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ADHRB Welcomes Senate Bill to Reinstate US Arms Exports Ban for Bahrain

Washington, DC - Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) welcomes yesterday's introduction of [S.2009](#), the [bipartisan resolution](#) in the United States Senate that would reinstate the ban on certain US arms sales to Bahrain until the country implements all 26 recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). We strongly support the efforts of the bill's co-sponsors, Senators **Ron Wyden** (D-OR) and **Marco Rubio** (R-FL), as well as that of Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA), who also [announced his intent](#) to introduce a House version of the bill after recess. The proposed resolution would overturn the Obama Administration's June decision to reinstate arms sales to the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) and the National Guard. Despite the State Department's announcement to the contrary, the resolution highlights the need to reinstate the arms export ban to ensure that US-sold weapons do not enable further human rights abuses in the Gulf kingdom.

Under S.2009, the United States would be forbidden from selling certain arms that could be used to "suppress peaceful dissent." Bahrain continues to utilize these types of weapons to repress dissenting voices, violently disperse peaceful protests, and commit acts of collective punishment and extrajudicial killing.

Yesterday's proposed legislation will lift the arms ban on these items only when the Secretary of State certifies that the Government of Bahrain has fully implemented all 26 BICI recommendations. A 2013 State Department report, commissioned under the FY2013 NDAA, stated that Bahrain had [only implemented](#) five of the BICI recommendations, while the 2014 US Department of State Human Rights Country Report on Bahrain found that the government had [failed to address](#) many of the subjects covered by the BICI, including issues relating to torture and the criminalization of free speech.

"The Senate has sent a clear message to the Obama Administration that it will not allow US arms and military equipment to be utilized in the commission of additional human rights abuses in Bahrain," said ADHRB Executive Director, **Husain Abdulla**. "If Bahrain expects to enjoy unrestricted trade with the US, it must put an end to human rights violations and release all prisoners of conscience currently detained in its prisons."

The United States imposed an earlier ban on the sale of arms to Bahrain following the government's violent suppression of the pro-democracy protests in February-March 2011, in which a majority of the population peacefully called for respect of human rights and serious political reform. The Obama administration [lifted that hold](#) on the BDF at the end of June to "recognize" Bahrain for its "meaningful progress on human rights and reconciliation," despite [widespread documentation](#) from [international NGOs](#) and [United Nations experts](#) stating otherwise.



The State Department later cited [the earlier release of Ebrahim Sharif](#), one of the prominent political prisoners of the “Bahrain 13” as a key example of this “meaningful” progress. Just 19 days later, however, the Bahraini government [re-arrested Mr. Sharif](#) after he [peacefully called for reform](#) in a speech days after his release. Sharif now faces up to 15 years in prison on charges related to his peaceful acts of expression.

“The Senate’s action recognizes that Bahrain has not implemented meaningful reform,” said Abdulla. “We strongly support this new legislation reinstating the ban until Bahrain finally implements all the recommendations of the BICI, and urge the rest of the Senate to support this measure by signing on as co-sponsors.”

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