HUMAN RIGHTS IN BAHRAIN

HEARING

BEFORE THE

TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED AND TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

MAY 13, 2011

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TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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CONTENTS

WITNESSES

Joe Stork, Deputy Director, Middle East and North Africa Divison, Human Rights Watch 6
Maryam Al-Khawaja, Bahrain Center for Human Rights 13
Richard Sollom, Deputy Director, Physicians for Human Rights 16

LETTERS, STATEMENTS, ETC., SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING

Prepared Statement of the Honorable James P. McGovern, a Representative in Congress from the State of Massachusetts and Cochairman of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission 3
Prepared Statement of Joe Stork 9
Prepared Statement of Richard Sollom 18

APPENDIX

Hearing Notice 28
Prepared Statement of the Government of Bahrain 29
Prepared Statement of the Honorable Jim McDermott, a Representative in Congress from the State of Washington 39
Prepared Statement of the Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, a Representative in Congress from American Samoa 41
Prepared Statement of the Honorable Donna F. Edwards, a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland 50
Prepared Statement of the Islamic Information Center 51
Human Rights First Press Release 53
Amnesty International Press Release 55
AFL-CIO Report 57
Doctors Without Borders Report 67

HUMAN RIGHTS IN BAHRAIN

FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2011

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
Washington, D.C.

The commission met, pursuant to call, at 10:00 a.m., in Room B-318 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James P. McGovern [co-chairman of the commission] presiding.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Well, good morning, everybody. I apologize profusely for being so late, but they called votes beginning at 9:45, and there were a series that just ended. So, I am here, I am out of breath, but I am very grateful to everybody for being here.

I want to, again, thank everybody for being here this morning, at the end of a very hectic week here in Congress.

I would like to thank the staff of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, in particular, Mike McVicker, for coordinating this hearing, and I especially want to thank our witnesses for attending.

A little over a decade ago, under the leadership of Executive Committee member, Congresswoman Donna Edwards, the Commission held a hearing on Human Rights in Bahrain. That hearing looked at labor rights, the situation of migrant workers, and human trafficking, and noted the many efforts by the government of Bahrain to address these human rights challenges and the many challenges that remain.

Today's hearing will again review the status of human rights in Bahrain, but this time with an emphasis on what has occurred during the last three months.

In a relatively short time span, there have been serious allegations of grave human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests and detention. Attacks on medical personnel to prevent them from treating wounded individuals, tension and abuse of female teachers of school girls, lack of due process in criminal proceedings, destruction of religious sites, dismissal from jobs based on religious affiliation, and other forms of harassment directed by the Bahraini government against political opponents, many of whom are from the Shia majority. These allegations need to be explored, and the Commission will attempt to begin that process today.

Although human rights can have a political dimension, the Commission does not take a pro government or anti government stance on broader political issues in Bahrain. Bahrain's political future is a matter for the people of Bahrain to determine.

As a Human Rights Commission, we are pro human rights, regardless of politics, religion, race or ethnicity. That will be our focus today and always.

The United States and Bahrain have an important friendship that serves the needs and interests of both countries. Also, during the last decade, Bahrain has shown a willingness to address human rights issues in a constructive manner. It is important to recognize and appreciate those facts.

However, there are times when one friend needs to tell another that something is wrong, and this is one of those times. As the Wall Street Journal noted earlier this week, Bahrain is, indeed, a friend, but it does not deserve a pass on human rights issues.

I think it might be helpful and serve to strengthen the Bahraini government's international relations to allow the International Committee for the Red Cross, or the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, or an appropriate U.N. human rights special rapporteur, to travel to Bahrain, visit detainees and provide an objective assessment of their physical security and the judicial process that will determine their future.

Every nation faces human rights challenges, including my own, and it is important for members of Congress to learn about them, not just to criticize, but to help governments, NGOs, and international organizations work together to find legal, peaceful solutions to longstanding abuses and restrictions on human rights.

I would like to end my remarks by noting a couple of things. First, about my own government. I was expecting at least one, possibly two, witnesses from the State Department to testify. Regrettably, over the past 72 hours we were informed that no one in any of the bureaus is available today. I regret that the State Department is unable to appear.

Second, I would like to thank the staff of the Commission and the staff at my personal office for talking to the many individuals who called from Bahrain to express their views about the complex situation in Bahrain. The callers were respectful, calm, and very clear about their concerns. The same is true with the many emails my office has received that express a wide diversity of views within Bahrain on human rights and what has been taking place there since February. I have got to express how much I appreciate these individuals taking time to contact my staff.

I also want to add that the Commission does not call representatives of foreign governments to testify in our hearings. This is not specific to Bahrain, but from China, to Columbia, from Iran to Vietnam, from Sri Lanka to Morocco, our position has been the same. Governments have significant access and resources to present their point of view to the media, and to U.S. and international officials. Like Bahrain, they are often aided by one or more public relations firms. The Commission, as an entity dedicated to human rights, is often a forum where the voices of the voiceless are provided an opportunity to be heard.

Having said that, we invited the Government of Bahrain to enter a statement into the record of this hearing, and I would like to officially submit the statement for the record. Copies are also available at the literature table.

I am also submitting for the record a May 11th press release from Amnesty International regarding the trials of opposition leaders in Bahrain, a May 12th release

by Human Rights First on torture and trials and protestors in Bahrain, the April 21st report of the AFL-CIO regarding the Government of Bahrain's failure to comply with agreements under the U.S./Bahrain Free Trade Agreement, and an April report by Doctors Without Borders on violations against the medical community.

I very much look forward to hearing from today's witnesses, from two NGOs, one of which has investigated the German human rights allegations, and the other which has examined the particularly troubling targeting of medical personnel.

Moreover, I am particularly pleased to hear from a member of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, whose father is currently detained in Bahrain under circumstances which indicate torture and other abuses.

I would like to recognize again and acknowledge all of you, and thank you for being here, and we will now begin. So, let me get my list here. I would like to acknowledge Mr. Joe Stork, Deputy Director of Middle East and North African Division, Human Rights Watch, Maryam Al-Khawaja, Bahrain Center for Human Rights, Richard Sollom, Deputy Director at Physicians for Human Rights. Mr. Stork, why don't we begin with you, and, again, thank you all for being with us.
[The statement of Rep. McGovern follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JAMES P. MCGOVERN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS AND COCHAIRMAN OF THE TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Rep. James P. McGovern (MA)
TLHRC Hearing: Human Rights in Bahrain
B-318 Rayburn HOB
Friday, May 13, 2011
10:00 AM-12:00 PM

Good morning. I want to thank everyone for being here this morning at the end of a very hectic week in Congress. I would like to thank the staff of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, in particular, Mike McVicker, for coordinating this hearing, and I especially want to thank our witnesses for their attendance.

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Today's hearing will again review the status of human rights in Bahrain, but this time with an emphasis on what has occurred during the last three months. In a relatively short time span, there have been serious allegations of grave human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings; torture; arbitrary arrest and detention; attacks on medical personnel to prevent them from treating wounded individuals; detention and abuse of female teachers and schoolgirls; lack of due process in criminal proceedings; destruction of religious sites; dismissal from jobs based on religious affiliation; and other forms of harassment directed by the Bahraini government against political opponents, many of whom are from the Shi'a majority. These allegations need to be explored and the Commission will attempt to begin that process today.

Although human rights can have a political dimension, the Commission does not take a "pro-government" or "anti-government" stance on broader political issues in Bahrain. Bahrain's political

future is a matter for the people of Bahrain to determine. As a human rights commission, we are "pro-human rights," regardless of politics, religion, race or ethnicity. That will be our focus today and always.

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However, there are times when one friend needs to tell another that something is wrong – and this is one of those times. As the Wall Street Journal noted earlier this week, Bahrain is indeed a friend, but it does not deserve "a pass" on human rights issues.

I think it might be helpful, and serve to strengthen the Bahraini government's international relations, to allow the International Committee for the Red Cross, or the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, or an appropriate U.N. human rights special rapporteur, to travel to Bahrain, visit detainees and provide an objective assessment of their physical security and the judicial process that will determine their future.

Every nation faces human rights challenges, including my own, and it's important for Members of Congress to learn about them, not just to criticize, but to help governments, NGOs and international organizations work together to find legal, peaceful solutions to long-standing abuses and restrictions on human rights.

I'd like to end my remarks by noting a couple of things. First – about my own government – I was expecting at least one, possibly two witnesses from the State Department to testify. Regrettably, over the past 72 hours, we were informed that no one in any of the bureaus is available today. I regret that the State Department is unable to appear.

Second – I'd like to thank the staff of the Commission and the staff in my personal office for talking to the many individuals who called from Bahrain to express their views about the complex situation in Bahrain. The callers were respectful, calm and very clear about their concerns. The same is true with the many emails my office has received that express a wide diversity of views within Bahrain on human rights and what has been taking place there since February.

I can't express how much I appreciate these individuals taking the time to contact me and my staff.

In the past two days, however, the tenor of some communications has changed. It became clear that unlike the many other phone calls and emails I had been receiving, these calls were orchestrated. They followed a similar script; they asserted the hearing was anti-government; and they based that assertion on the ethnicity and religion of one of our witnesses. These callers, however, were also very respectful and seemed to appreciate the fact that the topic of human rights broadly speaking was going to be explored at today's hearing.

The Commission does not call representatives of foreign governments to testify at hearings. This is not specific to Bahrain – from China to Colombia, from Iran to Vietnam, from Sri Lanka to Morocco, our position is the same. Governments have significant access and resources to present their point of view to the media and to U.S. and international officials. Like Bahrain, they are often aided by one or more public relations firms. The Commission, as an entity dedicated to human rights, is often a forum where the voices of the voiceless are provided an opportunity to be heard.

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I very much look forward to hearing from today's witnesses from two NGOs, one of which has investigated the general human rights allegations and the other which has examined the particularly troubling targeting of medical personnel. Moreover, I am particularly pleased to hear from a member of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights whose father is currently detained in Bahrain under circumstances which indicate torture and other abuse.

I would like to recognize my colleague Congressman McDermott to make his opening remarks. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JOE STORK, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA DIVISON, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Mr. STORK. Thank you very much, Congressman McGovern, and thanks for convening this meeting. I am pleased to be here, and I've submitted a written testimony, which I request be put in the record, so that I might try and be brief this morning.

This is a very critical time to be having these hearings, as you noted. What we have seen over the last five or six weeks since the middle of March is a very strong counter narrative emerging from the Government of Bahrain, which has, basically, transformed the accounts of pro democracy, largely peaceful pro democracy protests in Bahrain into what the government refers to, and has charged individuals like Maryam's father with, a terrorist campaign to overthrow the government. So, democracy, essentially, becomes equated with terrorism. This is an extremely grave state of affairs, and I think underlies a lot of the problems, some of which I will allude to today.

I think it is very important to note that since the middle of March, when the period of repression that we are talking about has come at a time when the government has been fully in control of the security situation. So, this is not like Libya, where you have an armed insurgency. This is not Syria, where thousands of people are on the streets every week, if not every day. This is a place where the government very quickly, and very comprehensively, suppressed all manner of protest. And so, what has been going on today, when you have night after night massed armed men, some in uniform, some in plain clothes, breaking into homes, hauling Bahrainis off to unknown locations, to interrogation centers where torture and ill treatment are routine, a time when people are pulled out of cars at check points and beaten or arrested, a time when people are suffering from gunshot or other wounds inflicted by security forces, fear of going to hospitals and medical centers where other security forces will be and arrest them.

These are times when something forceful and specific is needed from the United States Government. I have been watching the situation in Bahrain very closely since 1996, which was the time of my first visit on behalf of Human Rights Watch.

At that time, Bahrain was in the midst of another period of protractive and serious unrest, one the Bahrainis themselves refer to as intifada, an uprising. And, I documented very serious abuses that occurred in that period.

We took great heart, and I personally took great heart, in the changes that King Hamad introduced after he came to the throne in 1999. He abolished the state security courts, freed political prisoners, invited those who had been forced into exile to return, and most of them did. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was one of them.

I want to point out that my colleagues, and briefly for a time myself, were on the ground in Bahrain over these last two months, from February 17th until April 20th, the date being when the authorities refused to renew a colleague's visa.

I want to outline a couple of areas where we gathered information, did investigations, and just in very summary fashion present them to you this morning.

The first thing I want to refer to is the deaths which in many cases seemed to have been unlawful, unlawful killings by security forces. We documented the use of live ammunition against largely peaceful protestors, as well as, and I want to stress this, the misuse of riot control equipment, such as rubber bullets, and bird shot pellets, and tear gas, in other words use of these weapons in a manner that was completely inappropriate and where these too became lethal weapons.

We investigated one appalling case of a young 32-year old Hani Jumah, who on March 19th in Hani's village was chased into an empty apartment building under construction by security forces, and when neighbors found him about an hour later he was unconscious. We do not think he ever regained consciousness. He, eventually, died several days later, as a result of having been shot at point blank range with pellet guns in his knees, in his elbow, and he was beaten so that his teeth, as well as bone fragments, were on the floor.

As far as we know, there has been absolutely no acknowledgment of this on the part of the authorities, and, certainly, no investigation into the circumstances of Hani Jumah's death.

The other area I want to quickly touch on is arbitrary arrests and detention. As you know, about 1,000 people have been arrested in this period, since the middle of March. We believe that about 630 of these people still remain in detention.

What is most disturbing is the fact that we do not know where these people are, and neither do lawyers or family members. They have been held incommunicado. They have been allowed, at most, brief, and by brief I mean something like 30 seconds to a minute, phone calls once or twice with families, to say, basically, I am all right, thanks for asking.

Their lawyers have not been able to see them, except in a few cases when they have, actually, been brought into the court, and it is in the courtroom where they are able to meet with the lawyers for a few minutes.

These people under arrest include leaders of legally recognized political opposition societies, like Ibrahim Sharif, a Sunni Muslim who heads the secularist National Democratic Action Society, Matar Ibrahim Matar and Jawad Ferooz, recently elected members of parliament, representing the Al Wefaq Society, the largest opposition block in the parliament.

The use of incommunicado detention raises very serious concerns about torture or ill treatment. This is when it occurs, when people are held without any kind of access. I'm very glad to hear you call for ICRC access to the prisons for precisely this reason.

I am going to let my colleague, Rich Sollom, speak to the issue of attacks against medical personnel, assault on the medical establishment. I just want to note very quickly that my colleagues who were on the ground from mid February through mid April were able, prior to March 16th, to have frequent and generally unrestricted access to Salmaniya Medical Complex, as well as other health centers, and on several occasions after March 16th as well.

The government allegations that have surfaced since March 16th, that doctors refuse to treat Sunni patients, or brought in weapons, or use the hospital's blood supply to simulate grievous protestor injuries, these things have surfaced after the

military takeover of the hospital to our mind, based on what we know from being on the ground, appear to be completely fictive.

We wrote to the Minister of Health on April 21, requesting information about these and other allegations, and we have yet to have any response.

Very quickly, just to mention, there have been numerous restrictions also on the right to freedom of information, including banning websites and publications, hostile takeover of Al-Wasat, the country's one independent newspaper. Just this week, Frederik Richter, the correspondent from Reuters, who has been there since 2008, and the only international journalist based in Bahrain, was told to pack his bags and get out within a week.

Human Rights Watch itself, I mentioned my colleague not having his visa renewed. We sent another colleague last week to observe the trials, he was turned back at the airport. I received a letter myself, my bosses received a letter yesterday, from the Minister of Social Development, saying that you can send anybody to Bahrain, but do not send Joe Stork, because we are not going to let him in.

I urge people to bear this in mind when they read the submitted testimony of the representative of the Government of Bahrain.

Another thing that we have looked at is the summary workplace dismissals, so I was also very glad to hear you mention the AFL-CIO petition to suspend the free trade agreement, because it appears that most of these dismissals took place in violation of Bahraini labor laws, as well as its national standards.

Let me end with a couple of recommendations. First of all, we strongly urge the Congress and the Administration to speak out vigorously and publicly about these abuses. The United States should not be seen as complicit in a campaign by an autocratic government to stifle popular demands for democratic rights, a dynamic that has especially dangerous sectarian dimensions in Bahrain.

To that end, we believe the U.S. should announce a comprehensive ban on security assistance to Bahrain, including the commercial sale of riot control, as well as military hardware, until authorities take measurable steps to halt violence, suppression of peaceful protestors, and hold accountable those responsible for the unlawful use of force, the use of torture and ill treatment, and arbitrary arrests and detention.

It is crucial, we think, that U.S. military officials stress to their Bahraini counterparts, including Field Martial Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, head of the current martial law government. The continued close relations, military relations, including the presence of the U.S. fleet headquarters in Bahrain, require a prompt comprehensive halt in serious human rights violations.

We further urge Congress, and the Obama Administration, to criticize these abuses by name, such as unlawful killing and torture, and wholesale impunity for serious crimes. Administration officials have told us they do not do so, because they do not think it will be any more effective than the private demarches they have been making.

We cannot guarantee that public diplomacy will have the desired effect, but the time for relying only on quiet diplomacy is past. What is at stake is not only the

situation in Bahrain, but U.S. credibility regarding human rights issues throughout the region.

As long as the U.S. speaks forcefully regarding violations in Iran, Syria and Libya, as it should, but is publicly silent when it comes to Bahrain, it undermines its efforts and credibility to promote human rights in all countries, whether allies or adversaries.

And in that connection, my last recommendation is to urge the Obama Administration to take the lead in calling for the U.N. Human Rights Council session that would address the issues in Bahrain. The efforts of the Obama Administration to transfer and rehabilitate the whole role of the Human Rights Council is badly undermined by its silence when it comes to Bahrain.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. STORK follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF JOE STORK

Human Rights in Bahrain
Testimony prepared for the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
May 13, 2011
Joe Stork
Deputy Director, Middle East & North Africa Division, Human Rights Watch

Congressman McGovern and other Distinguished Commission Members:

Thank you very much for holding this important hearing on the human rights situation in Bahrain, and for inviting me to participate.

Human rights conditions in Bahrain have grown increasingly grave since mid-March, when the government violently put down pro-democracy and anti-government street protests. Since then, we have seen an unrelenting official campaign of punitive retribution against Bahrainis who participated in or otherwise supported the protests.

This campaign has included the apparently arbitrary detention of more than a thousand persons, of whom some 630 remain in detention. Almost all have had no contact with lawyers or a brief phone call with families and their whereabouts and well-being are unknown, including elected members of parliament as well as doctors and other professionals. This pattern of incommunicado detention is all the more worrisome in that in April four persons died in custody, some apparently as a result of torture and others from medical neglect. Early this week, 14 opposition activists were brought before a special military court, at least one of them bearing unmistakable signs of torture.

