



PRESS RELEASE
(for immediate release)

Bahrain Grand Prix:

Only 29% of Formula One companies respond to human rights concerns

London, 18 April 2012 – Only 29% of firms linked to Formula One responded to Business & Human Rights Resource Centre about [human rights concerns that various organizations raised](#) relating to the Bahrain Grand Prix, scheduled for 20-22 April. Forty two companies or teams failed to respond.

[See all the responses on this webpage](#), which also lists each company that failed to respond. That page also summarises human rights concerns raised by international human rights groups, human rights advocates in Bahrain, and others. Human Rights Watch warned Formula One that by holding the Bahrain Grand Prix, it would be endorsing the kingdom's government despite claims that sport and politics don't mix. Amnesty International said "Human rights violations are continuing unabated... Holding the Grand Prix in Bahrain in 2012 risks being interpreted by the government of Bahrain as symbolizing a return to business as usual." The UK Labour Party urged Formula One to cancel the Bahrain Grand Prix, saying that proceeding with the event would "send the wrong signal." Among the prisoners of conscience detained in Bahrain is human rights advocate Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, who is on hunger strike – there are fears that he may soon die.

The company responses were on the whole disappointing, given the gravity of the human rights concerns raised about Bahrain, and given that last year the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted by consensus the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which confirmed that all companies have a responsibility to respect human rights.

"Seldom have we seen a response rate this low from a group of companies anywhere in the world", said Christopher Avery, Director of **Business & Human Rights Resource Centre**. *"And of the responses that were received, seldom if ever have we seen such a high proportion that completely fail to comment on the human rights concerns that they were asked to address."*

Chris Marsden, Chair of the board of **Business & Human Rights Resource Centre**, said: *"I encourage everyone to look at each company's response and to draw their own conclusions about which companies are taking human rights concerns seriously, and which are not."*

The usual response rate to the Resource Centre is 75% globally. It is 95% for South African companies, 80% for Western European and North American companies, 50% for mainland Chinese companies. Since 2005 the Centre has invited over 1000 company responses, to a range of human rights concerns. A [record of all past responses and non-responses is here](#).

When the responses by Formula One owners, teams, sponsors and partners were posted on the Resource Centre website today, leading human rights organizations expressed dismay about the responses as a whole:

- Arvind Ganesan, Director of Business and Human Rights Division, **Human Rights Watch**:
"It is disappointing that the responses by companies involved with Formula 1 do not reflect any appreciation of the depth of the country's human rights crisis nor how the government is exploiting this race to deny those problems. We hope that once on the ground they will recognize the seriousness of the situation in Bahrain and speak out about it."
- Wilder Tayler, Secretary General, **International Commission of Jurists**:
"Bahraini authorities have failed so far to address the serious human rights violations that have been committed by security forces or to bring about the changes they have promised. It is unfortunate that Formula 1 teams and sponsoring companies do not seem to fully understand the implications of holding the Grand Prix in Bahrain at this very critical moment for human rights in

that country. We would encourage them to exercise greater responsibility and demonstrate an awareness of the plight of human rights defenders in Bahrain."

- Kirsty Hughes, Chief Executive, **Index on Censorship**:
"It is disappointing to see sponsors of Formula One ignore the implications of this weekend's race. Until the government shows a real commitment to reforms promised in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report, international events such as the Bahrain Grand Prix should not proceed."

FAILED TO RESPOND:

The following companies and Formula One teams have so far failed or declined to respond:

Sponsors & partners: Acer, Allianz, Alpinestars, Casio, CNBC, Dell, Falcon Private Bank, Fiat, GE, Gillette / Procter & Gamble, Hackett, Head & Shoulders / Procter & Gamble, Hilton HHonors, Hugo Boss / Valentino Fashion Group, Kingfisher Airlines / UB Group, Mitsubishi Electric, NEC, NetApp, Philip Morris Intl., Pirelli, Santander, Siemens, TAG Heuer / LVMH, Tata Motors, Telmex, Thomson Reuters, UB Group, Virgin, Visa, Whyte & Mackay / UB Group

Companies that have Formula One teams: Cosworth, McLaren

Formula One teams: Force India-Mercedes, HRT-Cosworth, Lotus-Renault, Marussia-Cosworth, McLaren-Mercedes, Sauber-Ferrari, STR-Ferrari

Formula One & its owners: Formula One Group of Companies, CVC Capital Partners, JP Morgan

DID RESPOND:

The following companies and Formula One teams did respond; [their responses are here](#).

Sponsors & partners: CNN, Deutsche Post DHL, Intel, Johnnie Walker / Diageo, Microsoft, Petronas, Reebok / adidas Group, Shell, Total, Vodafone

Companies stating they are no longer Formula One partners: Volkswagen

Companies that have Formula One teams: Ferrari, Mercedes / Daimler, Renault

Formula One teams: Caterham F1, Red Bull Racing, Williams F1

If any companies wish to send the Resource Centre any further statements about human rights concerns in relation to the Bahrain Grand Prix, the Centre will post them. If any organization or individual wishes to comment on the company responses collectively or individually, the Centre will also post those statements – if those comments criticise the response of a particular company, the Resource Centre will then invite that company to respond to the criticism if it wishes to do so.

About the Resource Centre

[Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#) is an independent non-profit organization that encourages companies to respect human rights. Our website links to reports on the human rights impacts (positive & negative) of 5100 companies worldwide, and provides guidance tools to assist companies and others working in this field. When human rights concerns are raised by civil society, we invite companies to respond, and post each company response alongside the concerns. Victims and NGOs thank us for bringing global attention to their concerns and for eliciting responses from companies. Companies thank us for including their perspective and for providing the opportunity to present their responses in full. This process often leads to real improvements on the ground.

Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and President of Ireland, is Chair of the Centre's International Advisory Network. The Centre's Academic Partners comprise 23 leading academic institutions. The Centre's researchers are based in Colombia, Hong Kong, India, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Senegal, South Africa, UK, Ukraine and USA.

For further details, see the ["About us"](#) section of our website.

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