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Bahrain deaths rise as protest camp is broken up

Amnesty International has condemned the Bahraini authorities' forcible eviction of a peaceful protest camp in the centre of the capital Manama that has reportedly left as many as six people dead.

Several people were killed by security forces using shotguns, rubber bullets, clubs and tear gas to disperse anti-government protesters who wanted to stay the night in the city's Pearl Roundabout.

"The Bahraini authorities have again reacted to legitimate protest by using deadly force and without warning. They must end their continuing crackdown on activists calling for reform," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa director.

"They must also carry out a full, impartial investigation into the force used this morning against peaceful protestors, including families with children, and whether the use of deadly force was justified.

"If not, those who gave the orders and used excessive force must be brought to justice."

Amnesty International has received unconfirmed reports that security forces were blocking ambulances from entering Pearl Roundabout to treat and transport the wounded.

Paramedics from the nearby al-Salmaniya hospital were also reportedly beaten by police.

There are fears that many activists have been arrested, after their families reported they were unable to find them in the hospitals.

Eyewitness told Amnesty International that the security forces were indiscriminately attacking protesters as clashes continued throughout the night.

"The riot police are still attacking everyone - we fear that they will attack us at any moment. Six have been confirmed dead, killed by the riot police. Many are still wounded. Many are still out there and they are in need of desperate aid," a Bahraini human rights activist told Amnesty International.

Two people were killed in Bahrain earlier this week following "Day of Rage" protests, organized on Facebook and Twitter and apparently inspired by unrest in Egypt and Tunisia.

"The Bahrain authorities are reacting with brutality to peaceful calls for political reform, inspired by similar movements elsewhere in the region," said Malcolm Smart.

"They must rein in their security forces and hold them accountable under the law."

"People should be allowed to conduct peaceful protests freely and the authorities must release anyone who has been arrested for taking part in these peaceful demonstrations."

Last week, Amnesty International highlighted the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain with its report *Crackdown in Bahrain: human rights at the crossroads*.

The organization called on the government to ensure proper investigations into allegations of torture and other serious abuses by the security forces.