

TO: HEALTH PROFESSIONALS
FROM: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

APPEAL FOR ACTION

RE: DEATHS AND INJURIES IN BAHRAIN

People demonstrating in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, have been subjected to violent policing by the Bahraini security forces. Health workers and ambulances trying to reach the wounded were impeded and those who did treat injured civilians were harassed and in one case seriously injured. There have been at least six deaths since the protests started on 14 February.

Demonstrations in support of political reform started in Manama on 14 February 2011. On 14 and 15 February two protesters were killed by the riot police. Subsequently, an informal "camp" was established in Pearl Roundabout in central Manama where protesters stayed. In the early hours of Thursday 17 February 2011 a large number of security personnel entered the Roundabout to evict those present and hundreds of officers also ejected the protesters. Subsequently tanks and armoured vehicles blocked access to the Roundabout.

The riot police used tear gas, batons, rubber bullets and pellet guns to disperse the crowds. An eyewitness said that one battalion of the riot police fired shots from a bridge over the roundabout while another battalion was shooting from the opposite side, while the crowd was trying to seek refuge. Another eyewitness said: "The protesters are being attacked! Women and children are running around screaming and there is no where to run. Riot police are everywhere and are attacking from every corner. Many are wounded. There is a panic and chaos at the roundabout. Everyone is running and screaming." Ambulances were prevented from arriving at the Roundabout and several ambulance drivers were reported to have been beaten.

Among those wounded was Dr Sadeq al-'Ikri, a surgeon who had brought his tent to the roundabout to establish a triage point to provide care for those with minor ailments and injuries. Dr al 'Ikri was taken with other wounded civilians to a vehicle belonging to the security forces and they were driven to the al-Salmaniya Hospital. Dr al-'Ikri told a journalist that he suffered from a severe pain all over his body as a result of blows and kicking by security officers.

Those evicted from the Roundabout moved to the grounds of the al-Salmaniya Hospital and were joined by others who swelled the numbers to several thousand.

At least six deaths have been reported and more than 200 people were injured, including some very seriously, since the attack on demonstrators on 14 February. In the afternoon of 18 February peaceful protesters again gathered at the Pearl Roundabout. The security forces continued to fire at the protesters, and a doctor in Salmaniya hospital reported to the media that the hospital was full of severely injured people and that patients were arriving with 'their brains blown out'.

Amnesty International is calling for an immediate end to policing that breaches international standards, for guarantees that those providing health care will be protected and that the government investigate attacks against health personnel.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY:

- Explaining that you are a health professional concerned about human rights;
- Expressing serious concern at the unprovoked attacks on demonstrators in the Pearl Roundabout carried out by the security forces;
- Urging the authorities to ensure immediate protection for health personnel attending victims of violence and protection of the right to medical care by those suffering injuries;

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- Calling on the authorities to investigate the attacks on health personnel and the blocking of movement of ambulances;
- Urging that medical professionals are able to document and report on injuries without fear of reprisal;
- Expressing alarm at the use of police force on hospital grounds;
- Calling for the authorities to instruct security forces to act in accordance with international standards guiding policing;

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 31/03/2011 TO:

Minister of Interior

Shaikh Rashid bin 'Abdullah bin Ahmad Al Khalifa
Minister of Interior
Ministry of Interior
P.O. Box 13, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: +973 17232661
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Health

His Excellency
Dr. Faisal Bin Yagoob al-Hamer
Minister of Health
Ministry of Health
P.O. Box 12, al-Manama, Bahrain
Salutation: Your Excellency
Fax: +973 17252569

Also, send **copies** of your letters to the Bahrain Medical Society: E-mail: bms@bms.bh

IF YOU RECEIVE NO REPLY WITHIN SIX WEEKS OF SENDING YOUR LETTER, PLEASE SEND A FOLLOW-UP LETTER SEEKING A RESPONSE. PLEASE SEND COPIES OF ANY LETTERS YOU RECEIVE TO THE INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, ATTENTION OF THE HEALTH TEAM, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 0DW OR E-MAIL: health@amnesty.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A press release of the Bahrain Medical and Dental Societies issued on 17 February 2011 stated in part:

"Today, there was the use of unjustified force by the riot police against peaceful protesters that resulted in the injuries and deaths of numerous civilians. According to the Bahraini constitution and international treaties, the people have the right to peaceful protests. These events were utterly devastating and unacceptable.

"Preventing health workers from providing care to the injured and transporting them to the proper facilities is not acceptable by any international treaty. Health care workers were also attacked and injured while attempting to provide care to the injured.

"Accordingly, the Bahrain Medical Society and Bahrain Dental Society condemn this unjustified violence towards such peaceful protesters as well as health workers, and call upon His Majesty the King to intervene urgently in order to stop such acts."

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