



Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain

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ADHRB Applauds House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee Hearing on U.S. Policy toward Bahrain

WASHINGTON, DC – November 19, 2013 – Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) applauds the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) for holding a [hearing](#) today entitled “U.S. Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula: Yemen and Bahrain,” which featured testimony from U.S. Department of State Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Barbara Leaf.

In opening remarks, Subcommittee Chairwoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) argued that U.S. policy “must look ahead and try to anticipate problems before they arise by being proactive rather than reactive.” Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen went on to call a “stable, unified and democratic Bahrain” a vital U.S. interest, while noting the Bahrain government’s lackluster implementation of the recommendations submitted by the Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI).

Following Chairwoman Ros-Lehtinen’s remarks, Ranking Member Ted Deutch (D-FL) called the U.S. response to the situation in Bahrain “puzzling” and argued that U.S. strategies in the region must be based on both national security interests and a respect for human rights.

In her [testimony](#), DAS Leaf stated that a “more stable, secure, and prosperous Bahrain” will enable the current bilateral security partnership to continue while promoting “reform, human rights, and dialogue.” Addressing the Bahrain government’s implementation of the BICI recommendations, DAS Leaf stated that “much remains to be done, particularly in the areas of accountability for police abuse, freedom of expression protections, and media incitement.”

DAS Leaf acknowledge that “certain measures by the government — the Ministry of Justice’s order regulating meetings between political societies and international diplomats, and the charges against senior opposition members including Al Wefaq leaders Khalil Marzooq and Ali Salman — have had a chilling effect on the dialogue and have restricted the space for opposition activity.” DAS Leaf concluded by calling on “responsible persons from all parts of Bahraini society to demonstrate leadership in the quest for reconciliation and real dialogue.”

Following DAS Leaf’s testimony, Ranking Member Deutch asked if Bahrain’s Crown Prince, often touted as a moderate voice within Bahrain, could bring about reform in the country, to which DAS Leaf responded by arguing that the ongoing unrest cannot be solved by one member of the ruling family, but is a problem the entire Government of Bahrain.

During his remarks, Representative Ted Yoho (R-FL) urged US policy in Bahrain to focus on securing “national interests while promoting peaceful, democratic reforms,” while Representative Bradley Schneider (D-IL) asked DAS Leaf to elaborate on Iran’s influence in Bahrain. DAS Leaf expressed concern over Iranian involvement via media, but stated that the 2011 uprising originated with the Bahraini people. Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) asked DAS Leaf to address the US Fifth Fleet’s significance in Bahrain, to which DAS Leaf responded by emphasizing the collaboration between the Fifth Fleet and the Bahrain military, as well as the role the Fifth Fleet has played as a forward base for staging operations.

“We commend the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa for holding a hearing on the important issue of US foreign relations with and policy toward Bahrain,” said ADHRB Director Husain Abdulla. “We are optimistic that this engagement will lead to an honest conversation regarding the need for U.S. policy towards Bahrain that forcefully encourages the promotion of and respect for democratic reform and basic human rights.”