



## London Retired Members Branch

### SUPPORT EARLY DAY MOTION 241

**David Binns (UCU London Retired Members branch)**

Ongoing repression in Bahrain continues to generate opposition on several fronts. Most importantly, within Bahrain itself the imposition of everyday police-military control faces sustained resistance in the mainly working class districts where state violence is unleashed. This popular refusal to bow in submission was the focus of *Road Block*, an installation created by Bahraini arts group *Road Bloc Collective*, recently exhibited at *Rich Mix* in London. Both the exhibition and the dissident tactics which it represents are testimony to the persistence of resistance to the absolute monarchy and its allies.

In addition, international political responses are drawing attention to the scale of repression in the country. Not least, on 9th July the European Parliament passed an Urgency Resolution calling for immediate release of Bahraini prisoners of conscience. The same measure evoked an EU-wide ban on supply of repressive technology, including tear gas, to the regime.

In terms of helping raise awareness of the Bahraini dictatorship and its crimes, this is to be welcomed. Even so, the regime is simultaneously being reinforced by escalating military engagement of its core overseas associates and underwriters. As the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) recently noted:

*"The passing of the Urgency Resolution follows major security developments between Bahrain and its international allies. In late June, the United States announced that it is lifting the four-year ban on military sales to the Bahrain Defense Force and National Guard that was first instituted following the violent suppression of protests in 2011. Earlier in June, the United Kingdom also finalised its plans for its new Bahrain naval base, the construction of which is expected to begin later this summer."*

So it is business as usual, in fact on a larger scale than for some time. Which makes it particularly important to support House of Commons Early Day Motion 241, tabled on 2nd July.

Sponsored by Angus MacNeil, among others, the motion provides a comprehensive overview of the spectrum of human rights abuses for which the regime is regularly condemned by Amnesty and other rights advocacy groups. Numerous areas of "ongoing violations" are identified. In addition, the motion calls on the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office to implement the Foreign Affairs Committee recommendation to "...(list) Bahrain as a country of concern in its upcoming human rights report."

The broadest possible support for EDM 241 will help build a wider awareness of the situation in Bahrain. As such it will facilitate development of an effective labour movement response.

The seeds have already been planted and our own union is playing its part. Since the May 2015 UCU Congress, our Bahrain policy centres on the proposal, originally raised through London Retired Members branch, for "... *future solidarity action, including an international trade union led inquiry into British support for the regime.*"

A union led inquiry along the lines proposed by UCU has the potential to draw together and provide organising focus for diverse strands of opposition to the Bahraini regime. Further, its emphasis on the reactionary role of outside state and corporate influence, notably Britain, can be an effective antidote to fantasies of benign neo-colonial guidance as a way forward. British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond, after all, was recently reported characterising Bahrain as "a very friendly country that is moving in the right direction". By "friendly country", it is clear, Hammond is referring to the al-Khalifa dictatorship, not to our

sisters and brothers of the viciously suppressed Bahrain Teachers Association and other regime victims. Workers' solidarity across national borders is the only coherent labour movement response to the Cameron-Hammond school of ruling class apologetics.

~ Urge your MP to support Early Day Motion 241;

~ Oppose the British base as a regressive neo-colonial contribution to the festering *status quo*;

~ Through your own branch and region, support the UCU call for an international union led inquiry into the Bahraini regime and its international allies.

Some links:

EDM Motion 241 is online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2015-16/241>

For details of the London *Road Bloc Collective* exhibition see:

<http://www.shubbak.co.uk/road-block/>

Further information on the European Parliament Resolution is provided by BIRD:

<http://birdbh.org/2015/07/ban-tear-gas-to-bahrain-and-free-nabeel-rajab-says-eu-parliament/>

Philip Hammond's words of praise for the Bahraini tyranny, quoted above, are reported by *Independent* journalist Jamie Merrill:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/dissidents-fury-at-hammonds-secret-bahrain-visit-10220967.html>

The complete text of the May 2015 UCU Congress Bahrain motion can be read on UCU national website:

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

UCU London Retired Members branch website contains links to additional, more detailed materials on Bahrain and the background to EDM 241:

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

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