



Baroness Catherine Ashton of Upholland
Vice-President/High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Rue de la Loi 200
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Honourable High Representative

On September 29 a Bahraini military court sentenced 20 doctors and other medical professionals to prison terms ranging between 5 and 15 years. The 'crime': treatment of those injured during protests indiscriminately. Human rights organizations have reported that the sentenced doctors and other medical professionals were tortured into giving confessions. This targeting of medical professionals is unprecedented and has already led international relief groups to stop their activities in Bahrain. The specific targeting of medical professionals must end.

Most of the medics worked at the Salmaniya Medical Centre in Manama, which was stormed by security forces on March 16. The sentenced include internationally renowned doctors, and people that have studied in the European Union. The military court has refused to hear evidence about the abuse and has otherwise lacked any credible legal standards, despite the presence of European Union and American observers during the proceedings.

Many Bahraini political activists, human rights defenders and journalists who participated in the peaceful pro-democracy protests have been tried in military courts. According to human rights organisations those tried were held in incommunicado detention for several weeks without access to lawyers or family. On Wednesday a special security court upheld life sentences for eight opposition activists, thirteen others received sentences from two years to 15 years.

These sentences indicate that there is no respect for meeting international fair trial standards and reveal that commitments by King Hamad to investigate human rights violations and to abide to international law standards are void.

We therefore urgently ask you to condemn the sentencing of the medical professionals in Bahrain specifically, and the ongoing systematic human rights violations there. We urge the immediate and unconditional release of all medical professionals and peaceful demonstrators. Everybody has the right to transparent and fair trials before independent civil courts.

Doctors should not be tried at all for treating patients during a period of civil unrest as they are required by their ethical duty, neither should civilians for speaking freely or for peacefully assembling. The EU should work together closely with international medical associations in protecting medical professionals who are vital but vulnerable in conflict situations.

Yours sincerely,

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Franziska Brantner (GREENS)
Member of European Parliament

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