

MORE ON MAHDI ABU DHEEB: NEWS FROM AMNESTY

The ongoing incarceration of Mahdi Abu Dheeb, imprisoned by the Bahraini regime for involvement in the reform struggles of Spring 2011, has taken a vicious new turn. On 26th August Amnesty International issued an appeal for urgent action in response to worsening victimisation of the Bahrain Teachers Association leader.

Amnesty reports:

"Prisoner of conscience Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb has been denied his medication for hypertension and diabetes since March. He has also been denied supportive shoes which his doctor says are needed to help alleviate his back pain, which he has suffered from since his torture in 2011."



The Amnesty text provides further details of regime abuse and is consistent with the broader account of state lawlessness in Bahrain, *Behind the Rhetoric*, published earlier this year by the human rights group. Its most recent report outlines the background to present developments in the treatment of both Mahdi and the BTA as a whole.

Amnesty's call for supporters to lobby the Bahrain authorities urging provision of needed medication, together with the immediate and unconditional release of Mahdi, should be supported. Alongside Early Day Motion 241 in the House of Commons, with its broad condemnation of the Bahraini status quo, Amnesty's latest intervention can help raise awareness of the nature of the regime. And if conceded, the group's demands would denote significant regime concessions, however much the retreat was spun as magnanimity.

But a campaign of appeals to key pillars of the torturing state, or its allies, must not be the end of the matter. LRM UCU branch has been active in support of the BTA for more than two years. Our motion as passed at the 2015 Congress calls on UCU to facilitate a union led inquiry into the Bahrain regime and the British contribution to the situation there.

Such an inquiry will be a step toward building support for and developing solidarity with independent trade unions and democratisation movements in Bahrain and in the Gulf region more widely. Unavoidably it will confront, publicly, the British facilitated state smashing of the BTA.

Both the initial suppression of the union in 2011 and continuing measures against its leaders are the actions of a regime recently described by British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond as "a very friendly country that is moving in the right direction." Hammond cannot be allowed to have the last word.

- **Support Amnesty's urgent action appeal!**
- **Support UCU policy (Congress 2015 Motion 45) on Bahrain!**

David Binns (UCU London Retired Members branch)

Links and Actions:

Amnesty's *urgent action* appeal to the Bahrain authorities, including guidance on making contact, is online:

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/get-involved/take-action-now/bahrain-release-mahdi-%E2%80%98issa-mahdi-abu-dheeb-ua-22711>

The Amnesty report, *Behind the Rhetoric*, can be read at:

http://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/bahrain_report_behind_the_rhetoric_eng_final.pdf

The full text of the May 2015 Congress Bahrain motion is available on UCU national website:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=7521#45>

For links to further UCU London Retired Members website materials on Bahrain generally and the background to Early Day Motion 241:

<http://www.ucu-retired-london.org.uk/bahrain3.html>

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