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Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by the Kham Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Torture, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[21 August 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Violations of Medical Neutrality in Bahrain

During the Crisis of 2011, a violent crackdown from government forces attacked one and only main governmental hospital on the island on the 16th of March. Group of Bahrain Medics (Doctors, nurses, pharmacist, paramedics, nursing assistance, cleaners, and cooked.) made their way to Salmaniya Medical Complex – Bahrain’s only public hospital – as volunteers to save lives and treat the injured protesters. What we witnessed was horrifying: evidence of the use of live ammunition, bodies battered by tear gas canisters fired at close range, and protesters blinded by the use of bird shot. In the months that closely followed nearly fifty people were killed as a direct result of the crackdown on protesters, a number which has risen to over 180 in the years since 2011.

The government responded to our humanitarian action and based on our ethical duties to save lives; with outraged. At the time Medics went live on TV exposing the government of Bahrain atrocities, and requesting to stop these atrocities against the people of Bahrain. Medics, were clearly identified and were attacked and detained by security forces, while Salmaniya Medical Complex came under the occupation of government forces. To justify their action, state-controlled media reported that healthcare professionals were refusing to treat injured security forces; a claim that remains baseless. In other words, the Minister of Interior used all its power and facilitated a campaign of hatred and sectarianism against the medics through the controlled media in Bahrain.

August of 2011, fifty-two of those medics were sentenced by a special military court to prison terms ranging from one month to fifteen years. I myself was sentenced to 15 years for 12 charges, including attempting to overthrow the government, spreading false information, and participating in an illegal public gathering. After considerable condemnation from the international community, these convictions were reviewed by a civilian court. The convictions of nine medics were ultimately upheld, while nine of them, including myself, were acquitted. In March 2013, an additional 21 medics were acquitted, but the convictions of more than a dozen medics still stand.

Bahrain Government has violated the concept of medical neutrality, which is the principle of non-interference with medical services in times of conflict. The principle of medical neutrality is quite simple: warring factions must protect civilians. Medical professionals must provide care to the sick and wounded, regardless of affiliation. Medical facilities, transport, and personnel must be permitted to tend to the wounded without interference. Clearly, the Government of Bahrain did not respect the rules of medical neutrality during the uprising of 2011.

For most, it is unthinkable that a medic would be punished for treating victims of government oppression and bearing witness to those crimes. However, this is a reality too many healthcare professionals face today. That is why I call upon the Government of Bahrain, and governments throughout the world, to release prisoners of conscience and respect the tenants of medical neutrality, for I cannot truly be free until they are free.

At the present time we have four medics in prison:

Dr. Ali AL-Ekeri- Orthopedic consultant sentenced to 5 yrs in prison due to be released October 2017

Mr. Ebrahim Al-Demastani- Occupational Nurse & Executive secretary of the Bahrain Nursing Society sentenced to 3 yrs in prison due to be released March 2015

Dr, Saeed Al-Samahig- Eye consultant sentenced to one year in 2011. He was released and again imprisoned for freedom of expression, due to be released October 2015

Sayed Saeed Taher Al-Alawi – Nursing assistant, sentenced to 15 yrs. in prison

Our request is the following:

Free all prisoners of conscious

Free our medics

Free our Unionist

Free our Human right defenders

Free our political prisoners

Free our kids, students, and reinstate them in schools

Stop the militarization and security measures of hospitals and health centers in Bahrain and allow the protesters to be treated without harassment and detention Employ the 500 newly graduate nurses into work (This is the first time in history to hear of unemployed nurses)where there is a severe shortage in the world for nurses

Re-instate medics and people of Bahrain into their positions in order to decrease the unemployment

Stop the stripping of Bahraini people from their nationalities

Stop the harassment of civil societies and let the societies set their own bylaws and guidelines

Implement BICI report

Detained the responsible people for the mass torture and death in Bahrain

Convict the torturer and the killer of the 180 martyrs in Bahrain

What can The United nation do:

A visit from the high commissioner representative to Bahrain again to set up an office in Bahrain to monitor and evaluate the situation

Request the Visit of Special Reporter on torture

Request the visit of the international Red Cross to prisons

Assign Special Human Right Council Reporter to Bahrain

Implement UPR 2012 recommendations and BICI recommendations

Allow Human Rights organizations to visit Bahrain.

Mandate a special session for Bahrain

Release prisoners of conscience.

Adopt Medical Neutrality by laws to protect medics all over the world

This is a summary of what Bahrain I people have been through and still going on:

Detention and torched of medics, teachers, sportsmen, journalists, teenagers, children, women etc.

Discrimination and sectarian hatred and uncalled attacks on the medics and unionist by the Ministers of the country and others through the local media in the country to enrich and feed into segregation and hate among the people of Bahrain

Sectarian acts against shiaa (suspending and sacking) members of governmental and nongovernmental employees

Mass dismissal

Harassment of civil societies

Militarization of the only public hospital in the kingdom of Bahrain

Detention of children and not allowing them to continue their education in prison

Sentencing kids, youth, men under the terrorist law to 10-15-20 yrs of life in prison