More than 1200 workers and employees have been summarily dismissed from their jobs apparently because of participation in the protests, in violation of Bahrain's labor laws as well as international standards. Several professional associations, such as the Teachers Society and the Bahrain Medical Society have been suspended or effectively taken over by the authorities. The government engineered a hostile takeover of the country's only independent newspaper, expelled this week the Reuters correspondent who was Bahrain's only in-country international journalist, and have denied access to other foreign journalists wishing to report from the country. Meanwhile state-controlled Bahrain TV and pro-government print media routinely vilify pro-democracy groups as traitors operating at the behest of Iran and feature commentaries fomenting hatred against the Shia community – who comprise the majority of Bahrainis and majority of protesters.

It is important to note that this fierce and sometimes deadly repression has continued – and indeed intensified – despite the fact that since mid-March the government has been fully in control of the security situation. In Bahrain people continue to face arbitrary arrest, and effectively be "disappeared" and subjected to torture, many weeks after the protests have been suppressed. This is not Libya, where rebel forces have taken up arms against the government, or Syria, where thousands of protesters take to the streets week after week in city after city. This repression is purely vindictive and punitive.

And unfortunately, in contrast to Syria, Libya, and other sites of unrest and repression, the United States government has had little to say about any of this, at least in public, and those few words have tended to be general in the extreme. We know, and just about every Bahraini knows, that the Obama administration weighed in forcefully, behind the scenes but with success, to persuade the Al Khalifa ruling family to pull back troops and security forces after they violently attacked protesters between February 14 and 17, killing seven and wounding many more. We also know that the administration worked very hard, though futilely, to head off Saudi Arabia's military deployment to Bahrain. At that time, and since, senior administration officials have publicly criticized the Al Khalifa family's resort to force, but these remonstrations have been for the most part quite general, stating for example that Bahrainis, like other people, should enjoy universal rights.

Quite frankly, at a time when night after night masked armed men, both uniformed and plainclothes, are breaking into homes and hauling off Bahrainis to unknown locations, to interrogation centers where torture or ill-treatment are routine, a time when people are pulled out of cars at checkpoints and beaten, a time when people suffering gunshot or other wounds inflicted by security forces fear going to medical centers where other security forces beat and arrest them – these are times when something more forceful and more specific is badly needed.

Mr. Chairman, I have been closely following the human rights situation in Bahrain since 1996, when I joined Human Rights Watch and, as one of my first assignments, documented rampant abuses during an earlier period of unrest in the country. I witnessed the sharp and substantial improvement that occurred after King Hamad took over from his father in 1999: in the early years of his reign, he abolished the State Security Courts, freed political prisoners, and invited those in political exile, in many cases having been forcibly expelled from their own country, to return.

While Human Rights Watch continued to criticize failures to institutionalize reforms in areas of free expression and freedom of association, we noted that reports of arbitrary arrests and abuse in detention declined markedly. It was with considerable dismay, then, that we received increasing reports, beginning in late 2007, of a revival of torture during interrogation, which we documented in a report we released in the capital, Manama, in February 2010. Despite official promises to investigate and hold accountable anyone found responsible, the only investigation we are aware of was superficial in the extreme, and no one, to our knowledge, has been criminally investigated or prosecuted. And, it must be said, the US government has at no point publicly commented on the problem beyond reporting in the annual State Department country report that we had made such allegations.

Mr. Chairman, my colleagues were on the ground in Bahrain from the night of February 17 until April 20, when the authorities refused to renew a colleague's visa. On May 4, our legal consultant travelled to Bahrain in order to observe trials before the special military court, but was turned away at the airport. Although our on-the-ground access has been restricted for several weeks now, we will continue to work with Bahraini authorities to insure that we are able to return, and we hope that Bahrain will not join the ranks of Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia as countries completely closed to international human rights reporting.

Based mainly on our field work – I myself was part of the team on the ground on the week of March 21 – I would like to summarize the most critical human rights issues in Bahrain and conclude with some recommendations of steps that Congress and the Obama administration should urgently take.

Suspect Deaths

Human Rights Watch confirmed the use of live ammunition against [largely] peaceful protesters, as well as the misuse of birdshot pellets and rubber bullets, between February 14 and 17, killing seven protesters and wounding many more. The government announced the formation of an investigative committee of three officials headed by a deputy prime minister to investigate the deaths, but if it has pursued this assignment it has done so with a complete absence of transparency. Committee members refused to discuss their methodology with Human Rights Watch, and other government officials have told us that they did not know what the committee had done, if anything. In mid- March another dozen or so people were killed in clashes, including several security officers and at least one South Asian worker killed by a mob. Further deaths occurred in subsequent raids on Shia villages in the week that followed.

To give just one appalling example that we investigated: on March 19, 32-year-old Hani Jumah, a cleaner from Khamis village and father of year-old twins, was outside his home when police swept through his neighborhood. According to witnesses, he was not protesting at the time or engaged in any unlawful behavior. Police chased him into an apartment building under construction. Neighbors found him unconscious, lying in a pool of blood, with massive injuries to his knees and arm caused by a shotgun firing pellets at point-blank range. Several days later my colleague found fragments of his knee-bone as well as a tooth and pieces of human tissue stuck to the wall and ceiling of the empty room, apparently the result of the force of the shots that maimed him. As far as we are aware, Jumah never regained consciousness: late on the night he was shot, security forces moved him from a private hospital to the Bahrain Defense Force hospital; when his parents went to the BDF hospital to ask about his condition, officials denied he was there. The next information they received was five days later, on March 24, when hospital officials called the parents to tell them to retrieve his body the next day.

As noted below, the hundreds of persons arrested are being held incommunicado, without access to lawyers or families, their whereabouts and well-being unknown. These are exactly the conditions that are conducive to torture or ill-treatment, and we know of four deaths in custody in April – some apparently as a result of torture and others from medical neglect. On April 28 state-run Bahrain TV aired a program that included a videotaped "confession" by Ali Isa Ibrahim Saqer – one of those who had died in custody earlier in the month and whose body – seen by Human Rights Watch at the time of his burial – bore unmistakable signs of torture.

Approximately 30 persons have been killed since February 14, most of them protesters or bystanders at the hands of security forces. We are aware of no investigations into the circumstances of what in many cases appear to be unlawful killings. While this number may appear small compared with deaths inflicted by security forces in Libya or Syria, in just 10 weeks they exceed the total number of deaths that occurred in the five years of serious unrest in the mid and late 1990s, and they occur among a population of just 500,000 Bahrainis (and an equivalent number of expatriate workers).

Arbitrary Arrests and Detentions

The Bahraini government has provided no information about the total number of persons arrested, detainee whereabouts and well-being, or in most cases the reasons for arrest. We believe that the number of persons arrested to have been approximately 1,000, with approximately 630 presently in detention. These include leaders of legally recognized political opposition societies, like Ibrahim Sharif, a Sunni who heads the secularist National Democratic Action Society, and Matar Ibrahim Matar and Jawad

Fairouz, recently elected members of parliament representing the Wifaq society, a Shia Islamic party that made up the largest opposition bloc in the parliament.

As noted, the widespread use of incommunicado detention raises serious concern about torture or ill-treatment in detention. We have already mentioned several deaths in custody. On May 8, authorities brought 14 protest leaders before a special military tribunal on charges ranging from plotting to overthrow the government – apparently based on the calls of some to transform the monarchy into a republic, although most of the protesters were demanding a constitutional monarchy – and specious offenses such as spreading false news and harming the reputation of the country. One of the 14, human rights and political activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, bore facial fractures and head injuries, apparently the result of severe beatings he sustained since authorities detained him a month earlier, on April 9. Several defendants in the courtroom walked with distinct limps.

Attacks on Medical Professionals

Attacks by security forces on medics first occurred in the pre-dawn February 17 raid on Pearl Roundabout protesters, when police attacked a volunteer medical tent, beating and in some cases arresting nurses and doctors. As a result of this as well as allegations that the authorities had prevented the dispatch of ambulances to attend to wounded protesters, the grounds of Salmaniyya Medical Complex, the country's largest public hospital, for weeks became a protest site as well, with protest posters, blown-up photos of wounded protesters, and occasional speeches by opposition leaders.

When the authorities declared martial law on March 15 and launched a wholesale crackdown on the street protests, Salmaniyya hospital was also targeted. On March 16 armed and uniformed masked men took control of the hospital, including patient wards, and restricting entry to and exit from the complex. Persons whose injuries appeared to be as a result of confrontations with security forces were frequently arrested and beaten, with those requiring urgent medical care moved to the sixth floor, which became an improvised detention area with highly restricted access.

My colleagues had frequent and relatively unrestricted access to Salmaniyya hospital prior to March 16, and occasional access several weeks later. Government allegations that doctors refused to treat Sunni patients, or brought in weapons, or used the hospital's blood supply to simulate more grievous protester injuries – which surfaced only after the military takeover of the hospital – appear to be fictive. Human Rights Watch wrote to the Minister of Health on April 21 requesting information about these and other allegations but we have not yet had any response.

Salmaniyya hospital remained under the direct control of security forces when the last of my colleagues departed in late April, and according to Doctors without Borders, this remains the case today.

Doctors, nurses, and other medical professionals have been among those targeted for arrest. According to Physicians for Human Rights, more than 80 doctors and other medical professionals have been arrested, of whom about 20 were since released. On May 4, officials announced that 150 doctors and nurses had been suspended pending investigations, and two days ago, on May 11, the pro-government *Gulf Daily News* carried a so-called news story headlined, "Rogue doctors seen working." The military prosecutor has brought charges against 24 doctors and 23 nurses and paramedics that include embezzling funds, possessing weapons and ammunition, inciting sectarian hatred, dissemination of false news, and participation in unauthorized rallies and meetings. Human Rights Watch has received reports in the past several days of additional arrests of doctors and medical workers from Salmaniyya and other health facilities.

Restrictions on the Right to Freedom of Information

The government has banned numerous websites and publications, including those of legally recognized political societies, arrested journalists and bloggers, and carried out a hostile takeover of the country's one independent newspaper, *Al Wasat*. In mid-March, unknown assailants attacked and partially destroyed the newspaper's printing press. The founding editor of *Al Wasat*, Mansoor al-Jamri, along with two other former editors, are being tried next week – the first session is scheduled for May 18 – on charges of "publishing fabricated news and made up stories…that may harm public safety and national interests." According to the editors, the six fabricated stories had been sent as e-mails from different addresses but a single external internet protocol (IP) source based in a neighboring Arab country. All the stories dealt with alleged incidents, such as nighttime raids on homes by riot police, that have been frequent and routine in Bahrain since March 15. The emails appeared to have been sent to other Bahraini papers, making them appear more authentic, but with small mistakes in the addresses so that in fact *Al Wasat* was the only recipient. Two Iraqi journalists working with *Al Wasat* since 2005 were summoned for questioning and summarily deported, along with their families, when they refused to support official claims that al-Jamri had knowingly fabricated the stories in question. In other words, not only the stories but the criminal charges appear to have been fabricated. Human Rights Watch monitored *Al Wasat's* content before and since al-Jamri's removal, and found that it had largely – although not completely – ceased publishing news and analysis differing from that of the rest of Bahrain's mass media.

Two other points of note with regard to freedom of information. First, while some international journalists have been permitted to report from Bahrain since March 15, others have been refused entry. This week the government ordered Frederik Richter, who for the past three years has been the only international journalist based in Bahrain, to leave the country within the week.

Second, the role of the state-run Bahrain television, and the remaining print media which are all friendly to the government and mainly function as its mouthpieces, have actively promoted government allegations against *Al Wasat*, against the medical professionals, and more broadly against Shia Bahrainis as traitors and worse. The Gulf Daily News on May 1 published a "letter," signed "Sana P.S.," riffing on termites and white ants as an "intelligent type of pest" that periodically swam and destroy buildings and crops, and concluding that "to me they are very similar to the February 14 group that tried to destroy our precious, beautiful country. The moral is: to get rid of white ants so they don't come back is to get rid of the mother (the head) responsible for these destructions. There is no point in capturing and getting rid of baby ants when the mother is still reproducing!"

Summary Workplace Dismissals
Since late March, according to the independent General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions (GFBTU), more than 1200 workers have been summarily dismissed from their jobs. In most cases the stated reason for dismissal has been absence from work during and immediately after street protests, but the dismissals were carried out in violation of Bahraini law, which requires that such absences be for at least 10 consecutive days and that workers receive written warnings after five consecutive absences. Human Rights Watch interviewed 18 workers fired from six companies. All said they were given no advance warning and the companies did not conduct independent investigations to determine that they had violated company or government regulations before they were dismissed. Those fired include 22 local union leaders and six members of the GFBTU executive board. We note that the AFL-CIO has petitioned the US government to notify Bahrain of its intent to suspend the Bahraini-US Free Trade Agreement for violation of ILO conventions prohibiting violations of freedom of association. The International Trade Union Confederation, for its part, has called for the establishment of an ILO Commission of Inquiry into Bahraini violations of ILO Convention No. 111, prohibiting discrimination in hiring and firing for reasons of, among other things, political opinions. The government itself has fired or suspended hundreds of employees from ministries and other official institutions.

Recommendations
Human Rights Watch strongly urges the US Congress and the Obama administration to speak out vigorously and publicly about rampant and continuing serious human rights violations in Bahrain. The United States should not be seen as complicit in a campaign by an autocratic government to stifle popular demands for democratic rights, a dynamic that has an especially dangerous sectarian dimension in Bahrain, where the ruling family and its close allies are mainly Sunni and Shia make up the majority of the citizenry.

First, particularly given the close and longstanding security relationship between the United States and Bahrain, the US should announce a comprehensive **ban on security assistance** to Bahrain**, including the commercial sale of riot control as well as military hardware,** until authorities there take measurable steps to halt the violent suppression of peaceful protesters and to hold accountable those responsible for the unlawful use of force, the use of torture or ill-treatment, and arbitrary arrests and detention. Because Bahrain values its military and security relationship with the United States, and seems less concerned with its civilian relations with Washington, it is crucial that US military officials stress to their Bahraini counterparts, including Marshal Khalifa bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, the head of the current martial law government, that continued close military relations, including the presence of the US Fifth Fleet headquarters, require a prompt and comprehensive halt in serious human rights violations.

We further urge the Congress and the Obama administration to criticize by name the most flagrant abuses, such as unlawful killings and torture, and the wholesale impunity for serious crimes in violation of international law – and to do so publicly. Administration officials have told us that they have not done so because they do not think it will be any more effective than private demarches for reversing the deteriorating human rights situation. While we cannot guarantee that public diplomacy will have the desired effect, the time for relying only on ”quiet” diplomacy is long past, given the current state of affairs. It is also important to realize that what is at stake is not only the situation in Bahrain, but US credibility regarding human rights issues throughout the region. As long as the US speaks forcefully regarding violations in Iran, Syria, and Libya, as it should, but is publicly silent when it comes to Bahrain, it undermines the efforts and credibility of the US to promote human rights in all countries, whether allies or adversaries.

Finally, it is crucial for the Obama administration to take the lead in calling for the UN Human Rights Council to address, by name, Bahrain’s human rights crisis. This need not take the form of a special session, such as those held recently on Syria and Libya, but it should clearly and specifically be directed at Bahrain, perhaps along with other serial abusers such as Yemen. The efforts of the Obama administration to transform and rehabilitate the role of the Human Rights Council are badly undermined by its deafening silence when it comes to Bahrain.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Thank you very much.
Ms. Al-Khawaja.

STATEMENT OF MARYAM AL-KHAWAJA, BAHRAIN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. I would like to begin by thanking the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for creating this opportunity for people to come here and testify about the situation in Bahrain.

I wanted to start by giving a very brief talk about what it was I witnessed when I was in Bahrain during the beginning of the process, and then I also want to speak about several other human rights violations that have occurred since I left Bahrain.

I went back to Bahrain around the 10th of February, and I was there to document the reports of human rights violations in my capacity as Head of Foreign Relations Office at the Bahrain Center for Human Rights.

On the 14th of February the protest started. What we witnessed, unfortunately, was the use of -(Witness deactivates microphone.)

I was also present during the attack on the Pearl Roundabout of Square on the 17th of February, when the Bahraini security forces attempted to, basically, make people leave the area. But, unfortunately, what I witnessed was not a clearing of an area, but rather an attack on civilians. The people who were killed that early morning were, actually, not killed due to random shootings that would happen and accidents, but rather it was intentional point blank shots that killed these people.

And, one of them died from bird shotgun bullets or pellets, sorry, and another one died because he had excessive bleeding, because his legs were cut, and then there was another person who had half his skull missing because he was shot also at point blank range with a, I believe it was a tear gun canister or rubber bullet canister.

So far what we know is that we have around 30 people who have been killed. Some of them are ex vets. One of them was caught in the crossfire, another one was shot by security forces when, according to testimonies, he attempted to help some of the protestors get away from the security forces.

We also know that four people have died inside detention centers since the arrests began. According to the government of Bahrain, the protests were mainly Shia, but also there has been a targeting of Sunni people in these arrests and crackdowns, namely, the first person to be arrested was Mohamed Albuflasa, and also Ebrahim Sharif, of course.

Total of 1,176 have been arrested altogether. Some of them have been released since, including more than 100 women. Around 950, according to our count, are still in detention. Most of those arrested include professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, and two former members of parliament. According also to our numbers, around 25 percent of the detainees are below 18 years old. Most detainees, as my colleague here has mentioned, have limited access to lawyers and families, and we have also heard several accounts in which female students 11 to 16 years old were arrested from schools.

We also have reported disappearances and that the police deny having them, and according to our count there is 54 people who have disappeared.

As for the torture, I will speak about a case that I personally know very well, because my family is involved. My family was able to speak to my father and see him, approximately, a month after he was arrested. He had four fractures in his face, three in his cheek and one in his jaw, and he looked very bad. The whole left side of his face was swollen. And, this was due to the beatings he had received from the security forces. He also explicitly told my family that he was being tortured in detention.

And, during the hearing, at the end when the judge was concluding, my father, actually, spoke and asked the judge for a guarantee that the continuous torture inside the detention centers would stop. Unfortunately, no guarantee like that was made.

We have reason to believe that many of those who are being held incommunicado detention are being subjected to torture, and this, of course, raises high concern for their well being and for their lives.

During the attacks or the raids, the nightly raids, that happened, in which people are arrested, we also see cases in which the wives of those arrested would be sexually harassed. And, one of those cases, actually, my uncle, Salah Al-Khawaja, his wife was sexually harassed by the security forces who attacked the house.

The University of Bahrain has announced the dismissal of one dean, seven academics, 25 administrative staff, and they have withdrawn six PhD scholarships. Over 400 students have been expelled from the University of Bahrain. And, we have also seen the withdrawal of several scholarships of students abroad.

