

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 12, 2011

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We are writing to urge the administration to delay its proposed arms sale to Bahrain in light of the country's ongoing repression of peaceful demonstrations.

We recognize the administration's commitment to the United States' strategic relationship with Bahrain, which has been an important feature of our national security strategy in the Middle East for many years. However, the Bahraini government's repressive treatment of peaceful protestors during the past several months is unacceptable. The United States must make it clear to the government of Bahrain that its ongoing human rights violations and unwillingness to acknowledge legitimate demands for reform have a negative impact on its relationship with the United States.

Since February, the people of Bahrain have used peaceful means to demand democratic reforms and protection for human rights – fundamental values shared by the United States. The Bahraini government's brutal response, including the use of torture, is inexcusable. According to Human Rights Watch, 34 people have been killed, 1,400 have been arrested, and 3,600 have been dismissed from their jobs for anti-government activities. In a country with a population of only 525,000, this represents a systematic effort to intimidate and punish those who promote democratic reform.

In May, President Obama criticized the mass arrests and brute force used to subdue protestors, and urged the Bahraini government to engage in meaningful dialogue with the opposition. While the independent commission charged with investigating the protests and ensuing events was a positive development, we have yet to see the results of the investigation or whether its recommendations will be acted upon. We were also encouraged to see that Bahraini judicial authorities nullified the prison terms of Bahraini medical professionals, some of whom have been sentenced to 15 years in prison for simply attending to injured protestors. We question the need for further legal proceedings against these individuals, but expect that they should be conducted in a fair, impartial and transparent manner. In addition, we remain deeply concerned about the treatment of countless other Bahrainis who have been detained through the special security courts.

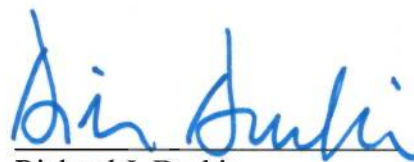
Completing an arms sale to Bahrain under the current circumstances would weaken U.S. credibility at a critical time of democratic transition in the Middle East. We urge you to send a strong signal that the United States does not condone the repression of peaceful demonstrators by delaying the possible arms sale until the Bahraini government releases its political prisoners, addresses the independent commission's recommendations, and enters into meaningful dialogue with Bahraini civil society and opposition groups.

We look forward to continuing a dialogue on encouraging peaceful political transitions at this historic moment in that region of the world.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator