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Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK  info@codepink.org

to jbennet

Paki, now in custody, holds a canister of
Made in USA tear gas in Bahrain
President Obama:
No new arms deals with Bahrain!
Sign the Petition

Tell Obama No War on Iran!
http://www.change.org/petitions/president-barack-obama-take-war-with-iran-off-the-table
Read my blog from Bahrain

Learn more about the struggle in Bahrain
Show your love
with an I Heart the 99% tee
Tweet This!
Share this on Facebook!

February 14, 2012
Dear Dick,
I write to you from the front lines of the violence rocking Bahrain. Today six US citizens-- including CODEPINK's very own Paki Wieland-- were arrested by Bahraini security forces in Manama during a peaceful protest on the way to the Pearl Roundabout. Protesters had marched into the city center to reestablish a presence of nonviolent, peaceful protest on the one year anniversary of the Arab Spring uprising in Bahrain.

Here's what you can do:
Call the US State Department:

Middle East Desk: (202) 647-2026
Bahraini Desk (Sarah): (202) 647-2129
Bureau of Consular Services, Citizen's Services: (888) 407-4747

Let them know that you are relying on the embassy is to do their job and protect the rights of their citizens who are there as human rights activists.

Contact the US Embassy in Bahrain: Call 011 973 1724 2700 and email manamaconsular@state.gov.

Ask for the consulate to insist that the delegate’s belongings are returned AND that they are NOT handcuffed for the long journey home!

Stand in solidarity with the Bahraini protesters and sign this petition!

More about the US delegation in Bahrain:

February 14 isn’t Valentines Day in Bahrain. It’s the one year anniversary of the people rising up to demand freedom - an effort brutally crushed by their government and Saudi tanks. This year, they are commemorating February 14 with massive demonstrations, and I am in Bahrain today for the demonstrations with an observer delegation.

Asked by courageous Bahraini human rights activists to come bear witness, what could we say but yes? What a great way to spend Valentines Day, showing our love for activists who put their lives on the line for freedom. Unfortunately, many on the delegation were not allowed into Bahrain, and since we arrived in the country two days ago, we have been incessantly teargassed along with thousands of Bahrainis,
with teargas made in the USA. It is shameful to know that my government continues to sell weapons to this repressive regime.

Show your love for the brave Bahraini protesters by signing this petition calling on President Obama to stop new arms deals with Bahrain. Support the people in the street fighting for their rights, from Egypt to Bahrain and Oakland to Washington DC!

Another way to show love on Valentine's Day is to stop the next war - a war on Iran. It is heartbreaking to hear the growing drumbeat for war. Please join us in telling President Obama that we demand diplomacy, not another devastating, senseless war.

Standing up for freedom, stopping the next war - now that’s the CODEPINK idea of love.

Happy Valentines Day,

Medea Benjamin

and the CODEPINK team

P.S. Don't wait to take action - support nonviolent activists in Bahrain and prevent an attack on Iran today.

Medea Benjamin, CODEPINK

info@codepink.org
End U.S. Support for Bahrain's Repressive Government

Statement by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy

May 2011 www.cpdweb.org

On Feb. 13, 2011, inspired by the forced resignation of

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, peaceful democratic

protests erupted in Bahrain. Protests grew and, in response, King
Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa invited other Gulf states to send security
forces into the country to assist in violently suppressing the
demonstrators. The March 15 invasion by Saudi Arabia and the United
Arab Emirates brought an intensification of torture, secret trials,
demolition of Shia mosques, and repression against human rights
activists, journalists, labor, lawyers, medical professionals,
students, political figures, and others. On March 18 the regime
destroyed the Pearl Monument that had served as the protest center.

Like many other autocracies in the region Bahrain has been a
key U.S. partner. It has provided a home to the U.S. Navy's
Fifth Fleet, responsible for naval forces in the Persian
Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, and the coast of East Africa as
far south as Kenya. This is why Washington's response to the
vicious repression in Bahrain has been so muted and pro-
forma, in contrast to forceful denunciations of repression
in countries outside the U.S.orbit, such as Iran and Libya.

Richard Sollom from Physicians for Human Rights says health
care workers in Bahrain have been targeted on a scale he has
never encountered. Government forces have invaded hospitals;
doctors have been dragged out of the operating room, abducted and detained for giving care to wounded protestors. The government says it will try 47 medical workers it accuses, incredibly, of causing the deaths of protesters by inflicting additional wounds on them.

Hundreds of workers, including union leaders, have been fired for striking for democratic change. Security forces closed down the General Bahraini Federation of Trade Unions headquarters. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights writes, "Bahrain is currently considered a dangerous zone for the freedom of press and journalists." On April 3 the government suspended the country's only independent newspaper, Al Wasat. On May 2 it arrested two politicians belonging to the opposition Al Wefaq party.