Ayet al-Ghermezi, who is a 20-year old poet, was arrested on 30th of March. She was subjected to harassment before that, and we still do not know where she is, and we do not know where her place of detention is.

Of course, then there is the targeting of human rights activists. I have several colleagues who are in prison today. One of them is Mohammad Sultan. Other colleagues from the Center are, actually, in hiding, as the security forces have been looking for them.

The President of our Center, Nabil Rajab, has been banned from travel, although the authorities would keep telling him that there is no such ban. Every time he would try to leave, he would be forbidden from leaving the country. He was also arrested for about two to three hours, in which he was beaten and threatened with rape, but then they released him.

And, of course, we have several other human rights activists who are in detention today, one of them being my father.

I will also leave the details about the seizure of the hospitals and the attack on medical professionals to my colleague, Richard.

We also have then, there is the issue of the mass dismissal of workers. Since the attack in mid March, we have seen the dismissal of, approximately, 1,300 people in Bahrain, and this was, the reason that was given for this was that they had participated in illegal protests.

We are also seeing this widespread crackdown of religious discrimination. We have around 52 demolished Shia mosques and 17 ma'tams, which are morning homes for the Shia sect. Also, religious gatherings and marches have been attacked by riot police.

Unfortunately, the situation today that we are seeing, we have already witnessed massive human rights violations in this crackdown, but it is also a daily campaign of attacking people and individuals, and most people in Bahrain today do not feel safe, even inside their own homes.

So, there are several recommendations, and I would probably echo some of the recommendations that my colleague, Joe Stork made. But again, I think it is very important that the United States uses the leverage that they have with Bahrain. Bahrain has made it very clear that the U.S. is a major ally to them, and a very close ally. And, I think this, in itself, shows that the U.S. does have leverage when it comes to Bahrain.

So, I think it is very important that the U.S. does use that leverage in making very topic specific statements in condemning the human rights violations that are taking place in Bahrain.

Thank you.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Richard Sollom.

STATEMENT OF RICHARD SOLLOM, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PHYSICIANS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. SOLLOM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Members and staff of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for holding this important hearing. Mr. Chairman, in the interest of time I would like to summarize my remarks, and ask that my full statement be made part of the record.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Without objection.

Mr. SOLLOM. In addition, I would like to submit for the record our full report, as well as a list of Bahraini doctors whose whereabouts remain unknown, in the wake of the government crackdown against media medical personnel.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Without objection.

Mr. SOLLOM. In previous statements, we heard that thousands of protestors took to the streets in Bahrain, calling for government reform earlier this year. The government's response was brutal and systematic, shoot civilian protestors, detain and torture them, and erase all the evidence.

On the front line, treating hundreds of these wounded civilians, doctors had first-hand knowledge of these government abuses. The assault on healthcare workers, and their patients, violates the principle of medical neutrality, as well as international law.

As part of a Physicians for Human Rights investigation in Bahrain in April of this year, my colleague, Dr. Nizam Peerwani, and I conducted in-depth interviews with 47 medical personnel, patients and other eye witnesses to human rights violations.

We corroborated these testimonies by conducting physical examinations of beaten and tortured civilian protestors. In addition, we examined their medical records and X-rays, and also investigated four suspicious deaths in custody.

Our investigation produced strong evidence that the Government of Bahrain had systematically targeted medical personnel as a result of their efforts to provide ethical and unbiased care for wounded protestors. These systematic attacks include abductions of physicians, sometimes in the middle of the night, taken from their homes in front of their children and loved ones, handcuffed, blindfolded, by armed and masked security forces.

For each doctor, nurse, or medic that the government disappears, many more civilians lives are impacted, as patients go untreated.

In conflict situations around the world, there is a unique and highly qualified community of professionals who bring comfort and compassion to those in need. Medical workers in all countries are bound by their professional ethics to provide care without consideration of religion, ethnicity, or other status.

Because doctors are trained to apply their skills without discrimination, they gleaned first-hand knowledge of types of injury and numbers of deaths during the conflict or during civil unrest. And importantly, they can discern the cause of injury

and death. That expertise and knowledge make doctors important eye witnesses to government abuses, and in the case of Bahrain make them targets themselves.

During our investigation last month, we gathered evidence about these and other egregious abuses against patients and detainees, including torture, beating, humiliation, threats of rape, and killing. Our documentation, and forensic evidence, enable us to conclude the following:

1. Government authorities used excessive force, including high-velocity weapons and shotguns, often fired at close range, aiming at the faces and heads of unarmed protestors.
2. Security forces used unidentified chemical agents, which caused disorientation, aphasia, and convulsions.
3. Perhaps, most alarming during my investigation was listening to numerous eye witnesses, patients who described similar accounts of being tortured by security forces on the 6th floor of Salmaniya Hospital, supposedly, a refuge for the sick and injured.

Regarding issues of medical neutrality, I gathered corroborated evidence that Bahraini forces physically attacked six Shia physicians who were on call the night of April 3rd at Salmaniya Hospital, used ambulances for military purposes, and stole uniforms to pose as medics, apparently, to get closer to protestors, and militarized hospitals and clinics, which continue to obstruct patients from seeking urgent medical care.

The assault on healthcare workers, and their patients, constitutes extreme violations of the Principle of Medical Neutrality, and they are grave breaches of international law.

In conclusion, I propose the following actions on the part of the U.S. Government:

1. The Administration's "mild" approach toward Bahrain, as characterized in a May 9th Washington Post editorial, has failed to curb government abuses, and doctors are still being disappeared. Senior members of the Administration, including the President, should instead speak out publicly, and in no uncertain terms, against ongoing human rights abuses by government authorities. The Administration should also demand the immediate and unconditional release of all detained medical personnel.
2. Members of Congress and the Administration should visit Salmaniya Hospital and meet with representatives of the medical community in Bahrain.
3. The United States should spearhead an international effort to create a new mandate for a special rapporteur on violations of medical neutrality, through the United Nations' Human Rights Council.
4. Physicians for Human Rights would like to thank Representative McDermott for his leadership on issues of medical neutrality over the years, and for introducing a bill dedicated to protecting and promoting medical neutrality through U.S. foreign policy. We encourage all members to support passage of this bill, which would, among other things, suspend non-humanitarian foreign assistance to countries violating medical neutrality, support a U.N. mandate for a special rapporteur on violations of medical neutrality, and add the reporting of violations of medical neutrality to the annual U.S. State Department Human Rights Country reports.

I am confident that through these efforts the U.S. Government can become an international leader in the protection and promotion of medical neutrality.

I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The statement of Mr. Sollom follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RICHARD SOLLOM

Testimony of Richard Sollom, MA, MPH,
Deputy Director, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)
Before the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing:
"Human Rights in Bahrain"
Friday, May 13, 2011
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Rayburn B-318

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission.
My name is Richard Sollom, Deputy Director of Physicians for Human Rights and author of PHR's report on the recent human rights crisis in Bahrain entitled "Do No Harm: A Call for Bahrain to End Systematic Attacks on Doctors and Patients." This crucial report is the result of an in-country emergency investigation conducted by the co-author of this report, Dr. Nizam Peerwani MD, Chief Medical Examiner, Tarrant County, Texas, and Advisor to PHR's International Forensic Program and myself from 2-8 April 2011.

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is very grateful for the opportunity this morning to testify before the Human Rights Commission, and PHR would like to thank the Chairman and the Members of the Commission for holding this timely hearing. PHR would also like to thank the entire staff of this bipartisan Commission, in particular Mike McVicker, Lars de Gier, and Ari Levin, as well as your Legislative Director, Cindy Buhl, for their tireless work on this important hearing.

PHR is an independent, non-profit organization that uses medical and scientific expertise to investigate human rights violations and advocate for justice, accountability, and the health and dignity of all people. We are supported by the expertise and passion of health professionals and concerned citizens alike.

Mr. Chairman, I ask that my full statement be made part of the record, as well as our report on Bahrain. In addition, I would like to submit for the record a list of the names of those medical professionals compiled by PHR whose whereabouts is unknown in the wake of the government crackdown against medical personnel.

Mr. Chairman, I have conducted human rights investigations around the world for the better part of 20 years, but what I observed in the Kingdom of Bahrain during our investigation in terms of blatant violations of medical neutrality is unlike anything I have ever seen.

As was already mentioned, in February and March 2011 thousands of protesters in the small island Kingdom of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf took to the streets calling for government reform. The Government's response to this protests which are a facet of what has been dubbed "the Arab Spring," was brutal and systematic: shoot civilian protesters, detain and torture them, and erase all evidence.

In conflict situations all around the world, there is a unique and highly qualified community which tries to bring comfort and compassion to those in need. This group - the medical community - is bound by international legal standards and protections to administer its skills without consideration of faith, ethnicity, class status, or political views or influence. Because of their requirement to apply their skills without discrimination and in neutral fashion, the trained eyes of medical professionals discern the first hand evidence of the conflict, the types of injuries, the number of deaths, the root causes which resulted in the physical suffering. That makes doctors and medical personnel important witnesses of severe human rights violations, which in turn makes them targets themselves.

That is the story unfolding in Bahrain right now.

Dr. Peerwani and I found evidence of systematic and targeted attacks against medical personnel as a result of their efforts to provide unbiased care for wounded protestors. While in Bahrain, I had the opportunity to speak with several eyewitnesses of abductions of physicians, some of whom were ripped from their homes in the middle of the night by masked security forces. It is important to note that for each doctor, nurse, or medic that the government disappears, many more civilians' lives are impacted as patients go untreated.

Based on our research, we estimate that approximately 36 medical professionals have been arrested, about 16 have been released, and 47 have been accused by a Bahraini military prosecutor of acting against the regime and face future trials.

The government of Bahrain's systematic attack on medical professionals plays out in startling personal stories. Armed security forces abducted Dr. Ali El-Ekri from the operating room while he was performing surgery at Salmaniya Hospital on 17 March.

In another incident, security forces shot a man named Ali in the face and head at close range with birdshot. He woke up later in Salmaniya Hospital where he was held for five days. On the second day of his detention, three armed security forces handcuffed

Ali and a dozen other wounded men behind their backs with plastic wrist ties and began to beat them. Then the security forces threw Ali and the other patients face first onto the floor and dragged them out into the hallway, leaving trails of blood on the floor. Interrogation, torture, and extraction of forced confessions followed.

Another doctor was abducted in the middle of the night from his home in front of his wife and three children. Police and masked men in civilian clothes stormed the home of Dr. Abdul Khaliq al-Oraibi on April 1. The security forces dragged him out of bed, handcuffed, and then blindfolded him. They did not say where or why they were taking him. His family has not heard from him since.

I gathered information about these and other egregious abuses against patients and detainees including torture, beating, verbal abuse, humiliation, and threats of rape and killing. Specifically, I found the following:

1. Government authorities used excessive force, including high-velocity weapons and shotguns, while using birdshot, rubber bullets, and tear gas against unarmed civilians – often at a close range. One story highlighted in the report details attacks on guests at a wedding.
2. Bahraini forces fired tear gas into enclosed spaces, including homes.
3. Security forces used unidentified chemical agents, which cause disorientation, aphasia, and convulsions.
4. Security forces violently assaulted civilian detainees while in custody.

Regarding medical neutrality alone, I gathered information about the beating, abuse, and threatening of six Shi'a physicians at Salmaniya Hospital, the main hospital in the Capital Manama; government security forces stealing ambulances and posing as medics; the militarization of hospitals and clinics that obstruct medical care, and rampant fear that prevents patients from seeking urgent medical treatment.

These findings are an indictment of the Bahraini government's all-out assault on health care and health professionals. The militarization of the health system has caused a breakdown in access to health care and the trust of patients in Bahrain's medical facilities. I interviewed individuals who were injured by government forces during the protests who did not seek urgently needed medical care out of fear.

It is important to note that the ruthless targeting of physicians is but one element of a vicious crackdown on dissent. Other groups targeted for arrest and detention include labor activists, lawyers, and academics. These attacks cumulate to stifle dissent and intimidate pro-democracy activists in the country.

Medicine and delivery of health care should unite, rather than divide a country. Bahrain's attacks on clinicians exhibit a profound disrespect for the basic principles of medical ethics. There are immeasurable long-term consequences of these atrocities. Punishing physicians for adhering to their ethical duty to treat the sick and wounded violates international law. Bahrain's abuses in the spring of 2011 are the most extreme violations of medical neutrality in the past half century, and history will remember them as such.

The assault on healthcare workers and their patients constitutes extreme violations of the principle of *medical neutrality* and are grave breaches of international law. Medical neutrality is a social contract between the medical profession and the communities it serves. Medical neutrality ensures (1) the protection of medical personnel, patients, facilities, and transport from attack or interference; (2) unhindered access to medical care and treatment; (3) the humane treatment of all civilians; and (4) nondiscriminatory treatment of the injured and sick.

I would like to end my remarks with a positive recent development. On May 4, 2011, nine medical professionals were released from custody. This release is the result of increased attention by the media, the international community, and governments who have pressured Bahrain to end its abuses.
But our work is far from finished. Now is a key moment for the United States government to make a strong and concerted effort to push the Kingdom of Bahrain to release the medical professionals it has detained and to end any show trials that would punish these professionals simply for adhering to their ethical duties.

Recommendations

I propose the following actions on the part of the US government:

1) Contrary to the 'speak softly to our ally' approach the Administration has chosen so far which was so pointedly characterized in the Washington Post Editorial on May 9th entitled "Applying pressure on Bahrain," senior members of the Administration, including the President, need to speak out publicly and in no uncertain terms about the unacceptability of these egregious violations and should vocally demand the immediate and unconditional release of the medical personnel arrested in the crackdown.
2) Members of Congress and the Administration should visit Salmaniya Hospital and meet with representatives of the medical community in Bahrain.
3) The United States should spearhead an international effort to appoint a Special Rapporteur on Violations of Medical Neutrality through the United Nations Human Rights Council.
4) PHR would like to thank Representative McDermott for his leadership on issues of medical neutrality and for introducing a bill dedicated to protecting and promoting medical neutrality throughout US foreign policy. We encourage all Members to support the passage of this bill which would

a. Suspend non-humanitarian foreign assistance to countries violating medical neutrality
b. Ban the issuance of visas to officials who ordered or engaged in any violation of medical neutrality
c. Add reporting on violations of medical neutrality to annual State Department human rights country reports
d. Encourage United States missions abroad to conduct investigations of alleged violations of medical neutrality

I am confident that through these efforts, the United States government can become an international leader in the protection and promotion of medical neutrality. I thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I want to thank all three of you for your excellent presentations here, and I would like to insert in the record the statement by Congressman Jim McDermott, who cannot be here today, so it will be part of the record.

Let me again express my disappointment that the Administration, our Administration, chose not to send a witness here, but I would like to get, both Joe and Richard, you have talked about this, but I want to have the record be clear. Based on your observations, what has been the role of the following U.S. Government entities on the human rights situation in Bahrain? I mean, the White House, you both asked the President to be more vocal on this than we have to this point. What has the White House done?

Mr. STORK. Well, the White House has, just about ten days ago the President called King Hamad. This was on, you know, probably less than 48 hours before Osama bin Laden was killed, so it was a very busy time. And, the fact that the President took that time to pick up the phone and speak to the King was very good.

The one paragraph read out that we got from the White House of that phone call was somewhat encouraging, but, again, it was very, very general. I talked about emphasizing universal principles, and the importance of democracy, and, you know, violence is not the answer. I mean, all the things, none of us here would disagree with, and all well and good.

But again, they were not, we don't know what was raised, actually, specifically in the call, but we do know that publicly very little has been said.

We also know, I am confident the Administration has tried. Look, on February 17th, after the army came out and shot dead an additional five or seven protestors that night, the army was off the streets the next day. And, I have no doubt at all, although there is no public confirmation of this, that the United States played a role in that.

So, it intervened effectively outside of the public lair, which is fine, it worked.

We also know that on March, the weekend of March 14th, 15th, 16th, the United States did try, Mr. Feltman was in Bahrain then.

Cochairman McGOVERN. That request was by the State Department, Mr. Feltman.

Mr. STORK. Mr. Feltman has made a number of visits.

Cochairman McGOVERN. He is also the Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

Mr. STORK. Right.

Cochairman McGOVERN. For the record.

Mr. STORK. Right. And, we understand that he worked hard and long into the night to try and forestall the Saudi military intervention, the declaration of martial law, and so forth, and get the dialogue, get a dialogue going. We cannot say back on track, because it never really got going.

Those efforts failed, but I do believe the Administration did try.

I think it has continued to raise these issues that we have raised today quietly. What has not happened, and we know there is instructions from, you know, the top level of the Administration, that we are just not going to do this publicly.

Cochairman McGOVERN. You talk about, Mr. Sollom, in many hospitals, but to your knowledge has anyone from the embassy or anybody within the Administration gone to visit that hospital? Have they been to any of the sites that you mention in your report, to interview some of these doctors? What is your knowledge of what has been done?

Mr. SOLLOM. To my knowledge, the Administration or embassy officials in Bahrain have not made those visits. If they have made those visits, they are quite welcome, but then they should speak out about what they found.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Maryam, we had a lot of calls the last couple of days about this hearing, and again, I welcome the calls, but I think just for the record I would like you to address an issue that was raised in a number of calls. And, that was that, you know, how do you respond to those who would say that the Bahrain Center for Human Rights members have provoked the violence against the Bahraini government? That was a common theme in some of the calls, but I would like you to have an opportunity to respond to that.

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. Well, at the Center, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, has been for several years now, since 2002 when it was founded, it has been documenting human rights violations.

Now, apart from the fights in general, the Center also helped in setting up several committees. For example, the Committee for Ex-pats Rights, the Committee for Unemployment, the Committee Against Torture. So, the Center is pretty well known, not only nationally, but also internationally, for the work that it does.

We also partner with organizations, or work with organizations like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, FIDH and so on. So, when it comes to international credibility, I believe that we do have that.

As for the provoking violence, I think that the Bahrain Center for Human Rights has made it very clear that we condemn any kind of violence, no matter where it is coming from, whether it is coming from the authorities or coming from civilians, any kind of violence is condemned and should not be used for any reason.

And, we've also put out several reports on that, so I think that's very clear.

Cochairman McGOVERN. To what extent did civil rights groups in Bahrain operate before the protests began in February?

Mr. STORK. Well, the Bahrain Center was, shall we say, legally unrecognized by the government in 2004, I believe, after the then President, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja, made a public speech criticizing the Prime Minister.

So, they have continued, now they have no legal standing. Their assets were confiscated, but they have been, shall we say, tolerated and continued to function by and large, not without harassment, but they have continued to function.

