

Dear members of Congress

On behalf of our supporters nationwide, we the undersigned organizations urge you to cosponsor the Arms Sale Responsibility Act, HR 5749.

This moment of rapid global political change requires strong and consistent US leadership. Our dedication to human rights and freedom of expression must not be applied selectively. Our values as a nation require us to reform our shortsighted arms sales policies.

The impacts of these flawed policies can be seen in the US government's recent decision to proceed with limited sales to the government of Bahrain, the full details of which have not been publicly disclosed. Serious concerns about human rights in Bahrain have not been resolved since the decision to move forward with these secret sales. Amnesty International has continued to receive reports of ill-treatment of protesters following the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry's report.

A Bahraini court recently upheld the convictions of nine doctors, giving them sentences of up to five years in prison for tending to wounded protesters. While five were released for time served, all should have their convictions and sentences quashed, because they were imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. Another example is that of eleven-year-old Ali Hasan, who was arrested in May and charged with "participating with others in an illegal gathering of more than five people, in order to disturb public security by way of violence." Police reportedly threatened to shoot the young boy and later interrogated him. He was sentenced on July 5th to one year of monitoring, after being released following 23 days without seeing a lawyer and nearly a month in juvenile detention.

These examples illustrate the need for a consistent US policy for weapons sales and human rights. The Arms Sale Responsibility Act would prohibit arms sales if there is substantial risk that the weapons would be used to commit or facilitate human rights abuses.

Reforming the US's approach to arms sales is not only the correct policy from a moral standpoint. It aligns with America's long-term security strategy, which increasingly relies on partnerships that are often undermined by the resentment and anger prompted by shortsighted arms sales decisions.

We strongly urge you to cosponsor the Arms Sales Responsibility Act.

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

Americans for Democratic Action

Amnesty International USA

Center for International Policy

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

CREDO

Foreign Policy in Focus

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Global Action to Prevent War

Global Exchange

GlobalSolutions.org

Just Foreign Policy

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NETWORK

Peace Action

Peace Action West

Physicians for Human Rights

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Project on Middle East Democracy

Refugees International

3P Human Security

United to End Genocide

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

Universal Muslim Association of America

Women's Actions for New Directions