24 October 2011

More than a dozen US and European human rights and arms control groups are urging the US Congress to block a proposed USD 53 million arms sale to Bahrain, mostly armoured Humvees, which could conceivably be used by the kingdom's security forces against protestors.

This sale is the first proposed by the US Government since the Government of Bahrain cracked down last February on hundreds of thousands of people peacefully demanding greater political freedom . Since that time, Bahraini security forces have continued to brutally suppress protests and undertaken a relentless programme of retribution. In mid-March the Government declared a 'state of national safety' which put the Bahraini Defence Force (BDF), the recipient of the proposed arm delivery, in charge of suppressing the largely peaceful protest.

In the fierce crackdown that has followed, more than 40 people have been killed by security forces and more than 1 600 people have been arrested. Authorities then initiated a large-scale campaign of retribution against anyone supporting or participating in protests, including human rights activists, journalists and medical professionals.

In the face of this reality, the US Department of Defence press release on this sale justifies it by referring to the Government of Bahrain as 'an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East'.

1. Is the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs aware of these facts, which run contrary to the US and European laws forbidding the transfer of any military equipment to military or security units which are credibly reported to have committed human rights abuses?

2. Does the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs have any information about recent or projected European arms sales to Bahrain?

3. Is the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs worried about the fact that people across the Middle East will not take Western statements about democracy and human rights in the region seriously when, rather than hold its ally Bahrain to account, it appears to reward repression with additional weapons?

Question for written answer
to the Commission
Rule 117

Pino Arlacchi (S&D), Dimitar Stoyanov (NI), Michail Tremopoulos (Verts/ALE), Robert Rochefort (ALDE), Wolfgang Kreissl-Dörfler (S&D), Frieda Brepoels (Verts/ALE), Boris Zala (S&D), Liisa Jaakonsaari (S&D), Ivo Vajgl (ALDE), Mariya Nedelcheva (PPE), Sabine Lösing (GUE/NGL), Pavel Poc (S&D), Roberto Gualtieri (S&D), Kyriakos Mavronikolas (S&D), Keith Taylor (Verts/ALE), Nikolaos Chountis (GUE/NGL), Guido Milana (S&D), Ana Gomes (S&D)

E-009999/2011

[source:www.europarl.europa.eu]