The Bahrain Human Rights Society, which was set up a year or so earlier, and has maintained its sort of legal standing, but when it spoke out against, somewhat loudly and publicly, against torture, the administrative social development, whose purview includes NGOs, generally, and human rights organizations, specifically, basically, fired the board, a hostile takeover would not be an unfair characterization of what happened.

There has been Mr. Derazi, who is the Secretary General, his role was suspended. He is a teacher at the university, I believe, is his role there. His livelihood is also more recently, within the last several weeks, has been suspended.

So, overall I'd say it's not good. There are a number of what we call GONGOs, government instituted NGOs, and do operate in Bahrain and in the Gulf Region. These appear to be the ones that the Sheik refers to in his submitted testimony as being allowed to attend the trials, because our representative was not allowed in.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I guess the other issue is that the government says that international human rights NGOs are open and operating in Bahrain and are under no restrictions on their activities.

Mr. STORK. I am afraid that is completely untrue. A colleague from Human Rights First was in Bahrain until this morning, who tried to get into the trial yesterday and was prevented from doing so.

So, I do not know where that idea of, you know, unrestricted access comes from, certainly not from reality on the ground.

Cochairman McGOVERN. What about Physicians for Human Rights in the aftermath of your report?

Mr. SOLLOM. Perhaps I can --

Cochairman McGOVERN. You testified that you are no longer welcome in Bahrain, right?

Have you gotten a letter like that yet?

Mr. SOLLOM. We have not gotten a letter, but, perhaps, pertinent to this discussion is on my last day in Bahrain, Friday, April 8th, I was encouraged over the phone by a top person at the Ministry of Health, to go visit Salmaniya Hospital, which is an 821-bed tertiary care facility, the best in the country, and he said that Physicians for Human Rights had free access to the entire kingdom, including the hospital.

He set about arranging an official visit to the hospital, and then an hour later called me back to say that that would not be possible, that they could not get permission from the Ministry of Interior or the BDF, the Bahraini Defense Forces, who, of course, control both the security and administration of that hospital ever since March.

We decided at the encouragement of that person from the Ministry of Health, to go visit the hospital. We showed up an hour later at 11:00 a.m. We were met by armed security forces. There is a heavy tank outside the emergency department entrance, sitting in the middle of a parking lot. There were about 20 police vehicles, riot police vehicles, several dozen security forces wearing green fatigues, blue uniforms, security forces also wearing black uniforms. Most of them were wearing black wool ski masks to hide their identity.

We were not met with a welcome reception, as the Ministry of Health claims that we did. We were immediately taken outside, once we entered the hospital, to a small room where we were detained under armed guard for about a half hour, while they tried to, they interrogated us, asking us why we were there. We said that we were Physicians for Human rights, that we wanted to visit the hospital, and speak with medical personnel, and that the Ministry of Health encouraged us to come.

About a half hour later, we were escorted out of the medical complex under armed guard.

So, I explain this circumstance just to let you know that what the government is saying to the media publicly is quite a different story than what is taking place on the ground for human rights organizations, both international as well as local.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Obviously, you have first hand, this is a first-hand account. Mr. Stork.

Mr. STORK. I just wanted to add that with regard to human rights watches, relations with the Government of Bahrain, until recently they have been quite good. As an organization, and I myself personally, I have had frequent and high-level access to the government. So, the issues we are talking about are fairly recent, the last few months.

But, what we are talking about is a trend which is in the direction of closure, rather than opening.

Cochairman McGOVERN. And what about members of the Center for Human Rights that are operating in Bahrain now, what is their situation?

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. Well, we have, I only have two colleagues left that have not been arrested. One of them is in complete hiding. We do not know where he is, but he has been doing some work from where he is hiding. And then, there is the President of our Center who has been banned from traveling, and he is under the threat of harassment any time.

There has also been massive defamation campaigns that are being carried out, and trying to tarnish the Center's reputation, or discredit them.

So, there are several things that are happening on the ground in trying to stop the work of the Center from happening, especially, the reporting about the violations.

Cochairman McGOVERN. What is the current status of your father?

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. Well, the last we know is that yesterday there was a hearing. The hearing was adjourned until next Monday, but the lawyers at the hearing, they requested that they get more time with the detainees, as they have not been allowed enough time with the detainees. And, they also requested that the prison conditions be made better, because the conditions were quite bad.

Of course, the attorney from the government said that that was not true, and that conditions were well. The lawyers also requested more bathroom time for the detainees.

One of the lawyers requested that the detainees be let out on bail, and that they would attend the trial. But, the judge said that that was not possible, as the sentence for the charges, if found guilty, would either be life imprisonment or a death sentence, which is very concerning, of course.

My father was the only person from amongst the detainees who was not allowed to meet with his family after the hearing, and we believe that this is probably because at the end of the session he told the judge that he feared for his life, as he had been receiving threats from security that he was going to be killed, and that is the last thing we know.

Of course, we also fear for his health, as he has the fractures in his face.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Let me ask all of you here. I mean, you know, we talked about the actions against the protestors, do we have any evidence that U.S.-made equipment was used against protestors? And, if so, what is the basis of that evidence, and what types of equipment were used?

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. I just wanted to make a quick comment, because I do not have a lot of background in arms, but I personally saw tear gas canisters and drummable canisters that said "made in the U.S., Pennsylvania." So, that is as far as I know.

Mr. SOLLOM. I was going to say the same thing, that walking through the streets of Manama, as well as smaller, say, suburban areas outside of the capital, where Shia predominantly live, you see canisters of CS gas, tear gas, with the markings as Maryam said, with "made in the United States."

What is important to note about this, is that CS gas is not a controlled substance. It is legal, however, that there are U.N. guidelines for how police officers and security forces use tear gas.

As Physicians for Human Rights has documented over the past couple of decades, since 1987 at least, tear gas can be a lethal agent. It is not supposed to be used in closed spaces, and we documented at least two cases where security forces in Bahrain launched tear gas into people's homes, where people were sleeping in the middle of the night, as well as at a wedding party. And again, people can die from tear gas. We only need to remember what took place in Waco, Texas a number of years ago, where 84 people were killed. Some of the children died from CS gas.

So, this is a common occurrence, and it should not, this is what I mean by excessive use of force.

Mr. STORK. What my colleagues have mentioned is consistent with our findings. We also looked into the origin of the pellet gun, the bird shot, since so many people, actually, had died as a result of misuse of that riot control equipment.

Our point of origin was Pakistan, which is kind of ironic, since many of the security forces that are using these weapons are also from Pakistan.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Let me ask you, you have previously discussed in other settings that you had good friendships with Sunnis in Bahrain. Can you discuss what the relationships are currently between typical Sunnis and Shias in Bahrain?

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. Well, actually, one of my closest friends since I moved to Bahrain is Sunni. I also have many other Sunni friends.

Since the beginning of the protests, people who are in support of the Government of Bahrain have become more, I do not know if I want to use the word

militant, but they have become very defensive, or rather, the way that they would speak to the people who were participating in the protests would be in the form of attacks or insults.

As a human rights activist, I have seen a lot of that myself. But also, the protestors being that they were Shias, Sunnis and otherwise, made it very clear that the issue at hand was not about sectarianism or about the discrimination that was ongoing against the Shia sect in Bahrain, but rather, it was an issue of human rights and freedoms.

But, unfortunately, the government has been able to spin it into a sectarian issue, and thus, most of the attacks, especially, that we are seeing on line today, is sectarian attacks that would happen from one side to another, sometimes vice versa as well.

And, I think this is a very dangerous territory that we are stepping into, not only on the national sense, but also regionally, being that some states are Sunni and some states are Shia in the region.

I also think that one of the recommendations that I have been making to the State Department was that there needs to be urgent action, not only for human rights in Bahrain, because of the violations, but also because if this situation does continue, and if people are still oppressed for a very long time, then Iran might, actually, become a threat, a valid threat in the region.

Today, up until now, as far as we know, the protestors have denounced the statements coming from Iran, and have made it very clear that they do not want any kind of intervention coming from Iran, but if this does continue then it is only logical that they will start looking for someone to support them.

Cochairman McGOVERN. Mr. Stork mentioned that they have been charged with some of the blocks that are going on. Can you give us more detail of what is happening?

Mr. STORK. We were just starting to look into that when our presence in Bahrain ended, thanks to the government.

But, we do know that, we did start to look into that.

The government has justified these demolitions on the grounds that these were illegal constructions, they were not properly zoned, the proper permits were not gotten and so forth. But, we are talking, know that in some cases we are talking about mosques and other religiously important structures that have been around for decades, frankly. And where, in fact, highways had been rerouted in order to preserve them in the past, and today they do not exist anymore.

So, frankly, we don't find the government explanation terribly persuasive, and to the extent that it is, why now decide to pay attention to your zoning laws in this way.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I am informed that we need to vacate this room shortly. We started so late, that is not your fault, it is the people that run this place.

But, I want to give you all an opportunity to, if there are any last comments that you want to make that you think are important to the record, I would welcome this opportunity to have you do so now.

Mr. SOLLOM. If I could just add one thing about, Physicians for Human Rights differentiates between beatings and torture. We document both in our report.

What we mean by torture is, of course, the U.N. definition of extreme physical or mental suffering inflicted on a person by security forces, by government authorities, with the intent, for example, to force a confession.

What I did not state earlier is that, inside the hospital itself, on the 6th floor of Salmaniya Hospital, we received corroborated testimonies that patients who were there recovering from gunshot wounds and tear gas inhalation were, actually, being tortured by security forces inside the hospital, that these security forces turned on a video cassette recorder and filmed the beatings, and filmed the forced confessions.

What is important to this discussion as well is what the security forces reportedly were forcing these patients to say. For example, that Iran was behind the protests, that the civilian protestors received arms and swords and other weapons from Iran, or that these people would be receiving military training in Iran.

And so, this is a really insidious campaign of, not only human rights violations, but also linking it to Iran to spread and sow fear.

Ms. AL-KHAWAJA. I would like to, in conclusion, say that I am not here today to represent anyone. I am not representing people who are protesting, and I am not here to represent people who are supporting the government. I am here only to report on human rights violations.

And, I think that in that regards to human rights violations in Bahrain, the situation is going from bad to worse, and I have been receiving, since the morning when people found out that I am coming here to testify, many, many messages of people asking, you know, rather begging me to ask people here to try to do whatever they can to protect them from the Bahraini government and the human rights violations that are occurring there.

So, I wanted to pass along that message.

Thank you.

Mr. STORK. I just want to reiterate one point, which is that the focus for today was on Bahrain, but what the U.S. does or does not do, or says or does not say, with regard to Bahrain has implications for the whole region, for the U.S. credibility on that score.

And then, just one last point. I would hope that this kind of hearing could be held by a committee of the House that has subpoena power, so that we do have representatives of the U.S. Government present as well.

Cochairman McGOVERN. I appreciate the final comments. I appreciate all your comments here today.

Let me once again reiterate what I said at the beginning. This focus is about human rights, it is not about, you know, supporting one side or the other. It is about the situation that, unfortunately, is unfolding right now.

And, you know, I think, quite frankly, as was stated, that the United States is kind of late to the game, in terms of speaking out against some of the violations that, you know, are being documented first hand.

And, you know, for the Government of Bahrain, I mean, I would simply urge them to take these comments seriously, and constructively. You know, there are two ways for governments to deal with human rights challenges. One is to ignore the concerns and to get defensive, and to not remedy anything. The other way is, actually, to address these concerns, and remedy the situation.

I think to the extent that governments do that, I think it reflects well on them.

And, as I mentioned at the outset, we do have a relationship with Bahrain. Our two countries have an important strategic relationship, and, you know, I hope that relationship continues and grows. But, when it comes to human rights, and I cannot believe I am quoting the Wall Street Journal, because I very rarely agree with anything they say, but when it comes to human rights, the editorial page, not the other stuff, but when it comes to human rights, I mean, you know, it is just not right for us to, you know, give the government a pass on this. And, my hope is that some of these concerns that you raise today will be addressed, and we are not going away. We are going to continue to monitor the situation, take some of the recommendations that you have made seriously, and we will talk with some of our other colleagues about being more outspoken on this.

So, thank you very much for being here. I appreciate it.

[Whereupon, at 12:11 p.m., the committee adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)
Hearing Notice

Human Rights in Bahrain

Friday, May 13, 2011
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Rayburn B-318

Please join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for a hearing on the current human rights situation in Bahrain. Since mid-February, reports of human rights violations in Bahrain have increased significantly as Bahraini authorities have attempted to suppress anti-government protests. There have been numerous, credible reports of violence, intimidation, inhumane treatment, and repression directed against peaceful protesters and medical personnel treating injured protesters. Even after protests effectively ended in mid-March, Bahraini security personnel have continued to target the Shi'a community generally and human rights defenders specifically.

This hearing will focus on human rights aspects of the Bahraini government's response to the February protests. Specifically, the hearing will examine reports of extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate shootings of unarmed peaceful protesters, torture, beatings, arbitrary and warrantless arrests and detentions, and general harassment. While all of these allegations are serious, the targeting of medical personnel is of particular concern.

The following witnesses have been invited to testify:

Panel I:

- Mr. William J. Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs, U.S. Department of State *(declined)*
- Mr. Jeffrey D. Feltman, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State *(declined)*

Panel II:

- Maryam Al-Khawaja, Bahrain Center for Human Rights
- Mr. Joe Stork, Deputy Director, Middle East and North Africa Division, Human Rights Watch
- Richard Sollom, MA, MPH, Deputy Director at Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)

If you have any questions, please contact Mike McVicker (Rep. McGovern) at 202-225-3599.

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress
Co-Chair, TLHRC

Prepared Statement of the Government of Bahrain

As prepared for the Hearing of the
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)
Friday, May 13, 2011 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Rayburn B-318
Human Rights in Bahrain

Executive Summary

- Bahrain has been peaceful, stable, and tolerant for over 200 years under its current ruling family.
- Bahrain has led the region in economic freedom, providing a legal and regulatory environment that has attracted investors from all over the world. It is ranked #10 most economically free of all the countries in the world.
- Bahrain's hosting the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet serves as a security guarantee to the interests of Bahrain, the U.S., the region, and the entire international community.
- Bahrain has called to outreach to the people of Israel, in an attempt to end the cycle of violence in the region
- Bahrain's government has reached out to the protesters, offering to negotiate with them on every point of their demands and to submit a reform package to a popular vote, but the protesters responded by calling for the removal and death of the royal family.
- No foreign troops were used to confront the population. Bahrain invited GCC forces into the country to defend our borders and help us protect critical infrastructure. This is a provision of the founding treaty of the Gulf Cooperation Council.
- Bahrain has a legitimate fear of Iranian influence among the protesters, given the history of Iranian interference, and the continual calls for uprising from Iranian broadcast media (with whom Bahrain shares a local media market).
- While the government has been busy trying to contain violence and protect people and infrastructure, opposition figures have been promoting sensational distortions in the media to discredit the government and attempt to gain political advantage.
- Bahrain's government did not arrest medical staff for treating demonstrators. They arrested medical personnel for turning a hospital and ambulances into instruments of political sedition, storing weapons and holding hostages in a hospital, refusing to treat patients based on religious background, and other abuses of the medical profession.
- Bahrain has had the blessing of a peaceful atmosphere throughout most of its history, and is not experienced in dealing with mass protests and mass violence. We regret the loss of life and the injuries suffered by police and protesters alike, and seek help from our allies in finding peaceful and nonviolent methods to deal with unrest.
- His Majesty the King has announced that the state of emergency will be lifted on June 1, 2011, and he has stressed on the continuity of reforms. Bahrain is looking for a way forward that will allow all Bahrainis to be able to live in peace and security once again.

Official Statement of the Government of Bahrain

The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain is pleased to have the opportunity to present a statement at today's hearing. We would like to begin our statement by pointing out some important background about Bahrain. Bahrain has been governed peacefully for over 300 years. In spite of our diverse population, we have never had significant sectarian divides among us. In fact, we have been praised by Western countries, and criticized by some neighbors, for having a tolerant atmosphere. We are known in the region for allowing freedom of thought and action to people. We also have allowed the naturalization of foreigners, which is unheard of in our region. We usually have been praised for this by organizations which care about human rights, but today we find ourselves in the position of being criticized for our naturalization policy.

As the Members of this Committee are well aware, Bahrain is the host nation for the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, in spite of criticism from some quarters. Some in this room may accuse us or the U.S. Government of placing too much emphasis on that aspect of our relationship, but we are proud of it. We believe it is important to point out that we do more than pay lip service to the cause of freedom and security in the Arabian Gulf. Let there be no doubt in the minds of any present here today what kind of dissent would be tolerated in any countries of the GCC if there were not a robust U.S. military presence there, keeping Iranian regional ambitions in check. Bahrain is quite proud to host a critical part of that presence. We have behaved as a reliable ally, and we don't expect to be treated as enemies in the house of our friends.

Bahrain started many years ago to diversify our economy away from just oil and gas, by putting in place laws and regulations that attracted investment from all over the world. Again, we have been praised by Western and industrialized states, and criticized by others for this, but we are justly proud of having accomplished it. Today, a greater portion of our GDP is derived from the financial services industry than from the oil and gas industry – more than twice as much. That is no accident, but is due to economic freedom and opportunity that exist in our country. It is why the Heritage Foundation has ranked

Bahrain's economy as the number 10 most free in the world, just behind that of the United States. Bahrain endured great criticism from some countries in the world, but was praised by Western countries, when in 2009 the Government made two very public statements calling for direct talks with the Israeli people to end the state of conflict between Arabs and Israelis. His Highness the Crown Prince, Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, wrote an opinion editorial published in the Washington Post calling for the change in policy. Two months later, the Foreign Minister, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, repeated the call in an official speech to the United Nations General Assembly. We make these points to demonstrate that Bahrain is a forward-looking, peaceful country that is a positive force to achieve good in

the world and peace and stability in the region.

Now, we are facing demands by some in our population for changes. As the popular uprisings in other Arab countries took root, many among our population also took to the streets to demand changes in our political system. Although Bahrain is a monarchy, not a democracy, we have many attributes of democratic influence inherent in our society. The very nature of the history of our governing policy includes consultation as an essential element. It has become fashionable in some Western circles to criticize things associated with Islam, but we are proud of our Islamic traditions, and proudly assert that truly Islamic rule requires that the governors consult with the governed, and that the governed have a voice in the affairs of the state.

As Bahrainis examine the demands of the protestors, as they were expressed originally in February, it is clear that some of their claims are just. It is also apparent that some of the political movements were domestic in origin. It is equally clear to us, however, that there is an increasingly heavy foreign influence encouraging the protests, and using the situation to try to foment sectarian divisions. We have been criticized for being too quick to see the hand of Iran in the demonstration, for refusing to recognize the domestic nature of the unrest. But it is easy to ignore Iranian influence when you are separated from them by two oceans and two continents; the slightest tremor is much more easily felt by those of us who live only 100 miles, across the flat waters of a Gulf that we call Arabian, and they call Persian.

