

URGENT ACTION

TWO DIE AS PROTESTS ARE VIOLENTLY REPRESSED

Two men have died in Bahrain after riot police shot at protesters peacefully demonstrating for more political rights and freedoms. Riot police have used tear gas, shotguns and reportedly live ammunition to contain the peaceful protests across Bahrain, which began on 14 February.

'Ali 'Abdulhadi Mushaima' was shot, reportedly with live ammunition, at a demonstration on 14 February in al-Daih village, in the north of Bahrain. He was taken to al-Salmaniaya hospital in Manama, the capital, but died one hour later. On 15 February, a funeral procession was organized to take his body from the hospital to the cemetery for burial. According to eye witnesses, high numbers of people were gathering at the gates of the hospital to join the procession, when riot police used tear gas and shotguns to disperse the crowd. One man, **Fadhel 'Ali Matrook**, was injured by shotgun pellets and later died in hospital.

Video footage taken by Bahraini human rights activists provides clear evidence of police brutality and excessive force in breach of international human rights law and standards. Article 3 of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 34/169 of 17 December 1979, states: "... the use of force by law enforcement officials should be exceptional; while it implies that law enforcement officials may be authorized to use force as is reasonably necessary under the circumstances for the prevention of crime or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders, no force going beyond that may be used".

The 'Day of Rage' protests were called for on several websites, Facebook and twitter. The protests were organized to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the endorsement of Bahrain's National Action Charter. Inspired by the protests in Tunisia and Egypt, the protesters have been demanding more freedom, the release of all political prisoners, a new constitution and an elected government. The largest Shi'a political group, al-Wefaq, has reportedly suspended its participation in parliament in protest at the death of the two protestors and the methods used by the police.

PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or Arabic:

- Urge the authorities to immediately stop using excessive force against the protesters;
- Urge the authorities to set up an immediate, thorough and independent investigation into the deaths of 'Ali 'Abdulhadi Mushaima' and Fadhel 'Ali Matrook, and ensure that any police found to have used excessive force are brought to justice.
- Urge the authorities to respect and protect the right of freedom expression, movement and assembly in Bahrain

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 MARCH 2011 TO:

King

Shaikh Hamad bin 'Issa Al Khalifa
Office of His Majesty the King
P.O. Box 555
Rifa'a Palace, al-Manama, Bahrain
Fax: 00973 17664587

Salutation: Your Highness

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: 0097317232661

Salutation: Your Excellency

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The human rights situation in Bahrain has deteriorated markedly in the last 12 months. Amnesty International published a report on 11 February detailing human rights abuses in the country “Crackdown in Bahrain: human rights at the crossroads” (MDE 11/001/2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/001/2011/en>)

The National Action Charter was put forward by Shaikh Hamad bin ‘Issa Al Khalifa, Bahrain’s head of state, to end the political turbulence of the 1990s and to establish a constitutional monarchy. The Charter was overwhelmingly approved in a national referendum on 14 February 2001 and led in February 2002 to the adoption of a new and relatively progressive Constitution. The Constitution contains human rights guarantees and widened the suffrage to allow women to stand for public office and vote in elections. However, the Constitution was criticized in some quarters, especially among the Shi’a majority population, for having been promulgated without adequate consultation and for adopting a two-chamber legislative system – a lower house comprising 40 directly elected members; and an upper house, the Shura Council, whose members are appointed by the King and have the power to veto legislation proposed by the lower house.

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