Bahrain's population is 60 percent or more Shia, with the government dominated by a Sunni minority. There is systematic discrimination against the Shiite majority in political representation, employment, wages, housing, and other benefits. The government has tried to split the opposition along Shia-Sunni lines, but uprising leaders insist their struggle for democratic rights is non-sectarian.
Zainab Alkhawaja wrote to President Obama after her father, Abdulhadi Alkhawaja, former head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, was beaten unconscious in front of his family and arrested by masked men: "if anything happens to my father, my husband, my uncle, my brother-in-law, or to me, I hold you just as responsible as the Al Khalifa regime. Your support for this monarchy makes your government a partner in crime. I still have hope that you will realize that freedom and human rights mean as much to a Bahraini person as it does to an American, Syrian or a Libyan and that regional and political considerations should not be prioritized over liberty and human rights."

Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, the International Crisis Group and many others have exhaustively documented the brutal terror of Bahrain's government. No further evidence is needed. As long as the repression continues, the promise to lift the state of emergency is only an empty public relations gesture. The United States should end all aid to Bahrain, condemn the invasion by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and sharply denounce Bahrain's horrific suppression of democratic rights.

As the Arab Spring has swept through North Africa and the
Middle East, the role of the United States has been truly shameful. Washington's rhetoric cannot conceal a deep fear of democracy. Its first instinct was to stand behind its old friends. Only when it became obvious that Ben Ali's and Mubarak's days were numbered were they abandoned. As for Saudi Arabia, this ultra-reactionary monarchy, with its appalling treatment of women and religious minorities, is almost never criticized by U.S. officials.

There are those who, while deploring repression in Bahrain, justify continuing U.S. support for that country's brutal tyranny as "realism"; in a dangerous world, they argue, our security depends on having a Middle Eastern state willing to host the Fifth Fleet. This argument is profoundly mistaken. Interventionist naval forces are part of a foreign policy that, by siding with despots and pitting the United States against the Arab people's longing for responsible government and a better way of life, guarantees endless terrorism and bloodshed and an even more dangerous world for everyone. For good reason, democratic movements around the world today do not trust the United States, which they see as motivated by imperial interest. That is why the U.S. desperately needs a new foreign policy, one that welcomes democratic forces -- not hypocritically, in order to manipulate them and blunt their impact, but to stand in solidarity with their struggles to win political power for the people and achieve
social and economic justice.

Initial signers of the statement include: Ervand Abrahamian, Bashir Abu-Manneh, Frieda Afary, Janet Afary, Michael Albert, Greg Albo,

Elahe Amani, Kevin B. Anderson, Stanley Aronowitz,


Action: Press Congress to Oppose the Bahrain Arms Sale

Rep. Jim McGovern and Sen. Ron Wyden have introduced a resolution of disapproval to block the proposed arms sale to Bahrain. Broad Congressional support for this resolution would increase pressure on the Administration to speak up about human rights in Bahrain.

Ask your Representative and Senators to add pressure on the Administration to change its policy on Bahrain by signing the McGovern-Wyden resolution.

http://www.justforeignpolicy.org/act/bahrainarmsdeal

"Convenient" Base Is Unexamined Excuse for U.S. Silence on Bahrain Crackdown

The New York Times called the U.S. naval base in Bahrain a "convenience," but it's still being used as an excuse for U.S. silence on the crackdown in Bahrain.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-naiman/convenient-base-is-unexam_b_1009992.html
Life in prison for Bahrain activists

“Dissidents jailed for plotting coup”, Macleans’

Wednesday, June 22, 2011 2:34pm - 0 Comments
A special military court in Bahrain handed down life sentences on Wednesday to eight Shiite activists accused of plotting a coup to overthrow the Gulf Arab state’s Sunni monarchy. Thirteen other activists received jail terms of up to 15 years. Seven of the 21 sentences were given in absentia. During the trial, witnesses in Manama say police fired tear gas to stop protesters from convening in a central part of the city, in one of the country’s first demonstrations in months. Human rights organizations have called the arrests and convictions politically driven, as the men are well-known opposition figures.

New York Times

“Life sentences for Bahrain dissidents”, Al Jazeera

Protesters take to the streets, clashing with police after eight Shia activists are given life sentences.
Last Modified: 22 Jun 2011 14:24


Police and protesters have clashed in Bahrain after eight Shia Muslim activists accused of plotting a coup to overthrow the Gulf Arab state's Sunni monarchy were sentenced to life in prison.

The court also sentenced on Wednesday other defendants - from among the 21 suspects on trial - to between two and 15 years in jail.

Saeed al-Shehabi, the only defendant to be sentenced in absentia, told Al Jazeera that the charges were false and called the government's response "draconian".

"The world has seen how peaceful the demonstrations were, for a month-long period ... yet, they were condemned as being terrorists," he said.

A member of Bahrain's largest Shia group said the sentencing of the activists as contradicting the government's calls for dialogue.