It is difficult for us to ignore the constant calls to citizens of our country issued from radio and television broadcasts, calling on them to rise up and overthrow our government. It is easy to downplay Iranian influence in Bahrain when sitting in London or Washington or Singapore; it is much more difficult to ignore Iranian influence when your country and Iran are in the same broadcast media market. It is difficult to ignore the organizational influence of Iranian foundations that claim to have only charitable or religious purposes, when many of the protesters stream from the locations of those foundations into the streets, calling for the removal and death of our ruling family. It is difficult to ignore travel by leading organizers of the protest movement to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, where Iranian agents and their client, Hezbollah, maintain complete dominance of a once-sovereign country. For that matter, it is difficult for us to ignore the lessons of Lebanon itself, which once was called the

Switzerland of the Middle East, because it was a haven of peace and beauty. There are some who are not satisfied with the evidence that Iran is fully influencing the protesters in Bahrain. There is certainly evidence of Iranian influence in Lebanon now; we remember when the Western world debated whether Iranian influence in Lebanon was real, or permanent. That debate is now over. We do not intend to suffer

the fate of Lebanon, and indeed, it is not in the interest of any stable nation on earth that we allow that to happen.

Those of us in the Government of Bahrain certainly are not perfect, but we are trying to govern well, as is our tradition. Let us examine what has happened since February of this year. Demonstrators occupied one of our central plazas, calling for political reforms. Recognizing that in order to govern well, we must consult and negotiate, we reached out to them. The Crown Prince offered to meet with them, offered to negotiate their demands and put together a reform package that would be submitted to a popular referendum. This was not a cynical maneuver, but a sincere offer to begin a national dialogue. But instead of accepting the offer and negotiating, they overran the financial district and wrought havoc there. The security forces, overwhelmed and threatened with a level of violence never before seen in Bahrain, reacted in some cases with regrettable violence in return. The protesters responded again by calling for the removal and death of the royal family. Instead of accepting a sincere offer to understand, negotiate, and achieve a consensus for moving forward, the protesters escalated the demonstrations into a full-fledged existential crisis. We saw the encouragement from the government of Iran to all this escalation, and believe that Iran was serious when they called for people to rise up and overthrow our government.

The Government regrets the loss of life, and the injuries, caused by the riots and by our responses to them. Precisely because we have been a peaceful society, we do not have experience dealing with this kind of civic unrest, or with agents provocateurs who urge destructive behavior. Societies like the United States could teach us a great deal about what you have learned in the past 50 years, as your society has undergone the struggle for civil rights and the subsequent societal upheavals, and we look forward to learning from you better methods of nonviolent security responses to violent demonstrations.

Disruptive elements in society began ratcheting up attacks that had started as a pattern of harassment and testing of response times and methods: attacking power lines and substations; blocking roads with burning tires; and attacking the financial district, the heart of our economy. We saw protesters start setting up checkpoints and harassing drivers who were of a different religious background, or who were naturalized citizens. As the disruptions threatened to overwhelm the ability of the security forces to manage them and still protect our borders and critical infrastructure, Bahrain invoked the mutual defense provisions of the founding document of the Gulf Cooperation Council to protect our critical infrastructure. This was widely reported – erroneously – as our calling in foreign troops to subdue civilian unrest. It was not true; the GCC troops did not engage protesters or demonstrators, but were deployed to protect infrastructure and borders, to free up domestic security forces for managing the peace-keeping. The story was not true, but it was circulated uncritically by those who did not bother to look beyond the first sensational accusations. While the Government was busy trying to contain the violence, detect any influence from

Iran or other foreign instigators, decide upon a proper response to the demands of the people, and continue to manage the other affairs of the country, forces opposed to the government were managing the foreign media and organizing international campaigns against us.

Some of those campaigns have taken on a life of their own, and the stories are beginning to be accepted as true. One of the themes of the opposition has been to accuse the government of politicizing the practice of medicine. This accusation is neither fair nor true, but is has been widely reported, uncritically. The politicization of medicine started when hospitals that were dominated by Shiite administrators and doctors began to exclude Sunni medical staff from conferences, and then began to perform triage on the basis of sectarian identity rather than medical necessity. Some refused to treat security personnel who were injured.

Now it is reported that Bahrain is arresting medical personnel for treating demonstrators. Again, that is not the truth. In a cynical display, the very people who politicized medicine are now calling the Government the aggressors. The doctors have been arrested because they refused to treat security personnel who were injured, and they began checking identity cards of patients and discriminated in the treatment of Shi'a and Sunni patients. The leaders of this operation turned Salmaniya Medical Center into a command post for the demonstrators, hiding behind the façade of a medical facility to orchestrate political sedition and violent operations against the government and against law and order. When the security forces entered the Medical Center, they found weapons hidden there, and they liberated workers from Asian countries who had been held hostage there. They found a television studio set up in the hospital, which the medical staff had used to fabricate stories about injured demonstrators. The doctors who have been arrested are charged with taking orders from hard-line opponents of the government, rather than acting in accordance with the rules of the Ministry of Health. They will be tried in an open court, and all the evidence will be presented and judged by the rule of law. Both sides will be heard from, and both will have an opportunity to make their cases.

In defending the reputation of our government against these charges, we would like to include the following report. This includes raw intelligence data that our government continues to investigate, to determine the facts through the fog of conflict.

Salmaniya Medical Complex Case Report

During the deplorable incidents that hit Bahrain starting 14 February 2011, some medical and paramedical staff got involved in activities that sharply clashed with standard medical work and ethics. Their practices violated all humanitarian, religious, ethical and genuine citizenship values and norms and turned into barbarous crimes.

Several doctors, nurses, paramedics and administrators at the Salmaniya Medical Complex, the largest hospital in the Kingdom of Bahrain, took full control of the premises, including facilities, equipment and human resources. Hard evidence later showed that the complex was used extensively for the activities of the saboteurs who sought to spread chaos, cause disruptions and trouble and create sedition within the Kingdom.

In order to highlight the extent of the dangerous actions committed at the premises, and within the confines of what can be disclosed according to His Excellency the Military Prosecutor, we wish to share with you some of the findings revealed by the ongoing investigations:

First of all, one doctor took advantage of his position within the hospital to support his colleagues involved in the events, in a bid to escalate the situation and distort the image of Bahrain within the international community. His goal was to put pressure on the authorities and erode their capabilities in dealing with the events unfolding at that time. He was followed by a number of employees at the hospital. They held meetings inside and outside the hospital, often at the doctor's private clinic, to coordinate their efforts and contribute through the use of the Salmaniya hospital to the developments and to support the demonstrators.

They formed a committee, headed by the doctor, to oversee the activities and assigned various tasks. They selected a spokesperson for the committee as well as a secretary general, and formed specialized subcommittees, such as the media panel which played a highly visible role in the contact between the defendants and the demonstrators.

Another doctor was tasked with the paper work in cooperation with accomplices in order to forge the hospital's certificates and records and produce fake statistics. The move was highly unethical and eventually caused the non-providing of crucial and much-needed medical care and resulted in serious harm and even the death of patients. The unlawful detention of people and the seizure and abuse of public funds were regular crimes throughout the occupation of the hospital.

Based on the investigation results so far, as well as on confessions of some of the defendants, and on witnesses' reports and testimonies, there is conclusive evidence that the following crimes took place:
They imposed full control on who enters or leaves the hospital by guarding and monitoring its gates and assigning saboteurs and ruffians to manage them.

They did not allow the treatment of some citizens and residents, based on their sect affiliations; they restricted medical care for those who were admitted for one reason or another into the hospital. The

records clearly show how remarks were placed on the records of patients who belonged to a sect that differed from that of the defendants. "The attribute baltaji (thug) was used."

The hospital was transformed into an area for vociferous demonstrations and sit-ins and loud slogans, in a blatant desecration of the character and humanitarian purpose of the premises. The activities were also a clear violation of the law that categorically banned demonstrations, rallies and assemblies near hospitals.

The hospital was turned into a center to hold forums and to use the media to disseminate fake news and malicious rumors.

They allowed the media that supported demonstrators and was in their service to enter the hospital and take pictures and film inside, including in the emergency department and operation theaters.
Several doctors made erroneous statements that include false and inflated statistics about the number of the injured.

A special stage and several tents were put up for seditious and subversive speeches and statements. Instigators from outside the hospital were allowed to give speeches and hold forums.

Media coverage was always by specific correspondents and media, while unbiased media and correspondents were blocked from entry.

Some defendants videotaped their own incendiary statements filled with false information and spiteful rumors and disseminated them via satellite channels and the Internet.

There is clear evidence that some doctors caused wounds and augmented the injuries of some of the wounded in order to aggravate their conditions and take their pictures to mislead people about the real facts on the ground in Bahrain. Some doctors performed surgeries that were neither necessary nor needed. Foreign correspondents and satellite channel reporters were allowed inside the operation theater to film the surgeries and used close up and other special effects to dramatize the situation and influence the local and international community.

However, under this inhumane practice, some people who were used by doctors for dramatic effects passed away. Investigations have revealed that a consultant who was in charge of an important room within the Emergency Department had issued orders to the doctors to give Atropine to those who suffered from dyspnea and convulsions. This order resulted in the aggravation of the cases as the drug stimulates the

heart rate. The purpose was to support claims that the tear gas used by the police to disperse crowds was of a type not allowed internationally.

Cases were admitted into the Salmaniya Medical Complex after they breathed tear gas. The cases claimed that their bodies were covered with a white substance. Investigations revealed that the substance was Moxal, which is normally used to reduce acidity in the stomach and treat heartburn. It has no medical use in preventing asphyxia.

Medicine and medical equipment that were the property of the Salmaniya Medical Complex were stolen and transferred to other locations in a blatant violation of the laws and regulations.

Investigations revealed that the defendants took bags from the Blood Bank at the Salmaniya Medical Complex which were used by demonstrators to splatter blood on their bodies and claim that they were injured.

Large quantities of medication and medical equipment were transported to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Roundabout.

Defendants forced their colleagues, nurses and paramedics who were not under their orders, to work under these conditions and did not allow them to behave otherwise.

In addition to all this, the Salmaniya Medical Complex was transformed into a prison where security men and foreigners, particularly Asians, who had been kidnapped, were detained by their kidnappers who had links with the defendants.

The Salmaniya Medical Complex was also used to store weapons. An inspection of the hospital following the termination of the occupation found several firearms and ammunition as well as sharp weapons (swords and knives) and incendiary devices (Molotov cocktails).

Ambulances that were under the control of the defendants were used for non-medical purposes. Investigations have revealed that they were used to support demonstrators and rioters in their criminal activities:

Ambulances were used to transport demonstrators and their weapons to various locations in Bahrain to attack citizens. They were also used in such a manner during the incidents at the University of Bahrain.

Ambulances were used to transport kidnapped hostages to the Salmaniya Medical Complex where they were detained before they were moved to the GCC Roundabout.

Ambulances were used to transport medication and medical equipment stolen from the Salmaniya Medical Complex.

Ambulances were used behind the unlicensed rallies and at the GCC Roundabout without any specific purpose. This resulted in delays in rescuing or helping citizens and in some cases in not providing assistance at all, as attested by citizens' complaints.

Ambulances repeatedly drove through the city with their sirens wailing and warning lights flashing without any call for assistance. The purpose was to give the impression there are new casualties, and dramatize the situation.

The number of defendants who have been questioned is now 47, including 24 doctors and 23 nurses and paramedics. The military prosecution has leveled the following charges against them:
Refusal to extend assistance to a person in need, embezzlement of public funds, assault, assault that resulted in death, unauthorized possession of weapons and ammunition, refusal to perform duties and putting people's lives and health at risk, illegal detention, abuse of authority to suspend and stall laws and regulations, attempt to occupy buildings by force, incitement to the forceful overthrow of a political regime, incitement to the hatred of a regime, incitement to the hatred of a segment of society, dissemination of false news and malicious rumors that could harm public interest and participation in unauthorized rallies and meetings.

The investigations are continuing.
End of report on Salmaniya Medical Center.

We also see reports that arrests have been made for political purposes. This, too, is untrue. Those arrested have been arrested for specific criminal activities. International human rights NGO's are open and operating in Bahrain, and are under no restrictions on their activities.

There are charges that people in detention have been tortured or otherwise mistreated, but these are not true. According to a statement made by government officials to the Bahrain News Agency on May 9, 2011, "The genuine facts that we received from the Military Hospital and the Salmaniya Medical Complex, the largest hospitals in the country, are that neither hospital has admitted or treated any of the detainees. The hospitals stated that the rumours about the admissions and hospitalization were untrue and were fabricated politically-motivated news."

We have always had a cooperative relationship with our allies, especially our GCC allies and the United States. We look forward to continuing that cooperative relationship, and ask that the U.S. Congress focus on our mutual alliance and interdependence; that you not be led astray by people and organizations who may seek to profit from unrest, who may seek to use political unrest overseas as a way to raise money for their groups, or awareness of their other work. We invite any Bahraini who is serious about political reform to join the dialogue they were invited to in February, and have been invited to again.

Bahrain remains a steadfast ally of the United States. We do not claim to be perfect, but we do claim to be good. We do not torture dissidents, or persecute medical personnel for practicing medicine, or foment sectarian divisions. We continue to seek common ground, and to seek a dialogue with all our citizens, so that we can develop a national consensus about how we will govern ourselves and how we will coexist. His Majesty the King has declared that the state of emergency will be lifted on the 1st of June. We also claim the right to govern ourselves as a sovereign country, and we look forward to engaging the political opposition in our own country, in an honest dialogue, and to coming up with a plan that can be submitted for the approval of all the people in Bahrain. This is how political progress is achieved.

Fawaz bin Mohamed Al Khalifa
President of Information Affairs Authority

Prepared Statement of the Honorable Jim McDermott, a Representative in Congress from the State of Washington

Jim McDermott

Remarks at The Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing:
Human Rights in Bahrain

May 13, 2011, 10:00AM – 12:00PM

B-318 Rayburn

I want to thank my good friend Congressman McGovern for organizing this timely hearing on the excessive use of force and arbitrary detentions of protesters by the Government of Bahrain.

Bahrain has been an important friend and security partner of the United States, enjoying the status of a major non-NATO ally. I also believe that mature partners ought to be able to talk about difficult issues – especially when internationally recognized principles of human rights are concerned.

Since protests began in February, there have been disturbing reports by numerous credible human rights organizations and major international news organizations about the systemic crackdown by the government of Bahrain.

At least 30 people have been killed since the protest began in February, and hundreds of Bahrainis have been detained. Their whereabouts and wellbeing are unknown to families. Several people have even died in detention from physical abuse and medical neglect.

Earlier this week, Bahrain's king announced plans to lift the country's emergency rule on June 1st. While lifting the odious emergency rule is welcome news, the international community continues to watch the Bahraini government's heavy-handed response to protesters with growing concern.

Among those who are charged with fomenting unrest are Shiite opposition activists, human rights workers, bloggers, and even medical professionals who were simply doing their job of treating protesters in hospitals.

As a physician, the attack against medical workers and their patients by the Bahraini armed forces seems particularly egregious. The notion that medical personnel should be free from intimidation and physical harm is common sense.

For those of you who don't know, the principle of medical neutrality is something that I've championed since 1988, when medical personnel and church workers were detained by the armed forces of El Salvador during the civil war.

Like the medical professionals in El Salvador, we are seeing credible reports of Bahraini doctors and nurses who have been beaten, arrested without a warrant, and awaiting military trials.

The flagrant disregard by the government of Bahrain of the basic right to medical care is a breach of major international laws, all of which Bahrain has ratified.

Disturbingly, the Bahraini military has vowed to continue to use force against peaceful protesters. Last Wednesday, Bahrain's military commander reportedly said, "to those who did not get the message, if you return we will come back, stronger this time."

Before I turn it over to the witnesses, I want to take a moment to thank Maryam al-Khawaja from the Bahrain Center for Human Rights for testifying before the Commission today.

Her father, human rights activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, was arrested on April 9th under the charge of attempting to "topple the regime forcibly in collaboration with a terrorist organization working for a foreign country." Human Rights Watch reported that al-Khawaja was admitted to the Bahrain Defense Force hospital for six days for treatment of major injuries.

I want to thank Maryam for her courage in speaking out on this very personal and painful story. In the upcoming weeks, I will introduce a legislation that seeks to make medical neutrality a key priority for the United States government. The bill will seek to punish violators of these norms and advocate for greater protections of medical neutrality at an international level.

Thank you.

Prepared Statement of the Honorable Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, a Representative in Congress from American Samoa

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

before the
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission (TLHRC)
Friday, May 13, 2011
Rayburn B-318

Human Rights in Bahrain

Co-Chairs:

As the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission examines the topic of human rights in Bahrain, I would request that the commission consider the threat posed by the Islamic Republic of Iran to Bahrain, a U.S. ally and a member of a group of U.S. allies, The Gulf Cooperation Council or the GCC.

Bahrain is a small country with a free economy and a government that is friendly to the United States. It plays host to the Fifth Fleet of the United States Navy, which patrols the waters of the Persian Gulf and protects world shipping there. Bahrain has been declared a major non-NATO ally by the United States Government, and has established a Free Trade Agreement with us to facilitate better relations between our countries.

But today, Bahrain is under attack, in a proxy war between Iran on one side, and the entire GCC and their allies in the United States and Europe on the other. As the demonstrations sweep through the Middle East demanding democracy, Iran has seen its opportunity to fish in troubled waters by stirring up long-time resentments among Bahrain's majority Shi'a population.

Not that the Shi'a protests are without merit, or are completely foreign imports: to the contrary, they have real complaints that the Bahraini government will have to address, and has committed to address. But Iran, which has long been probing Bahraini defenses and stress-testing the social system, believes that its chance has finally come to achieve one of its cherished foreign policy goals: the weakening of the GCC by picking off one member state at a time.

Iran has long desired to export its so-called Islamic revolution, and to expand its influence in the rest of the Islamic world. The preamble to the Iranian Constitution states, ". . . the Army of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps will be responsible . . . for fulfilling the ideological mission of jihad in God's way; that is, extending the sovereignty of God's law throughout the world." Iraq and Bahrain, Lebanon, Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, all have come in for special

attention because of their substantial populations of Shi'ite Muslims. In fact, those who committed several terrorist acts during the 1980's in GCC countries proudly claimed allegiance to and sponsorship by Iran, leading Bahrain to break diplomatic relations with Iran in protest.

