

Service 129/99
AI INDEX: MDE 11/16/99

5 July 1999

PUBLIC STATEMENT
Bahrain

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL WELCOMES THE OPENING
OF A CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT**

Amnesty International delegates returned on Friday 2 July from Bahrain where they undertook the first visit by the organization in 12 years.

The purpose of the visit was to hold introductory talks with government officials which we hope will be followed by more visits in the coming months.

Detailed talks took place with the ministers of the Interior, Justice and Islamic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and Labour and Social Affairs, as well as with senior judges and other officials. Discussions focussed on Amnesty International's human rights concerns including administrative detention; unfair trial procedures before the High Court of Appeal, in its capacity as a State Security Court; allegations of torture and cases of forcible exile.

The delegates also raised a number of individual cases of victims and Bahrain's plan to ratify additional human rights treaties and to review laws and practice with the aim of bringing these into line with internationally agreed human rights standards.

Amnesty International welcomed the opening of a constructive dialogue with the government, but regrets its delegates were not permitted to meet privately with other sectors of society concerned with human rights promotion and protection during this visit. Amnesty International has sought assurances that similar restrictions will not be imposed in future visits.

Amnesty International will be submitting a memorandum of its findings and recommendations to the Government of Bahrain in due course.

ENDS.../