"Is this the atmosphere for dialogue?" asked Khalil Marzooq, a former MP and member of the Islamic National Accord Association (Wefaq), in excerpts of a speech he gave in Manama posted on his Facebook page.

Many unhappy

The Bahrain News Agency said the life sentences were issued against a prominent Shia political leader, Hassan Mushaima; activists Abdulhady al-Khawaja, Abduljalil al-Singace; and five others.

Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, the country's most prominent Shia opposition group, told Al Jazeera that many people were unhappy about the
"Abdulhady al-Khawaja is one of the most respected human-rights activist in the whole Arab region, so people are very angry," Rajab said.

"Hundreds of people have been brought up for charges in the past few days, and hundreds more are waiting to be tried."

Maryam al-Khawaja, another member of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, said that Abdulhady al-Khawaja's daughter, Zainab, was present in court when he was sentenced and stood up and chanted "Allahu Akbar" [God is Greater].

She was violently removed from court and arrested. She was later released after being charged with contempt of court and made to sign a pledge.

Al-Singace, who was released in February after six months in jail, was also sentenced to life. Nine of the defendants had been in custody on similar charges in the past before being set free under a royal pardon in February aimed at calming protests in Bahrain.

Following the pardon, Mushaima returned to the kingdom from self-imposed exile in the UK. Ibrahim Sharif, the Sunni leader of the secular leftist group Waad, was sentenced to five years. Waad had joined Wefaq in calling for political reforms.

Said Abdulnabi Shihab was also sentenced to life in absentia. Six other defendants who are abroad and being tried in absentia were sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Authorities claimed the activists had sought to overthrow Bahrain's Sunni monarchy and had links to "a terrorist organisation abroad".

**Sand-and-debris roadblocks**

Several villages had demonstrated on Tuesday night in solidarity with the opposition leaders facing charges.

Residents and activists said small protests broke out in some areas to chants of "Down, down [King] Hamad", as police cars rushed to block the roads to the villages.

The government contests the opposition's estimate that some 400 people are on trial, saying the number is far smaller.

Some activists sent telephone text messages calling on followers to protest again on Wednesday to demand the release of the defendants and rejection of the government's dialogue offer.

Four people have been sentenced to death and three others to life in prison over the killing of two policemen. Nine others were jailed for 20 years after being convicted of abducting a policeman.

Authorities have said 24 people were killed during the month-long unrest, most of them demonstrators.

Bahrain, home to the US Fifth Fleet, invited Saudi and other Gulf troops in mid-March to help crush pro-democracy protests.
Bahraini security forces attacked doctors and nurses, lay siege to hospitals and clinics, detained protesters who sought treatment, and arrested and prosecuted dozens of medical personnel after unrest hit the island kingdom in February, a prominent human rights organization has alleged.

Since mid-March, when the government stifled the uprising, the government has arrested more than 70 medical professionals, including several dozen doctors, and has put 48 on trial in a special military court, Human Rights Watch alleged in a 24-page report released on Monday.

The organization called on Bahrain to stop harassing medical personnel, withdraw all security forces from health centers and release all those facing minor charges, while providing due process to those accused of more serious crimes.

The report also called on the United Nations to conduct an independent investigation into the government crackdown.

"The Bahraini government's violent campaign of intimidation against the medical community and its interference in the provision of vital medical assistance to injured protesters is one of the most egregious aspects of its brutal repression of the pro-democracy protest movement," the report stated. [...] Since the crackdown, hundreds of detainees, including doctors, remain in custody facing politically motivated trials, Human Rights Watch said. Around 30 people are believed to have died during the uprising, while more than 500 were injured. [...] Attacks on medical personnel began almost as soon as demonstrations did, according to Monday's report. On February 17, police moved in on the Pearl Roundabout protesters without warning, firing tear gas, rubber bullets and pellets.

Though a team of medical volunteers, some of them wearing Red Crescent jackets, identified themselves as medics, they were beaten by police. [...] After the Gulf Cooperation Council force moved into Bahrain to quash the uprising, the crackdown on medical personnel entered a new phase, according to the report.

On March 15 and 16, security forces surrounded a health centre in Sitra, one of the country's larger Shia towns, and then commandeered the SMC. Men armed with pistols and automatic rifles, some of them masked, effectively put the SMC into "lockdown," the report said, and began ordering many of the injured protesters to the sixth floor, where they had control.

The Bahraini military began "calling all the shots", a doctor told Human Rights Watch. The situation was much the same at other clinics in the country.

Security forces wrote down the names of doctors who helped protesters, entered operating theatres to
confiscate phones and other recording devices, decided when some of the injured would receive surgery, and removed or beat those they suspected were involved in demonstrations. [...].
There are 48 medical professionals on trial for protest-related crimes. Human Rights Watch says they have had little to no access to lawyers and family members.