Iran has long used its military and intelligence assets to destabilize neighboring countries. And its aim is to destabilize the entire GCC, and peel its member states away from the United States and the West, starting with Bahrain. A perfect example is what has been happening in Bahrain since last year – long before the current protests started. In the run-up to last year's elections, Bahrain disrupted a terrorist plot to instigate a violent overthrow of the government. Although some of those arrested may have been caught unfairly in a wide net, others were shown to be complicit in subversive and violent plots against the state.

Another example of Iranian pressure before the February outbreak of protests is the constant burning of tires and setting of fires, almost every night, at various points in Bahrain. The youth involved claimed that they only were trying to make a point, and to protest their political marginalization. But the government recognized that the fires targeted power lines and communications towers more often than not, and suspected that the real aim may have been not only to weaken infrastructure, but also to test response times of security and emergency personnel. This would be roughly equivalent to 'probing' attacks such as sending fake bombs through air cargo, to see whether and how security forces reacted.

These tactics are consistent with a continued pattern that we have seen from the Islamic Republic, in Lebanon for example, of using unwitting young people, inciting them to extremist sentiments and radical action, to inflame popular opinion. They convince youth to rebel, and get themselves arrested; then their families and friends rise up to defend them, and security forces fear them and overreact, and this instigates a pattern of resentment and fear on both sides that seems – and becomes - autonomous to the participants themselves.

This is how a terrorist threat ends up shutting down an entire society: the tactic is to provoke, provoke, and provoke the rulers of society, until they react harshly in fear or anger, and then to provoke the people to rise up when the rulers impose harsh measures. Iran already had been engaged in these activities in Bahrain for some time, when the people of Tunisia and Egypt rose up against corruption and repression. They had their networks already established, and had only to stoke the flames of resentment they had been slowly fanning over the previous years.

With the security forces already strained to the breaking point – in resources and in nerves – it was no great surprise that they snapped. The resulting violence and loss of life was execrable, and it is a mark of honor to the Crown Prince that he stepped in so quickly to take control and instantly to offer

reconciliation to the protesters. International observers breathed a sigh of relief, and felt as if Bahrain had dodged a bullet, and was ready to begin cooling off.

In order to make it clear to the protesters that he was serious about negotiations, so that they would not dismiss the offer as window dressing, the Crown Prince specifically named every issue the protesters have named. For example, giving the parliament full authority – one of the first demands of the demonstrators – and ensuring that the government represents the will of the people. His plan addressed setting up new procedures for contracting that will be transparent and include outside audits, to reduce opportunities for corruption by increasing overall transparency.

He even brought up specific matters of law that may seem obscure, but that result in disparate impacts on the two major communities in Bahrain, the Sunni and the Shi'a. For example, the Crown Prince promised to work with the opposition to determine fair ways to draw the lines of voting districts, because critics have charged that the current districts dilute Shi'a voting power.

The Crown Prince also brought up Bahrain's naturalization procedures. Bahrain is the only member of the GCC – one of very few in the entire Arab world - that allows foreign nationals to become naturalized citizens. The opposition leaders have charged that current naturalization laws favor foreign nationals of Sunni origin, and are designed to increase the Sunni population at the expense of the Shi'a; this issue also is on the table for the negotiations.

The Crown Prince described all these measures as ways to achieve the overall goal, which is to reduce sectarian tension, and "bring an end to envy and division among [the] population."

When these overtures were first offered, the protesters initially stopped demonstrating. Many of us believed that a crisis had been averted, and that reason and good judgment would prevail. But with within a couple of days, the protests were renewed, and the opposition derided the offer as not serious, and refused to participate. The protests increased in their intensity, and swept into the financial district. According to BBC reporting, young Shi'a protesters began to set up illegal and intimidating checkpoints in key places around the country, "paralyzing business and choking off the economy." The government acted to relieve the overstressed security forces by invoking the mutual self-defense provisions of the GCC charter. This treaty provided for the establishment of a multinational force called "Peninsula Shield," with headquarters in Saudi Arabia, which would be available to help any member state defend critical infrastructure against the threat of attack. 2,000 troops from Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. arrived on the 14th of March and were immediately deployed to protect threatened infrastructure.

The foreign troops were not brought in to confront protesters, in spite of immediate claims to the contrary from opposition sources. In fact, with the Peninsula Shield troops guarding the infrastructure, the Bahraini troops can devote more time and resources to crowd control, and avoid committing violence sparked by fear or desperation.

In reaction to the arrival of the foreign troops, the Prime Minister of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, issued a bizarre threat to his neighbor, warning the Bahrainis not to seek help from their allies. At the same time, the protests took an even uglier turn, with demonstrators no longer calling for democratic reform, but for the complete removal and even death of the entire al Khalifa family.

I have to ask the Members of the Commission why the demonstrators returned to protesting again, even after all their demands were agreed to? What lies behind this stubborn refusal to accept their long-stated goals? Is there some other goal, some hidden agenda, behind the protests? Is there indeed an influence from abroad, from Iran, that is fueling these protests and fanning the flames? There is no doubt that the Shi'a population of Bahrain has legitimate grievances, and I am pleased that the government of Bahrain has agreed to address them. There is no doubt that many in the crowds of protesters are loyal, patriotic citizens of Bahrain who are sincere in their desire for reform. We should support those desires, and we should be pleased any time we see a nation that is asking for a greater voice for the public in running their political affairs. Democracy entails a great responsibility, and it should be pleasing to every American to see other peoples that are willing to accept that awesome responsibility.

But we cannot be pleased at the prospect of anarchy, or worse, of the violent overthrow of an allied, peaceful government by the worst kind of seditious infiltration from a foreign enemy. We cannot sit idly by while a country - whose founding document calls for spreading its revolution – uses its influence to undermine a peaceful neighbor and an entire alliance.

This brings us again to consider why Iran cares so much about such a small country: what does it really stand to gain by weakening, intimidating, or dominating a country as small as Bahrain?

The same question could have been asked about Lebanon, before it was overrun by Hezbollah, a Shi'a militia trained, equipped, supported and directed by Iranian intelligence and military forces. Lebanon has nearly ceased to be a sovereign country, since it has become dominated by Iran and its client state, Syria. In the early 1980's, as Lebanon devolved in civil war, nobody could have predicted that it would one day become a client state of Iran, a nation so different from it in so many ways. But it happened.

And it can happen in Bahrain as well. Iran wants to dominate Bahrain for many reasons. Among them are that Bahrain has a Shi'a majority population, and the Iranian regime has appointed itself the

international guardian of Shi'a rights. Another cause for Iran's animus is, of course, the presence of the U.S. Fifth Fleet. Using its base in Bahrain, the U.S. Navy can not only patrol the waters of the Arabian Gulf and protect the international shipping lanes; it also is well-positioned to conduct surveillance missions, and even potentially to send missile strikes into Iranian territory with only seconds' warning, should that ever become necessary.

Furthermore, Iran's aim is not just to dominate Bahrain: it is to destroy the GCC alliance. Since its inception in 1981, the GCC has been a thorn in Iran's side. It has bound together previously fractured (and sometimes competing and even divided) countries into a strong partnership, with a united economic market and foreign policy. It has shown itself an ally of the United States, and an effective bulwark against the encroachment by Iran on the foreign relations and even military policy of its member states. If Iran succeeds in splitting off even one member state from the GCC, the alliance will crumble and disappear as its member states are picked off one at a time.

Bahrain is also a great prize to be taken by a greedy despot. As the Bahrainis have worked very hard to diversify their economic base, they have discovered that creating an inviting legal and regulatory framework can attract an inordinate amount of foreign direct investment – disproportionate to their size, or the original size of their economy. They have succeeded in making their country a banking haven, especially for the increasing number of institutions and high net-worth individuals who want to invest without paying or receiving interest, or otherwise want to comply with Islamic rules of investing and finance. Anyone who controlled that sector would have power greater than the size of the country would seem to predict. Bahrain's Free Trade Agreement with the United States has doubled our bilateral trade volume since it was signed in 2006, again increasing the value of the national GDP.

Finally, Bahrain and its leaders have incurred the wrath of the leadership of the Islamic Republic by doing the unforgivable (and, in many circles, unthinkable). They have reached out to Iran's arch-enemy, the only country Iran hates more than it hates America: the nation of Israel. In an unprecedented opinion editorial article, published in the Washington Post July 16, 2009, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamid Al Khalifa called for direct communication with the people of Israel, and for a new approach that treats peace as a process, not an event. I will insert the entire text of the article here:

Arabs Need to Talk to the Israelis
By Shaikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa
Thursday, July 16, 2009 8:36 PM

We need fresh thinking if the Arab Peace Initiative is to have the impact it deserves on the crisis that needlessly impoverishes Palestinians and endangers Israel's security.

This crisis is not a zero-sum game. For one side to win, the other does not have to lose. The peace dividend for the entire Middle East is potentially immense. So why have we not gotten anywhere?

Our biggest mistake has been to assume that you can simply switch peace on like a light bulb. The reality is that peace is a process, contingent on a good idea but also requiring a great deal of campaigning -- patiently and repeatedly targeting all relevant parties. This is where we as Arabs have not done enough to communicate directly with the people of Israel.

An Israeli might be forgiven for thinking that every Muslim voice is raised in hatred, because that is usually the only one he hears. Just as an Arab might be forgiven for thinking every Israeli wants the destruction of every Palestinian.

Essentially, we have not done a good enough job demonstrating to Israelis how our initiative can form part of a peace between equals in a troubled land holy to three great faiths. Others have been less reticent, recognizing that our success would threaten their vested interest in keeping Palestinians and Israelis at each other's throats. They want victims to stay victims so they can be manipulated as proxies in a wider game for power. The rest of us -- the overwhelming majority -- have the opposite interest.

It is in our interest to speak up now for two reasons. First, we will all be safer once we drain the pool of antipathy in which hatemongers from both sides swim.

Second, peace will bring prosperity. Already, the six oil and gas nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council have grown into a powerful trillion-dollar market. Removing the ongoing threat of death and destruction would open the road to an era of enterprise, partnership and development on an even greater scale for the region at large.

That is the glittering prize for resolving the dilemma of justice for Palestine without injustice to Israel. Effectively, this is the meta-issue that defines and distorts the self-image of Arabs and diverts too much of our energies away from the political and economic development the region needs.

The wasted years of deadlock have conditioned Israelis to take on a fortress mentality that automatically casts all Palestinians as the enemy -- and not as the ordinary, decent human beings they are.

Speaking out matters, but it is not enough. Our governments and all stakeholders also must be ready to carry out practical measures to help ease the day-to-day hardship of Palestinian lives.
The two communities in the Holy Land are not fated to be enemies. What can unite them tomorrow is potentially bigger than what divides them today.

Both sides need help from their friends, in the form of constructive engagement, to reach a just settlement.

What we don't need is the continued reflexive rejection of any initiative that seeks to melt the ice. Consider the response so far to the Arab peace plan, pioneered by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. This initiative is a genuine effort to normalize relations between the entire Arab region and Israel, in return for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territory and a fair resolution of the plight of the Palestinians, far too many of whom live in refugee camps in deplorable conditions.

We must stop the small-minded waiting game in which each side refuses to budge until the other side makes the first move. We've got to be bigger than that. All sides need to take simultaneous, good-faith action if peace is to have a chance. A real, lasting peace requires comprehensive engagement and reconciliation at the human level. This will happen only if we address and settle the core issues dividing the Arab and the Israeli peoples, the first being the question of Palestine and occupied Arab lands. The fact that this has not yet happened helps to explain why the Jordanian and Egyptian peace accords with Israel are cold. They have not been comprehensive.

We should move toward real peace now by consulting and educating our people and by reaching out to the Israeli public to highlight the benefits of a genuine peace.

To be effective, we must acknowledge that, like people everywhere, the average Israeli's primary window on the world is his or her local and national media. Our job, therefore, is to tell our story more directly to the Israeli people by getting the message out to their media, a message reflecting the hopes of the Arab mainstream that confirms peace as a

strategic option and advocates the Arab Peace Initiative as a means to this end. Some conciliatory voices in reply from Israel would help speed the process.

Some Arabs, simplistically equating communication with normalization, may think we are moving too fast toward normalization. But we all know that dialogue must be enhanced for genuine progress. We all, together, need to take the first crucial step to lay the groundwork to effectively achieve peace. So we must all invest more in communication.

Once we achieve peace, trade will follow. We can then create a "virtuous circle," because trade will create its own momentum. By putting real money into people's hands and giving them real power over their lives, trade will help ensure the durability of peace. The day-to-day experience would move minds and gradually build a relationship of trust and mutual interest, without which long-term peacemaking is impossible.

When stability pays, conflict becomes too costly. We must do more, now, to achieve peace.

The writer is crown prince of Bahrain.

Later in 2009, the Bahraini Foreign Minister echoed the sentiments of the Crown Prince, in a formal address to the United Nations General Assembly. This served to emphasize that the proposal was an official government position, not a private initiative from a senior member of the royal family.

Iran, like other nations once characterized as 'rogue states,' has a vested interest in extending and exacerbating the friction between Palestinians and Israelis, and in fact has called for the extermination of Jews worldwide. Ahmedinejad cannot countenance an outreach by his neighbor to a nation he hates so completely.

Why does Ahmedinejad hate Bahrain? It is easy to see. Bahrain is a member of the GCC. It is the host of the hated U.S. 5th fleet. It is rated the 10th most free economy in the world by the Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom. It is politically free, where women are educated at state expense, can dress as they please and are not bound by law to dependence on male relatives; where there are Christian, Jewish, and female Members of Parliament; and where the royal family has maintained peace and stability for over 300 years. In short, it is, and stands for, everything that Ahmedinejad has sworn to destroy.

It is in the interest of the United States to see that Bahrain continues to be a haven of peace and prosperity in a troubled neighborhood. It is in our interest to support the integrity of the GCC, and to provide diplomatic and political support for GCC and Bahraini initiatives. It is in our interest to support a government that has provided freedom and opportunity for women; freedom for its citizens; tolerance for religious minorities; economic freedom, growth and prosperity; and a peaceful haven for the region. It is in our interest to support a government that has reached out to call for peace with Israel, to put an end to the vicious cycle of anger and despair that has characterized the Arab-Israeli relationship for far too many decades.

For all these reasons, it is important to the United States to help its Bahraini allies in their time of need, to withstand the threat and the increased pressure from Iran. We support the reform agenda laid out by the Crown Prince, and call on all parties to show calm and to meet together around the negotiating table. We call on the Bahraini government to demand restraint from its security forces, to avoid at all costs any repeat of the bloodshed we have seen. We call on the demonstrators to sit down and negotiate their differences, and find a way to achieve the progress that they deserve.

This is a critical time for one of our most important allies. The U. S. Congress should do all in our power to show our support, to encourage peaceful negotiations that will preserve the stability of the country, the continuation of the ruling polity, and the achievement of the aspirations of all the people of Bahrain.

Prepared Statement of the Honorable Donna F. Edwards, a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONNA F. EDWARDS
Member, Executive Committee
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

Human Rights in Bahrain
Friday, May 13, 2011 10:00 a.m - 12:00 p.m.
Rayburn B-318

I appreciate this opportunity to add a statement to the record from the Islamic Information Center (IIC), a non-profit non-governmental organization established in 2002 by a group of professionals under the leadership of Imam Syed Naqvi, Imam of the Jaferia Islamic Center in Burtonsville, MD. The IIC advocates on behalf of humanitarian issues domestically and worldwide.

Recently, the IIC has been actively engaged on the situation in Bahrain and has taken a public role in highlighting the serious allegations of abuses by the Bahraini government. In this light, they have requested to make a statement.

Therefore, I ask for unanimous consent to respectfully submit the IIC's statement in its entirety for the hearing record at the request of and on behalf of constituents in Maryland's 4th Congressional District.

Prepared Statement of the Islamic Information Center

The Islamic Information Center (IIC) values the opportunity to provide a statement for the record concerning the Friday, May 13, 2011 Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Congressional Hearing regarding the human rights situation in Bahrain. IIC believes that dialogue regarding the violence that the Bahraini community is suffering at the hands of the Al Khalifa and Saudi Arabian governments is vital to preserving human rights around the world.

IIC is a non-profit non-governmental organization that was established in the year 2002 by a group of concerned professionals and is under the leadership of Imam Syed Naqvi, eminent Scholar and Imam of the Jaferia Islamic Center in Burtonsville, MD. The purpose of the Islamic Information Center is to correct popular perceptions of Islam and advocate on behalf of humanitarian issues domestically and worldwide. Since Islam has come under intense scrutiny in the United States, an information center is vital in helping citizens know more about Islam, and its strong focus on human rights, as defined by the Holy Quran. IIC has chapters across the U.S.

The Islamic Information Center hopes that the hearing will examine reports of extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate shootings of unarmed peaceful protesters, torture, beatings, arbitrary and warrantless arrests and detentions, and general harassment. While all of these allegations are serious, the targeting of medical personnel is of particular concern. Further, IIC believes that United States government should exercise all efforts and political influence to alleviate the suffering that the Bahraini people are facing at the hands of the Al Khalifa government.

Islamic Information Center | National Press Club, 529 14th Street, Suite 1292 Washington DC 20045, www.islamicinformationcenter.org

The Bahraini people are being subjected to extreme torture, imprisonment, and even death for protesting against the Al Kalifa government. Community members are being dragged from their homes and thrown into prison; several prisoners have died with no explanation given for the cause of death. Bahraini human rights activist Zainab al-Khawaja personally witnessed the arrest of her father, and reported unprecedented that her father received an unprecedented beating at the hands of Bahraini police forces when he attempted to peacefully surrender.

The Al Khalifa government is intentionally creating a humanitarian crisis and the violence needs to be put to an end. Beyond this, the Al Khalifa government is attempting to misconstrue their actions by falsely asserting that the crisis is sectarian in nature, rather than a human rights issue. Bahrainis have a right to want democracy and freedom in their country and this kind of retaliation by the government, against their own people, is reprehensible. The U.S. has come to the aid of other Middle Eastern countries going

through similar plights, and now the Bahrainis need help. The Islamic Information Center requests that Congress and the White House take action against this inhumanity and save the people of Bahrain.

Human Rights First Press Release

HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST: TORTURE AND UNFAIR TRIAL OF PROTESTERS IN BAHRAIN

May 12, 2011

Manama, Bahrain— Human Rights First is gravely concerned at today's unfair trial in Bahrain of 21 suspects involved in recent protests calling for greater respect for human rights and democracy in the island kingdom.

Human Rights First was refused entry at the courtroom door this morning despite assurances from the Bahraini authorities that human rights organizations and other observers would be admitted. "Relatives of the defendants who were permitted access told us they looked in bad physical and mental shape," said Brian Dooley of Human Rights First. "Several were limping and others have suffered drastic weight loss. They have not had adequate time to consult their lawyers, and there are credible reports of their torture in custody."

