



PSI DEMANDS JUSTICE FOR HEALTH WORKERS IN BAHRAIN

In 2011, 52 physicians and nurses were arrested by the Bahrain government for providing medical services to anti-government demonstrators and accused of felonies, 20 of whom were convicted and sentenced by Bahraini military court to between 5 and 15 years after a trial lasting a few minutes.

Many of the health care workers were reportedly tortured and forced to sign confessions. Following international pressure, Bahrain's Attorney General overturned the sentences and ordered retrials. Hearings took place in January-April 2012 before the civilian High Criminal Court of Appeal. On April 19 the case was adjourned until April 26 to hear the defence.

Defence lawyers are repeatedly requesting inclusion in the case file of the reports of torture and of the forensic examinations that are in the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) report.

In addition to those who have been arrested, many Bahraini health care workers have been dismissed, suspended, demoted and discriminated against and many health care professionals have been denied the ability to practise their profession.

- PSI demands that the Bahraini government respect common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Articles 19 and 24 of the first Geneva Convention, 1949, which provides that in a situation of hostilities not of international character, medical personnel “shall be free to pursue their duties” and “shall be respected in all circumstances.” PSI takes note that Bahrain acceded to the Geneva Conventions on 30.11.1971.
- PSI demands that the Bahraini government release all the remaining prisoners immediately and drop all the charges against all the health workers.
- PSI recognizes partial improvement in the case of dismissals, in view of the reinstatement of many dismissed workers in the health sector that took place following ILO urging. Nevertheless, PSI still urges the government to reinstate the remaining workers with back-pay for the period of dismissal. PSI condemns violations at workplaces against the reinstated workers after reinstatement, or against their colleagues who were not dismissed, such as unjust treatment, arbitrary transfer, discrimination, further deductions and demotions of health care workers that took place. Health care workers have the right to assembly and freedom of expression and these practices have violated their rights.
- All people have the right to the highest attainable standard of health. PSI affirms that health care workers all over the world have the right to exercise their professions and to provide medical services to all human beings, without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation. It is the workers' professional and ethical duty to care for injured individuals and they should not in any circumstance be sanctioned as a consequence of providing care.
- The Bahraini government should respect the ILO Convention No.111, Article 1, stating that any distinction, exclusion or preference made on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, political

opinion, national extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation (Discrimination), which Bahrain ratified on 26.09.2000.

- PSI demands that governments should take all necessary measures to ensure that health care workers can carry out their work in all circumstances, including times of conflict and organized demonstrations.
- PSI condemns the ongoing violation of human rights in Bahrain and stands with the Bahraini democracy movement in its struggles for the economic, social and political rights of the people of Bahrain.
- PSI urges the Bahraini government to restore and respect human rights as called for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in ILO Conventions.
- PSI calls upon world leaders to take measures to guarantee health care workers everywhere the right to exercise their profession unhindered, without being subjected to fear, repression, retaliation, or any loss in respect of the fundamental principles and rights at work.

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Public Services International
Health and Social Care Services Task Force meeting
At the International Labour Organization, Geneva, Switzerland