



CAIRO INSTITUTE
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STUDIES
Institut du Caire pour les études des droits de l'homme
مركز القاهرة لدراسات حقوق الإنسان

United Nations Human Rights Council: 17th Session
Item 4: General Debate - Situation in Bahrain
Oral Intervention
15 June, 2011
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies

Delivered by Ms. Laila Matar

Mr. President,

Over the last four months, human rights NGOs from around the world have repeatedly called on the Human Rights Council to urgently take up the grave and deteriorating rights situation in Bahrain. Despite these calls, member states of the Council have consistently turned a blind eye to the violations committed in Bahrain; all while Bahrain is allowed to maintain its seat as a member state of this body.

Currently, forty-eight doctors, nurses and other medical staff are being tried in a special military court because they provided medical care to protesters injured by state security forces or criticized the government. Many of these have allegedly been subjected to torture and forced confessions while in detention. The Bahrain government's treatment of its medical professionals is emblematic of a government that feels emboldened by an international community that has decided to ignore the victims of rights abuses in its country.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf Cooperation Council's choice to send military forces into Bahrain to aid in repression, and its efforts within this Council and the wider world to provide complete impunity for the gross violations occurring in Bahrain, is indicative of an authoritarian government that has decided to prioritize undermining, by any means possible, the democratic aspirations of millions of people throughout the Arab region.

Despite the total and unprecedented crackdown in Bahrain, and the impunity the government has been granted, protests in Bahrain continue. The political crises in Bahrain will not simply fade away; by all accounts the current behaviour of the Bahrain government is only entrenching and escalating this crisis, and increasing sectarian tension.

A week ago, in his concluding remarks before this Council, Professor Sherif Bassiouni, head of the International Commission of Inquiry on Libya, pointed out that the current atrocities being committed by the Gaddafi government against its citizens are a natural extension of years during which the international community refused to take united action against the brutal totalitarian repression of the Libyan people. The current silence that has characterized this Council's response to the grave and deteriorating rights situation in Bahrain is a repeat of this same mistake, and as such, only adds to the growing instability and future threat of atrocities being committed against innocent civilians within Bahrain.

Thank you Mr. President.