The 21 suspects before the Lower National Safety Court today include prominent human rights defenders and opposition leaders. They have been charged with various national security crimes, including "insulting the army," "organizing and managing a terrorist group for the overthrow and the change of the country's constitution and the royal rule," and "seeking and correspond[ing] with a terrorist organization abroad working for a foreign country to conduct heinous acts." Some of these charges carry the death penalty.

"The hearing today was conducted in a heavily militarized atmosphere," said Dooley. "The court buildings were full of armed soldiers, some wearing black masks." Leading human rights defender Abdulhadi Al Khawaja is among those charged. His wife and daughter Zeinab were allowed a 10-minute meeting with him on Sunday. Zeinab told Human Rights First that his face had been badly damaged with multiple fractures while in the custody of security forces. He had undergone a four-hour operation in the military hospital. "But when he was supposed to be recovering from the operation they tortured him again," she said.

He was in court today with 13 others – Abdulwahab Hussain Ali Ahmed, Ibrahim Sharif Abdulraheem Mossa, Hassan Ali Mushaima, Abduljalil Abdullah Al Singace, Mohammed Habib Al Saffaf, Saeed Mirza Ahmed, Abduljalil Radhi Mansoor Makki (Abduljalil Al Muqdad), Abdulhadi Abdulla Mahdi Hassan, Al Hurr Yousif Mohammed, Abdullah Isa Al Mahroos, Salah Hubail Al Khawaja, Mohammed Hassan Jawad and Mohammed Ali Ismael. Seven more being tried in absentia are: Akeel Ahmed Al Mafoodh, Ali Hassan Abdullah, Abdulghani Ali Khanjar, Saeed Abdulnabi Shehab, Abdulraoof Al Shayeb, Abbas Al Umran and Ali Hassan Mushaima. The court adjourned until Monday May 16.

The special courts consist of two civilian judges and one military judge in a process which falls far short of international fair trial standards. Another international legal observer was also refused admission to the court despite Sunday's official statement announcing that "attending trials is permitted for all civil society institutions, human rights organizations and media representatives to reflect the Kingdom's keenness to respect its international commitments in the field of human rights."

"The U.S. government needs to take a stronger stance in support of peaceful protesters in Bahrain demanding their legitimate rights for an end to discrimination and for a more representative government," said Dooley. "Hesitation and perceived weakness in support of human rights in a close U.S. ally like Bahrain weakens U.S. support for peaceful democratic change throughout the region."

Amnesty International Press Release

May 11, 2011

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO MONITOR TRIAL OF OPPOSITION LEADERS IN BAHRAIN

(Washington, DC) -- Amnesty International today urged the U.S. government to send its ambassador in Bahrain to monitor the trial of 14 prominent opposition activists that is set to begin Thursday. The human rights organization is deeply concerned that many of the defendants are likely to be prisoners of conscience.

In addition to the 14 leaders, another seven opposition leaders are being tried in absentia.

"Amnesty International strongly urges the U.S. government to send its ambassador to Bahrain to attend the trial to observe what AI considers to be an already deeply compromised process," said T. Kumar, International Advocacy Director for Amnesty International USA in Washington.

"President Obama needs to speak up more forcefully about the crisis in Bahrain and tell the Bahraini authorities that trials that do not conform to international fair trial standards will not be viewed as credible."

Among other charges, all 21 leaders have been accused of trying to topple the royal regime and change the constitution through terrorism. In addition, they have been charged with insulting the army, public incitement of hatred and contempt of the regime, disseminating false information, and taking part in rallies without notifying the authorities.

Amnesty International has repeatedly said that there is no evidence that the activists used or advocated violence in peaceful demonstrations demanding reforms of the government.

"The charges are so vague and they could apply to thousands of demonstrators who called for change and didn't use violence," said Kumar. "Those detained simply for exercising their right to peacefully express their political views in public should be immediately and unconditionally released."

Defendants did not have free and regular access to lawyers, were not allowed visits by their families while jailed and were only allowed to make brief phone calls to relatives (once a week). Defendants had been interrogated following arrest by National Security Agency officers, without the presence of lawyers who were allowed only during questioning by the military prosecutor.

In addition, most defendants were arrested without judicial arrest warrant. At least two of the defendants were reportedly tortured following their arrest.

The lawyers and families of detainees are not free to discuss the case because of a gag order by the military prosecutor. However, government media has been orchestrating a campaign against the defendants.

Amnesty International is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with more than 3 million supporters, activists and volunteers in more than 150 countries campaigning for human rights worldwide. The organization investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

AFL-CIO Report

PUBLIC SUBMISSION TO THE OFFICE OF TRADE & LABOR AFFAIRS UNDER CHAPTER 15 OF THE US-BAHRAIN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

CONCERNING THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF BAHRAIN TO COMPLY WITH ITS COMMITMENTS UNDER ARTICLE 15.1 OF THE US-BAHRAIN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

SUBMITTED BY:

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR AND CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS (AFL-CIO)

April 21, 2011

I. INTRODUCTION

On January 11, 2006, the United States signed into law the U.S.-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which entered into force between the United States and Bahrain on August 1, 2006. In light of the ongoing brutal repression of peaceful protest carried out by the police and armed forces of Bahrain and the Gulf Cooperation Council (the latter at the invitation of former), the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) urgently calls on the United States government (USG) to serve notice of its withdrawal from the FTA upon the government of Bahrain (GoB), pursuant to Article 21.5.2.[1] The U.S. simply should not provide preferential trade treatment to a country that has and continues to engage in well-documented widespread and serious violations of human rights, including labor rights, of its citizens and residents.

In the interim, the USG must immediately enter into consultations with the GoB under Article 15.6 of the FTA and insist that it end its ongoing campaign to punish trade union activity and to cease all forms of discrimination against trade unions and union activists. To date, several trade union leaders have been arbitrarily detained and investigated, and hundreds of rank and file union members and workers have been fired for participating in strikes and pro-democracy demonstrations. Indeed, a recent high-level delegation by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) warned that "the government has clearly decided to try and destroy [the trade unions]," which "have been at the forefront of the movement for dialogue, peace and reconciliation."[2] Failure to intervene now to support workers and their democratic institutions would make a mockery of the labor protections included in the FTA.

If these consultations (and any other engagement) result in a satisfactory resolution of the human and labor rights issues described herein within the six month notice period, we would withdraw our request for withdrawal from the FTA.

This submission is filed with the Office of Trade and Labor Affairs of the U.S. Department of Labor (OTLA) in accordance with the procedures set forth at 71 Fed. Reg. 76691, Section F. The submission sets forth several serious and repeated examples where the GoB has failed to "respect, promote and realize" core workers' rights, as outlined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.[3] Each of these acts occurred after the FTA entered into force.

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[1] Article 21.5.2 provides "Either Party may terminate this Agreement on 180-days written notice to the other Party."

[2] See, ITUC Bahrain: Urgent ITUC Mission Warns of Slide into Dictatorship, April 18, 2011, available online at http://www.ituc-csi.org/bahrain-urgent-ituc-mission-warns.html.

[3] The GoB has also failed to "strive to ensure that such labor principles and the internationally recognized labor rights set forth in Article 15.7 are recognized and protected by its law." The AFL-CIO intends to raise these issues once the more immediate concerns are fully addressed and resolved.

II. STATEMENT OF FTA PROVISIONS VIOLATED AND STATEMENT OF JURISDICTION

The government of Bahrain has violated the following provision of Chapter 15 of US-Bahrain FTA.

Article 15.1: Statement of Shared Commitment

1. The Parties reaffirm their obligations as members of the International Labor Organization (ILO) and their commitments under the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its Follow-Up (1998)* (ILO Declaration).[4] Each Party shall strive to ensure that such labor principles and the internationally recognized labor rights set forth in Article 15.7 are recognized and protected by its law.

The Office of Trade and Labor Affairs (OTLA) has jurisdiction to review this submission as it concerns "any matter arising under this Chapter."[5] This submission sets forth facts related to the government's violation of its commitments under the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, specifically the rights of freedom of association and the right to organize and non-discrimination.[6]

III. BRUTAL REPRESSION OF PEACEFUL PROTEST

Political rights in Bahrain are severely restricted. In Bahrain, the king is the head of state and of all branches of government. The king appoints the Prime Minister, who selects the Cabinet of Ministers. The king also appoints the members of the Shura Council, the upper chamber of the nation's legislature. The members of the Council of Representatives, the lower chamber, are elected by popular vote; however, the outcomes of those elections are undermined by extensive gerrymandering.[7] In sum, the vast majority of Bahraini citizens have limited means of participating in the government and/or influencing state policy.

Public assembly, particularly of a political nature, was highly restricted even before the recent events of 2011, with protestors sometimes treated severely. Human rights groups reported that political activists were subject to abusive tactics and torture while in detention last year.[8]

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[4] Article 2 of the Declaration provides that "all Members, even if they have not ratified the Conventions in question, have an obligation arising from the very fact of membership in the Organization to respect, to promote and to realize, in good faith and in accordance with the Constitution, the principles concerning the fundamental rights which are the subject of those Conventions, namely: (a) freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; (b) the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; (c) the effective abolition of child labor; and (d) the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

[5] See Article 15.6(1).

[6] See, e.g., ILO Conventions 87, 98 and 111.

[7] U.S. State Department, 2010 Country Reports on Human Rights, Bahrain, April 8, 2011.

[8] Id.

Bahrain has a large, poor working class population, which does not participate in the distribution of the nation's wealth. The lack of decent work, basic social services and adequate housing is major problem confronting many Bahraini citizens. These same problems, to an even greater degree, exist for many migrant workers in Bahrain.

It is in this context that peaceful mass pro-democracy protests commenced at Pearl Roundabout on February 14, 2011. From February 14-17, the peaceful protests grew, drawing several thousands to join the encampment at the roundabout. On the morning of February 17, riot police moved in and, using tear gas and batons, dispersed thousands of protestors. Several people were reported killed, some by live rounds, and hundreds sustained injuries. Public security forces continued the attacks into the following day, using live rounds against protestors and mourners, leaving more dead and wounded.

On February 15, the General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions (GFBTU) urged the GoB to open an investigation into the attacks and to guarantee free assembly and expression. The GFBTU also called on the government to commence a national dialogue to address a long list of concerns, including job creation and fair wages.[9] The GFBTU threatened a general strike on February 19 but withdrew the strike call when the GoB announced that it would engage in a dialogue with civil society – which subsequently failed to materialize. In the following weeks, demonstrations continued, at times met by harsh repression by state security forces.

Events took a dramatic turn when the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agreed to send troops into Bahrain. On March 14, Saudi and UAE troops arrived in an armored convoy, right on the heels of bloody clashes between protestors and Bahraini security forces in downtown Manama. On the following day, March 15, the King declared a three-month state of emergency under Article 36(b) of the Constitution,[10] which prohibits most forms of public assembly and speech related to such assembly, as well as to prohibit the operation of non-governmental organizations, political societies and unions. Reports also emerged of security forces occupying medical facilities, denying access to care to the wounded, harassing doctors and nurses and redirecting the wounded to military facilities - where they were certain to be detained and interrogated. Following the incursion of the GCC troops, the GFBTU issued a call for a general strike, which lasted until March 22.

Labor and pro-democracy protests continue. Human rights NGOs have reported serious human rights abuses committed by state actors in March and April 2011.

Human Rights Watch has documented in detail the denial of medical services to those who were victims of state-sponsored violence. Ambulances were turned away from hospitals, and in some cases were attacked. Medical staff also reported being threatened,

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[9] See Exhibit 1

[10] Article 36 b): Martial law shall be proclaimed only by law, unless otherwise dictated by urgent necessity to be by a decree giving the justification therefore, provided that the matter shall be referred to the National Assembly within two weeks for decision. In all cases the period of martial law shall not exceed three months, but this period may be renewed in whole or in part once or more, provided that approval by a majority vote of the members constituting the National Assembly has been obtained.

searched and questions, with personal belongings confiscated. Some patients awaiting or receiving critically needed medical care were taken from their beds and led out by security forces.[11] On April 6, the GoB suspended the Bahrain Medical Society's Board of Directors and 30 doctors and nurses were summoned for investigation. All of them had treated protestors injured in demonstrations. The NGO Physicians for Human Rights has identified nearly 30 medical professionals who have been detained or are missing in Bahrain.[12]

Human Rights Watch has also reported the arbitrary detention of activists, human rights defenders, defense lawyers and doctors, some of whom were picked up in pre-dawn raids of their residences and held in unknown locations without access to counsel or family. Some reported being verbally and physically abused by security forces. HRW reports that there is no registry of those detained since demonstrations commenced on February 14.[13] At this point, several hundred protestors are believed to be held by the police and military.

On April 15, the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that Karim Fakhrawi, founder of Al Wasat, an independent daily, died after ten days in custody. While authorities claimed he died of kidney failure, his body showed signs of cuts and bruises. The GoB also announced it will file criminal charges against three senior editors and already deported two other senior staffers. Online journalist Zakariya Rashid Hassan al Ashiri "also died under mysterious circumstances while in government custody."[14]

IV. VIOLATIONS OF ARTICLE 15.1.1 OF THE FTA

The GFBTU is a unique institution representing Bahrain's pluralistic society. It is a multi-party, non-sectarian union that represents all workers - including migrants. Since its founding, it has played a leading role in the movement for political reform; in the context of recent events, it has called for peaceful protest and genuine dialogue with the government. However, the government has rebuffed overtures by the trade union movement to resolve the current crisis. The March 15 declaration of a state of emergency, which prohibits trade union activity, has foreclosed the possibility of any meaningful dialogue.

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[11] See, e.g., Human Rights Watch, Bahrain: New Arrests Target Doctors, Rights Activists, March 20, 2011, available online at http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/03/20/bahrain-new-arrests-target-doctors-rights-activists; Human Rights Watch, Bahrain: Injured People Denied Medical Care, March 17, 2011, available online at http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/03/17/bahrain-injured-people-denied-medical-care.

[12] Physicians For Human Rights, Bahrain - Free the Docs!, Bahraini Government Continues to Abduct Physicians, list of missing doctors available online at http://bahrain.phrblog.org/the-missing/.

[13] Human Rights Watch, Defense Lawyer Detained After Night Raid, April 16, 2011, available online at http://www.hrw.org/node/98124; Human Rights Watch, Bahrain: State of Fear Prevails with Arbitrary Detentions, Pre-Dawn Raids, April 7, 2011, available online at http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/04/07/bahrain-state-fear-prevails-arbitrary-detentions-pre-dawn-raids; Human Rights Watch, Bahrain: Protest Leaders Arbitrarily Detained, March 18, 2011, available online at http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/03/18/bahrain-protest-leaders-arbitrarily-detained.

[14] Committee to Protect Journalists, *Al-Wasat Founder Dies in Custody in Bahrain*, April 15, 2011, available online at http://www.cpj.org/2011/04/al-wasat-founder-dies-in-custody-in-bahrain.php.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) immediately expressed concern regarding the state of emergency, stating in a press release on March 15th:

> The Director-General of the International Labor Office, Juan Somavia, expresses his grave concern at today's declaration of a state of emergency in Bahrain. This constitutes a serious setback to civil liberties, including the rights to legitimate trade union action. In the current volatile situation it is even more urgent to intensify efforts towards the dialogue that has started between the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the key actors of society.[15]

The state of emergency remains in effect to date, and has been used to prohibit the free association of Bahraini workers, including citizens and migrants.[16]

Since then, prominent trade union leaders have been specifically targeted for firing and even face prosecution for their role in organizing and participating in strikes and demonstrations.[17] According to the ITUC, "[s]ome 2,000 workers in 30 mainly government enterprises have been sacked for joining trade union actions in support of dialogue and an end to violence, including 6 members of the Executive of the ITUC-affiliated General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions (GFBTU) and 22 local trade union leaders."[18] The GFBTU itself has documented 881 workers, as of mid-April, who had been fired from their jobs for participating in strikes and pro-democracy demonstrations; the trade union leadership appears to be bearing the brunt of the dismissals. The GoB has also announced that trade union leaders will be the subject of investigations for their activities. In demanding the dismissal of workers who went on trade union endorsed strikes or who otherwise demonstrated for political and socio-economic reforms, largely in state owned or invested enterprises, the government, is actively working to intimidate and dismantle an independent, democratic and non-sectarian trade union movement.[19]

Once again, the ILO was swift to denounce the repression of trade union activity.

> All this information is extremely alarming, in particular as the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions had called on workers to return to work and had been given assurances by State officials that they will not face any

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[15] ILO, *The crisis in Bahrain must be solved through national dialogue, Statement by the ILO Director-General*, available online at http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_153131/lang--en/index.htm

[16] The parliament went further, on April 5, calling on the government to identify the organizers of the strikes and refer them to the Public Prosecutors office.

[17] The AFL-CIO has on file copies of notices of dismissal which cite as a reason participation in strikes or pro-democracy demonstrations.

[18] ITUC, Bahrain: Urgent ITUC Mission Warns of Slide into Dictatorship, available online at http://www.ituc-csi.org/bahrain-urgent-ituc-mission-warns.html.

[19] Of note, several companies several companies had announced (in some cases on public television) that they would only issue a warning to striking workers. It appears that the GoB put direct pressure on these firms to dismiss these workers instead of warning them.

> punitive measures for their participation in strikes. Indeed, the GBFTU had taken a constructive attitude in inviting the workers to return to work in the interest of the national economy and to allow for conditions that would strengthen the basis for a national dialogue.[20]

To date, the following leaders of the GFBTU have been dismissed:

- Ibrahim Hamad, Deputy General Secretary
- Ahmad Hasan Al-Khabbaz, Assistant General Secretary, Occupational Safety anc Health;
- Abdul Qader Shehabi, Assistant General Secretary, Youth;
- Hasan Madhi, Assistant General Secretary, Finance;
- Makki Abbas, Assistant General Secretary, Social Affairs
- Muhammad Abdul-Rahman, Assistant General Secretary, Organizational Affair:

The leaders of unions (both GFBTU affiliates and non-affiliates) have suffered retaliatioı for their trade union activity. The nine executive members of the Arab Shipbuilding & Repair Yard (ASRY) trade union have been dismissed, including GFBTU Genera Secretariat (executive) member Muhammad Abdul-Rahman, in addition to other workers Bahrain National Gas (BANAGAS) fired the entire executive committee of the union including GFBTU Deputy General Secretary Ibrahim Hamad, as well as 51 workers. The Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) fired trade union chairman and a founder of the Bahraini labor movement, Abdul Ghaffar Abdullah Hussein. On April 4, Rulla el Saffar president of the Bahrain Nursing Society, was detained and her whereabouts are unknown. The president of the Gulf Air trade union was also dismissed in April, alonş with 40 other workers.

