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## **Bahrain must protect peaceful protesters from torture**

Amnesty International has urged the Bahraini authorities to ensure the safety of people participating in peaceful protests and of all detainees after one demonstrator described how police tortured him and his friend repeatedly late last week.

'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan told Amnesty International that he and a friend endured torture and other ill-treatment during hours of detention and interrogation after police arrested them in Manama, Bahrain's capital, on Friday.

The pair were punched and beaten with sticks by police who questioned them about their role in the protests before releasing them without charge on Saturday evening.

"The Bahrain authorities must respect the rights of people to participate in peaceful protests and to exercise their right to freedom of expression without fear of retaliation, arbitrary arrest, detention or torture," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"They must also investigate the alleged torture and other ill-treatment of 'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan and his friend and hold those found responsible to account."

'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan told Amnesty International that he and his friend were stopped in their car at a checkpoint near Manama's Pearl Roundabout.

The police searched the vehicle and found a Bahraini flag with the words "We are staying in the Martyrs (Pearl) Roundabout until our demands are met" written on it.

The pair were beaten and taken to a police station in the district of al-Na'im where they were again assaulted.

'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan was also blindfolded and beaten with a wooden stick after being taken to another police station in the district of al-Gadhaibiya.

He said: "They tied my hands behind my back and then put me on a chair; I was standing on the chair. Then they put my arms behind the door from the top and pushed the chair away. I was left suspended: my body on one side of the door and my arms on the other side. It was very painful.

"I asked for water and they didn't give it to me. I wanted to pray and they refused. I didn't sleep. I was left suspended on the door for a few hours."

'Abdallah Salman Mohammad Hassan was interrogated about the protests and held for 30 hours before being released.

He went to al-Salmaniaya hospital for X-rays and his right arm was put in plaster. He said his friend was

released earlier than him but did not give any details.

The unrest in Bahrain started with a “Day of Rage”, organized on Facebook and Twitter, on 14 February and apparently inspired by popular protests in Egypt and Tunisia.

At least seven people were killed and scores, possibly hundreds, of people have been wounded in the past week by security forces who excessive used force against protestors before they were largely withdrawn on Saturday.

Amnesty International last week condemned the heavy-handed tactics used by Bahrain's security forces.

Amnesty International highlighted the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain on 11 February 2011 with its report Crackdown in Bahrain: human rights at the crossroads.

The King of Bahrain on Monday issued an order to free political prisoners and other detainees. Those released may include 23 opposition political activists, who have been detained since their arrest in August-September 2010 and who are featured in the report.