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State-Organised Murder on the Streets of Bahrain

Brussels, 16 March 2011 (ITUC OnLine): Security forces with tanks have over-run the Pearl roundabout in the centre of Manama, capital of Bahrain, where pro-democracy protesters have been camped and have demonstrated peacefully for the past month, asking for political reforms and equal rights. Using Apache helicopters and live ammunition, the crackdown immediately follows the declaration of a three-month state of emergency yesterday by King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa and the dispatching of troops from other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, including a thousand heavily armed Saudi soldiers.

Live rounds were used in parts of the city, with at least six people reported killed and hundreds injured. Mobile phone and internet access are restricted, and palls of smoke rose from protestors' tents that were set ablaze by the security forces. Particularly brutal repression has been reported in Shia villages.

The ITUC strongly condemns this intensified violence, organised and perpetrated by the Bahraini authorities with the support of neighbouring Gulf States.

Troops have reportedly entered the main Salmaniya hospital. Doctors have launched an emergency call for help, describing the situation as very critical due to lack of blood, power cuts and pressure from security forces to prevent them treating many severely wounded demonstrators. Yesterday and today, ambulances from the hospital were prevented from transporting casualties, with the wounded now reportedly being treated in mosques and houses.

“The actions of the authorities are appalling, and the deliberate targeting of hospitals to stop injured people being treated is simply inhuman. The Bahraini authorities and those from neighbouring countries who have helped to orchestrate the killing and maiming of innocent civilians must be held accountable under international law. Those responsible must be confronted with the full weight of international pressure to immediately stop these criminal acts and to lift the state of emergency,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The national coalition of civil society organisations, including the ITUC-affiliated national trade union federation GFTBU, launched an emergency appeal this morning to stop the systematic murder of people struggling for legitimate democratic rights. Pro-democracy groups have urged the international community, the Arab League and the UN to intervene to stop the massacre, and asked for emergency humanitarian support to break the siege on hospitals and the assaults against medical staff.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 301 affiliated national organisations from 151 countries and territories. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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