The vice-president and four board members of the Bahraini Teachers Association (BTA) were arrested on March 29 and the general secretary on March 30.[21] They continue to be held incommunicado. Security forces also twice raided the house of BTA Presiden Mahdi Abu Deeb and interrogated his wife and children. In addition to these arrests anc raids, the government has launched an investigation against some board members, anc the payment of salaries to some teachers and board members have been halted. Severa students were arrested around the same time.

In April 5, security forces surrounded the GFBTU headquarters and blocked all roads leading into the area. The union's website has been shut down. At the same time, articles have appeared in at least two pro-government media calling for the dissolution o the GFBTU and the creation of a government-dominated union of civil servants.

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[20] ILO, *ILO Director-General Sounds Alarm on Situation of Workers in Bahrain*, available online at http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_154099/lang--en/index.htm.

[21] They include Mrs. Jalila Salman, Vice President; Mr. Sana Abdul Razzaq, General Secretary; Mr. Salah AlBari, Financial Secretary; Mr. Afrah Asfour, Administrative Member; Mr. Ahmed al-Aneisi, Management Member; and Mr. Falah Rabih, Management Member.

In response to the ongoing crackdown on the unions and the dismissal of leaders and workers, the ILO has stated:

> it is a matter of the deepest concern that resort to discriminatory action in contradiction with ILO Conventions would, in addition to violating the basic rights of Bahraini workers, undermine the conditions for genuine and successful dialogue.[22]

The prohibition of trade union activity by means of the declaration of the state of emergency, the shutting down of the union's website and the retaliatory arrests and dismissals, all of which are related to union leader and member participation in peaceful strikes over political, social and economic rights, are a clear violation of the principles of freedom of association.

The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has repeatedly explained that unions may strike for reasons other than purely industrial disputes, including government economic and social policy.[23] The numerous statements and the basis of the strike called by the GFBTU explicitly referenced social and economic demands, to be resolved through a process of social dialogue – which the GoB rejected.

The right of freedom of association cannot be exercised in a climate of fear.[24] However, the GoB has created such a climate through prohibiting public assembly, arbitrary arrests,[25] surrounding the GFBTU's premises[26] and targeted dismissal of trade union leaders and union members.

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[22] Supra, fn. 20.

[23] See, ILO CFA Digest ¶¶ 526 (The occupational and economic interests which workers defend through the exercise of the right to strike do not only concern better working conditions or collective claims of an occupational nature, but also the seeking of solutions to economic and social policy questions and problems facing the undertaking which are of direct concern to the workers); 527 (Organizations responsible for defending workers' socio-economic and occupational interests should be able to use strike action to support their position in the search for solutions to problems posed by major social and economic policy trends which have a direct impact on their members and on workers in general, in particular as regards employment, social protection and standards of living.); 529 (While purely political strikes do not fall within the scope of the principles of freedom of association, trade unions should be able to have recourse to protest strikes, in particular where aimed at criticizing a government's economic and social policies.); 531 (The right to strike should not be limited solely to industrial disputes that are likely to be resolved through the signing of a collective agreement; workers and their organizations should be able to express in a broader context, if necessary, their dissatisfaction as regards economic and social matters affecting their members' interests.).

[24] See ILO CFA Digest ¶ 44 (The rights of workers' and employers' organizations can only be exercised in a climate that is free from violence, pressure or threats of any kind against the leaders and members of these organizations, and it is for governments to ensure that this principle is respected.).

[25] See ILO CFA Digest ¶¶ 62 (The arrest, even if only briefly, of trade union leaders and trade unionists ...for exercising legitimate activities in relation with their right of association constitutes a violation of the principles of freedom of association.); 64 (The detention of trade unionists for reasons connected with their activities in defense of the interests of workers constitutes a serious interference with civil liberties in general and with trade union rights in particular.); 69 (The arrest and detention of trade unionists without any charges being laid or court warrants being issued constitutes a serious violation of trade union rights.); 75 (The arrest and detention of trade unionists, even for reasons of internal security, may constitute a serious interference with trade union rights unless attended by appropriate judicial safeguards.).

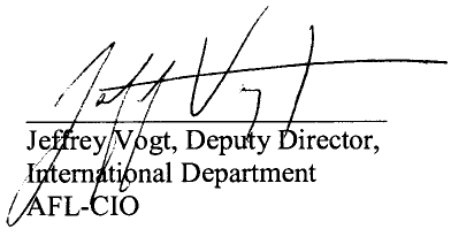
The ILO CFA has also been clear that a state of emergency does not give a government carte blanche to suspend the activity of trade unions.[27] The state of emergency declared by the King on March 15th should not serve as a basis to prevent peaceful strikes protesting the GoB's social and economic policy.

The targeted dismissal of workers who have engaged in protest which is in part political in nature also violates the principles on non-discrimination. Convention 111 is clear that workers must not suffer discrimination based on political opinion. In many cases, workers have been told at the time they were fired that the dismissals were due to participation in strikes and/or participation in pro-democracy rallies. Union leaders are specifically being investigated by the government for having encouraged workers to participate in these actions. Any reliance by the GoB on Article 4 of that Convention is without merit, as the workers have not engaged in activities prejudicial to the security of the State nor have they been given the right to appeal before a competent body.[28]

V. CONCLUSION

For all of the reasons set forth herein, the USG should immediately invoke Article 21.5.2 to commence withdrawal from the FTA. In the interim, the USG must enter into consultations with the GoB under Article 15.6 of the FTA and insist that it end its ongoing campaign to persecute trade union activity and to otherwise frustrate the activity of the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU).

This petition is filed with the OTLA by the AFL-CIO on Thursday, April 21, 2011.



Jeffrey Vogt, Deputy Director,
International Department
AFL-CIO

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[26] See ILO CFA Digest ¶ 192 (The access of trade union members to their union premises should not be restricted by the state authorities.).

[27] See ILO CFA Digest ¶¶ 193 (The Committee on Freedom of Association has recalled ...that the freedom of association Conventions do not contain any provision permitting derogation from the obligations arising under the Convention, or any suspension of their application, based on a plea that an emergency exists.); 201 (Emergency legislation aimed at anti-social disruptive elements should not be applied against workers for exercising their legitimate trade union rights.).

[28] Article 4 of Convention 111 provides: Any measures affecting an individual who is justifiably suspected of, or engaged in, activities prejudicial to the security of the State shall not be deemed to be discrimination, provided that the individual concerned shall have the right to appeal to a competent body established in accordance with national practice.

Exhibit 1

Statement by General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions

The General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions held this morning in an extraordinary meeting to discuss the ongoing tragic developments in Bahrain for the last couple of days with reports of a number of injuries and two dead yesterday and today morning. The GFBTU recalled the Bahrain National Charter and constitution and the hopes it brought about after being approved in a national referendum. Expressing concern regarding the draw back in the situation, the GFBTU appealed to safeguard the charter against all kinds of curtailing genuine reform at all levels. The GFBTU decided to:

1. Offer its condolences to families of the victims and wished the injured a very quick recovery.
2. To ask the concerned authorities to immediately start an investigation in the tragic events and to ensure bringing to justice all those responsible for the attacks on the protesters.
3. To call for the full respect of freedom of expression and the right to peaceful protest that is a guaranteed right for all citizens by the National charter and international Conventions and Charters ratified by the Kingdom.
4. Call for the full respect of human rights and the rejections of all forms of violence from all parties and their commitment to peaceful means of action.
5. Call for a national dialogue initiative to calm down the situation and reduce tensions that have led the country to dead-ends
6. Call to release all prisoners of opinion and all those detained during the protests
7. Call for the establishment of a national dialogue Council, with participation of the social partners and all those concerned to achieve a viable and quick solution the employment crisis, to secure job opportunities to thousands of new entrants to the labor, including new graduates, to find solution to imbalances between wages and prices, including the minimum wage policy
8. Opening the national media to all different points of view and not to maintain monopoly of media in the hands of certain groups and thus call for an objective, transparent and honest coverage of events.

GFBTU
Bahrain 15 Feb 2011

Doctors Without Borders Report

Health Services Paralyzed: Bahrain's Military Crackdown on Patients

An MSF Public Briefing Paper, April 2011

Introduction

Health facilities in Bahrain have been drawn into the center of the country's current unrest and clashes between government and opposition protestors that began in February 2011. The result is an unacceptable circumstance in which medical facilities—which are generally functioning well in terms of material, infrastructure and skilled staff—now no longer impartially serve the medical needs of the population.

Hospitals and health clinics are no longer places to go for the sick or injured, but are rather places to be feared. As the military cracks down on protestors and medical personnel Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has witnessed patients with critical and life-threatening injuries refusing to go to the hospital due to high levels of fear.

Their fear is not unfounded. Wounds are used to identify demonstrators, restricted access to health care is being used to deter people from protesting, and those who dare to seek treatment in health facilities are being arrested.

Although MSF has been blocked from addressing this issue on a larger scale, the organization has been able to provide basic medical care to the patients it has met in their homes when there has been no other option for them.

All patients have a right to seek and receive treatment in a safe environment, and all medical staff have a fundamental duty to administer treatment without discrimination. To ensure that this is able to happen, all health facilities—particularly Salmaniya, the only public referral hospital in Bahrain—must be demilitarised and depoliticized, and health care must not be used as bait to lure patients into situations where they are identified and arrested.

MSF activities in Bahrain

MSF first had a team on the ground in Bahrain two days after protests began in February. Despite the gaps in the provision of care for people wounded in clashes, MSF has been unable to deploy to its full capacity in addressing this issue due to the military crackdown on patients and health facilities. MSF has informed the Ministry of Health of its concerns about the situation. MSF has also proposed setting up an emergency medical response mechanism whereby MSF would accompany patients to health facilities to ensure that they are treated and not targeted for arrest at health facilities, and that health workers are able to conduct their duties in an impartial way without fear of reprisal. MSF has not been able to secure

guarantees during this period of military control that patients who it accompanies will not be targeted.

However, MSF will be establishing a project of psychological support to health workers as a way to address one of the internal challenges currently facing the health system. The use of the main referral hospital, Salmaniya, by protestors, the subsequent military occupation of the hospital, the targeting of health facilities and workers, and the sheer number and severity of wounds stemming from clashes have left many health care workers traumatized.

In addition, MSF will continue to share expertise on the management of mass casualty situations. On 2 March, MSF conducted a training session on multiple casualty management for 40 health officials in Bahrain.

As the situation continues to evolve, MSF will remain prepared to respond to any further medical needs or potential casualties that could arise out of the ongoing tension.

Climate of Fear

I. Salmaniya: from a political platform to an occupied hospital

Salmaniya Hospital is the public referral hospital for the whole of Bahrain. However, when MSF visited the hospital on 21 March, it was virtually empty. This is a direct result of the way in which the hospital has been used in the clashes between the military and opposition protestors.

Following a military operation against protestors on 17 February, many sought refuge in the Salmaniya Hospital grounds. Salmaniya was seen as a safe place for the opposition protestors to go. During this time, as the protests continued, wounded demonstrators were received in Salmaniya as well. When ambulances were blocked from reaching patients, the doctors at the hospital began leading protests themselves.

Regardless of the reasons, health professionals making speeches and leading protests directly from the steps of the entrance to the hospital undermined the concept of a neutral hospital, as did the anti-government slogans painted onto the walls of the hospital.

Instead of asserting the neutrality of the medical structures, the government declared Salmaniya Hospital a legitimate military target, calling it a “stronghold of the opposition protestors.” This completely and wrongfully undermined the notion that all patients have a right to treatment and all medical staff have a fundamental duty to administer treatment. This military reaction was exponentially more damaging to the trust in the health system than the activities of the opposition protestors.

"Omar" was one of the patients MSF visited at home as part of a medical assessment of the needs in Bahrain. He had been in the main roundabout during the demonstrations on 13 March when the military began shooting rubber bullets and tear gas. Omar was shot in the head at close range with a rubber bullet. He passed out and was referred to, and admitted into, Salmaniya Hospital for surgery.
During his last two days in the hospital, the military took over. "They came and I was beaten and assaulted every day," he said. "They were beating me directly on the wound on my head. The doctor discharged me, said I can't do more, and the police arrested me."

"They took me to the police station where I had to be standing for two hours. I couldn't manage. When I fell down, they started to beat me and assaulted me again…"

On 16 March, the military took over the hospital and established checkpoints with tanks and masked military personnel all around its perimeter. Patients arriving at the hospital were searched and their identity numbers checked. The cordon blocked doctors who had gone home between shifts. The wounded within Salmaniya were centralized in one ward, which was controlled by the military. MSF has met different patients in their homes who confirm that they were systematically beaten and intimidated within the ward, to the point that some tried to escape but where caught, arrested, and taken to police stations where they were further beaten and humiliated. Many patients with whom MSF was in contact with, had not only suffered physically from the beatings, but also psychologically.

"I stayed in Salmaniya for five days after I was wounded in the protests," said one 29-year old male. "The police used to come into the ward regularly to prevent us from sleeping. They would come in with masks and sticks. It was scary. They would come at 1AM and hit us. I begged the doctor to discharge me. I wanted to leave. It was not safe for me in the hospital. When I tried to run away, I was arrested by the police. I was taken to a police station where I was blindfolded and beaten. They finally let me go at 3AM. I found a nurse to treat me at home. If I go back to the hospital now to get more treatment they will ask me how I got these wounds and then beat me more."

When the MSF team examined the patient during a medical assessment, he was suffering from pain in his chest and had difficulty using his right hand, which had been bound. The pain associated with breathing is improving. He is still not able to move due to the pain caused by the bruises from the beatings.

The disregard shown by the military within Salmaniya also extends to health centers in the villages. MSF has visited health centers that were attacked by the military on 15 March. Tear gas was shot into health facilities, protestors were arrested within the facilities, health workers were questioned and threatened, ambulances were shot at, and health workers were beaten, including those who had travelled out of the health facilities to reach the patients. Overall, this has undermined the status of health facilities as

safe places and resulted in a high level of trauma among health workers, compromising the ability of the facilities to function effectively.

"I tried to escape from Salmaniya for five days," said a 40-year-old male. "They would beat us in the night. They called us terrorists. They even ripped off my IV line and pushed me to the floor."

II. The use of medical needs and facilities to identify and arrest patients

The clashes between the military and the protestors have resulted in numerous kinds of wounds. The most common wound is from the use of the bird-shot gun on protestors. Bird-shot is a shot gun cartridge that contains a multitude of small pellets. The wounds associated with bird-shot range from minor superficial wounds to more serious injuries such as perforated retinas and deeper tissue wounds—depending on the range at which people are shot. Some patients can have hundreds of wounds from the small pellets. These very distinctive wounds have been used to identify who has been involved in protest action. If these marks are seen by the police or military, the person will be immediately arrested.

"If we go to the hospital, they will see our marks and they will catch us and beat us," said one 28-year old male, who'd been wounded with bird shot.

Those who do risk going to a health center in the villages with these wounds are at risk of being arrested within the health center, as health workers are supposed to report these wounds to the police and register the patients. If a patient is critical, they will have to be referred from the health center or go directly to a hospital. However, the same registration system exists at hospitals.

MSF was contacted about two critically injured patients who finally agreed to seek medical care at private hospitals but were arrested by police and Ministry of Interior personnel when they arrived. At least one of these patients was taken to the military hospital. However, the family has not been informed about the patient's condition. Incidents such as these further increase the fear of going to health facilities for treatment.

"Ashraf" was wounded with bird-shot pellets on his thighs and arm. Ashraf didn't believe that going to a health care facility was an option for him, or others who have been wounded. He and his father explained to MSF that if they do go to a hospital, there are no guarantees that they will not disappear and later be found dead. Ashraf doesn't even dare to seek help in the health center or leave his village. "All the health facilities are under surveillance," he said. "Even if you are not stopped at check points, they will search me and find my wounds, and then I will be arrested. There are no guarantees for us to go anywhere."

In addition, the blood bank is centralized in Salmaniya Hospital, from which it is dispatched to private hospitals. This means when private hospitals request blood, the military is once again alerted to the presence of wounded individuals.

Even ambulances are no longer seen as neutral medical facilities providing a service to patients. The police now escort most ambulances. Thus, ambulance transportation is firmly associated with the police and military and is not regarded as an impartial means for people to receive treatment regardless of their political affiliations or protest involvement.

Many wounded therefore remain at home, unwilling to seek treatment at health facilities for even the most critical needs. Many require secondary care with surgical interventions. MSF has witnessed this first hand by visiting patients in their homes in many of the villages.

III. Medical workers targeted

There is also a crackdown on medical professionals. Doctors have told MSF that they are afraid to provide treatment to people wounded in the clashes in case they are then arrested. Many doctors and other health professionals have even been too afraid to talk with MSF about the situation or discuss how MSF can help in responding to the medical needs.

IV. A breakdown within health facilities

In addition to the breakdown of trust between patients and the health facilities, there is also a high level of polarisation between health workers within the health facilities, including Salmaniya.

The high level of trauma among health workers makes this polarization even worse. They have had to deal with medical casualties on a scale that they were neither expecting nor prepared for. The subsequent military blockade of health facilities, and in some instances, the targeting of health centers, has created a high level of fear for health workers who do not feel safe inside health facilities.

These tensions are undermining the effective collaboration between health workers with different political or sectarian backgrounds, which in turn are crippling the effective functioning of the health system.

Conclusion

Considering the civil unrest and the involvement of armed forces in military and security operations in Bahrain, MSF wishes to stress the necessity and duty of the authorities to respect relevant rules of international humanitarian law, especially those concerning the protection and respect of medical

structures and medical personnel. These rules also extend to the protection of civilians, the sick or injured, and to prisoners.

As a state party to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and its Additional Protocols of 1977, Bahrain must comply with the mandatory rules laid down in these conventions, (including common article 3 to the Geneva conventions), as well as with the rules of customary international law.

In accordance with these rules, the military must allow health facilities in Bahrain to resume their core activity of treating patients in an impartial way.

MSF is still working on securing permissions from the authorities that will enable it to address the crucial issue of patients being too afraid to access health facilities. At the same time, MSF is currently able to play a role in responding to the trauma caused by recent events through a psychological support program for health workers.

If the military does not remove itself from the hospital and if patients continue to be arrested in health facilities, those in critical need of medical attention will remain at home, risking delayed treatment, and, ultimately, their lives.

Steps must be taken to restore the population's ability to receive treatment without fear by removing the military from Salmaniya Hospital. The opposition protestors should also guarantee that the hospital will not be used as a political platform or a rallying point for protests.

However, the responsibility for restoring the functioning of the health services in Bahrain is in the hands of the authorities. The police, military, and intelligence services must stop using the health system as a way to crack down on the protestors and must allow medical providers to return to the primary duty of providing health care regardless of patients' political or sectarian affiliations.