidding travels for the Al-Khalifa family to Europe. But it will also aim at financially sanctioning them as they would not be able to move funds within the European Union. This objective is echoing with the sanctions already applied to Russian nationals accused of crimes similar to the ones the Royal family of Bahrain is accused of. As long as an international court has not made clear that every allegation is misplaced then the campaign aiming at creating a travel ban over the Bahraini sovereignty is perfectly relevant.

As for the petition, the objective is very bold. It involves a lot of inextricable connections between the EU and a trade partner. However, demanding such a strict move from the European Union is to stand for the core values of human rights that this new Regime is tending at doing. If the MEPs and the European representatives were not responding this chapter of the campaign would be transformed into raising awareness for other NGOs and other movements that could rise up and denounce the felonies committed in certain regions of the world.

## Goals and objectives of the Global Campaign

As explained earlier in the project, the ultimate goal of any advocacy officer is to find a way to suppress the reason of their work. In the case of a campaign denouncing the violations of Bahrain in terms of human rights, the goal would be to have the authorities to follow international treaties and to respect the fundamental rights of their citizens.

However, realistically, a campaign on sportswashing has a very different objective. Allowing the investments and the advertisement of Bahrain on the sport stage is allowing the authorities to perpetuate their exactions, including acts of tortures, forced disappearances, and violations of the freedom of expression, but not limited to those. Giving the Bahraini government, especially in the presence of Nasser Al-Khalifa, the possibility to be a part of international actions alongside athletes and world leaders is tolerating an alleged criminal, despite many international calls from the civil society but also the United Nations and the European Union. The goal of the campaign would thus to forbid the participation of any team displaying the sponsoring of Bahrain in national and international competitions. If it is not possible to forbid formally an investor to be a part of a team or athletes sponsors, it is possible to ask for the sponsor to not display the name of a country that is under investigation for violations of human rights. In the case of Bahrain, the suppression of the sponsors “Explore Bahrain” or “Bahrain Victorious” from the environment of the sports team under the control of the Kingdom would be a sign that countries that are not complying with human rights are not tolerated.

Another objective, especially related to the third part of the campaign, is a European ban. The recent EU Human Rights Sanctions Regime is aiming at condemning people involved in human rights violations. It has been used already to forbid the entry on the European territory for several accused of those violations in Russia. The campaign contacting

European officials would aim at putting on the list of banned from entry the entire Al-Khalifa family and their relatives in position of power. Nasser Al-Khalifa is used to running races, participating in horse competitions, and coming to Europe for investments. Putting him on a list of banned individuals would be a striking example that when accused of torture, it is not possible to enter the European territory. This goal is extended to more family members of the Royal family as many of them are accused of either being personally involved in human rights violations or are tolerating this practice. Reiterating that Bahrain is under the scrutiny of supranational institutions by ordering a ban to enter Europe would show the importance of fundamental rights for European officials.

### Limitation to the elaboration

The elaboration of a campaign that would take place from May to December is complicated. Furthermore, it would involve various actors, in *ADHRB* and out of the NGO with fellow organisations, MPs, MEPs, and other officials. There is a risk that the project is limited in time because of the difficulty to create a follow-up that is sufficient to keep every actor on board until the last chapter of the campaign, the demand that the Al-Khalifa family is submitted to the Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, is closed.

In addition to the difficulty to keep the awareness of the political actors and the fellow organisations, there is a structural difficulty within *ADHRB* that resides in the fact that the offices around Europe are mostly, when not exclusively, composed of interns that are there for six months. Without a leading capacity that remains present from the start to the end of the campaign it could be complicated to continue the campaign with the same energy while the advocacy officers in charge of this would rotate and no be there from day one until the end. This limitation could of course be compensated either by a follow-up of a permanent member



of the organisation or by making sure that at every rotation of interns the project is clear for the upcoming people in charge of it.

Like many other campaigns launched at *ADHRB*, and in advocacy in general, there is a need of surveillance to convey actions on a long term. As long as the authorities will not have worked toward a legal framework regarding the public advertisement of foreign nations through sports to dissimulate human rights violations, this campaign project can be renewed. It is a sustainable action that does not engage monetary losses and is necessary to limit the range of actions of countries that are using sportswashing.

In the event that the sanitary conditions would allow it and the project would not be enough, future actions could be taken physically with gatherings in front of official building such as the Council of Paris in Paris, or stadiums, but also at any sports events involving this whitewashing.

## Conclusion

Conducting advocacy projects for the past two months has given me a glimpse of the possibilities to work toward peace and conflict transformation, but also it showed me that it is possible to reach political bodies when the actions are meaningful.

Creating a project around sportswashing is a way to combine the importance I attach to cultural investigations and advocacy for peace. In this project, I used critical thinking to consider how to best impact the role that the Al-Khalifa family is playing in sports and how to foster the awareness of the public regarding the exactions this family is conducting in their country on their people.

By the elaboration of this project the intention was to mix many parts of the work that is done on a daily basis at *ADHRB* by the Paris Bureau. We are working everyday for communication on social media, writing articles for the website, and creating content to alert the general audience about the different cases that we are made aware of by the sources in the different countries *ADHRB* is working in.

Parallely to our communication work, the Paris Bureau is on a daily basis working with Senators and Members of the *Assemblée Nationale*. Writing letters to ministers, ambassadors or even the President, we are in constant contact with Members of Parliament to promote our work and share our expertise on the situation in the Arabian Peninsula.

The idea of a petition came out of a discussion we had during a daily team meeting with my fellow interns in advocacy in Paris. The creativity of this project is to make the audience not a passive receiver of the information that Bahrain is perpetrating human rights violations, but to give them ways to act. The voices of the human rights defenders are silenced in Bahrain, they are forced into prisons, sentenced to obey to travel bans and absence of political dissent. This project of petition is a way for voices to be heard by the authorities.

Overall, this project is bold and ambitious, it requires the coordination of several offices around Europe, and efforts to carry a campaign on several front. However, it is truly similar to the work that is done everyday at *Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain* and it has the potential to reach not only a popular audience of people interested in sports, but also to alert the authorities, as it has been the case on many issues. Making official that the European Union, as an international body, and many countries composing the Union, are no longer willing to be complaisant with the Al-Khalifa with regards with accusations of human rights violations against them, is the core objective of *ADHRB*. Targeting sportswash-

ing is making an ambitious and following the steps initiated by the Council of Europe to target human rights violators from Russia.

This project should be conducted on those three fronts as it is not costly to organise, is very similar to what is done currently and is a precise campaign to achieve the maximum efficiency to witness changes regarding the policies.

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Annex:



## Annex 1

		Communication	Petition	Legal Action
Costs		Low	Low	Low
Time		Medium -	Medium +	High +
Development policy priority		Medium	Medium -	High +
Social risks		Low	Medium	Medium
Viability		High +	Medium -	Medium -
Institutional viability		High +	High +	High +
Gender impact		Medium -	Medium	Medium
Harnessing local resources		Low	Low	Low
Beneficiaries/Priority group		High	Medium	Low