



London Retired Members Branch

BAHRAIN TRADE UNION BREAKTHROUGH UCU INITIATED JOINT STATEMENT PUBLISHED

UCU London Retired Members branch proposed Motion 45 at this year's Glasgow Congress. Carried unanimously, it concludes with the following call:

"Congress instructs NEC to:

~ support campaigns against the (Bahrain British military) base and against arming or training security forces of repressive regimes within the region

~ work with EI and TUC for unbanning Bahrain Teachers Association, and for the release of Mahdi Abu Deeb

~ work with MENA Solidarity to produce a public report on human rights in Bahrain, making recommendations to the NEC for future solidarity action, including an international trade union led inquiry into British support for the regime."

Some branch members and friends will already be aware that ensuing UCU intervention has engendered far wider labour movement commitment to change.

A press release announcing a new trade union *Joint Statement* on Bahrain was issued on 24 September by Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), MENA Solidarity and UCU. Together with a link to the statement itself, it is posted on the BIRD website:

<http://birdbh.org/2015/09/press-release-joint-statement-by-trade-unions-on-bahrain-and-the-uk/>

The same text can be read at MENA Solidarity Network site, where various materials developing the call for union struggle over Bahrain, and specifically against the complicity of the British state in the generalised repression prevailing there, have appeared:

<http://menasolidaritynetwork.com/2015/09/24/bahrain-unions-launch-campaign-against-uk-failure-to-act-on-abuses/>

The press release observes:

"UK and global trade unions today launched a campaign highlighting 'widespread and systematic' human rights abuses in Bahrain and calling for an independent audit of UK government aid to the Gulf monarchy.

The University and College Union (UCU), initiated an open letter condemning British failure to act over repression in Bahrain, which has now been signed by the largest trade unions in the UK

including UNITE, USDAW, UNISON, GMB, CWU, NASUWT, RMT, NUT, NUJ, RCN, PCS and BFAWU.

It has also gained the backing of Trade Union Congress (TUC), which represents 52 unions across the UK with a combined membership of 5.5 million, and Education International, the world's largest trade union federation, which represents over 30 million education employees across 400 organisations worldwide."

Something close to the entire organised trade union movement in Britain is now united with strong international support around this call for change. The launch of the campaign is significant because it implies broadly based rejection of and opposition to the policies and practices relating to Bahrain of successive British governments. Concretely the Joint Statement draws attention to ongoing "support from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office" for the Bahraini dictatorship. It notes the absence of any "independent assessment" of such assistance and concludes:

"...we call on the UK government to take serious practical measures to ensure that the human rights situation in Bahrain is finally tackled and that any military, diplomatic and security ties are handled with the view of ending human rights abuses."

It is important, nonetheless, that matters not be left where they stand. The logic of the statement includes sustained measures to educate and inform membership within all the unions involved, and further afield, on the neo-colonial nature ("military, diplomatic and security ties") of British involvement. Such activity will assist creation of a climate of opinion within which the status quo, above all the key British role, becomes untenable.

Crucially Bahrain should be considered in the context of these times and the wider political possibilities that are opening up. Notwithstanding the retreat from its initial programme, the rise of Syriza makes clear the social need and potential for radical responses to the regressive bourgeois tantrum politely known as "austerity". So too does the virtually overnight groundswell of support for Jeremy Corbyn within and around the Labour Party. Corbyn, it should be remembered, recently denounced "...the Bahraini dictatorship murdering its democracy movement, armed by us".

In line with these developments it is vital to maintain the momentum of the international labour movement initiative over Bahrain, whose regime is one of the enduring dirty secrets of the British ruling class and their state.

~ Solidarity with the Bahrain Teachers Association!

~ For a Rigorous Independent International Trade Union Led Inquiry into Repression in Bahrain!

~ Oppose the British Base!

~ Bring the Struggle Home!

Notes:

1] Jeremy Corbyn's observation on Britain and Bahrain, as quoted above, can be read in context at:

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/13/jeremy-corbyn-labour-leadership-victory-vision>

2] Regarding the British base in Bahrain and the background to it, see:

<http://www.ucu-retired-london.org.uk/bahrain-base.html>

David Binns (UCU London Retired Members)

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