INTRODUCTION

Bahrain is an island in the Persian Gulf. It has been ruled by the Al Khalifa family for more than 200 years. The UK has a long history of colonial intervention in Bahrain, which declared its independence in 1971.

In February 2011, mass pro-democracy protests were violently suppressed. Security forces killed and injured protesters. One of the main weapons used was tear gas. Physicians for Human Rights said its use was “unprecedented in the 100-year history of tear gas use against civilians”. In the following crackdown, hundreds of people were unjustly detained. Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners was “systematic.”

The government crackdown was supported by the Saudi Arabian National Guard. These forces entered Bahrain in March, in armoured vehicles made in the UK by BAE Systems.

Since then Bahrain has become “one of the Middle East’s most repressive states” according to Freedom House. Basic freedoms have been restricted, and political opposition has been dismantled.

Bahrain is also currently a member of the Saudi-led coalition involved in the war in Yemen. It supplies ground forces and takes part in bombing.

UK MILITARY RELATIONSHIP & ARMS SUPPLIES

The UK is a steady supplier of arms to Bahrain and would like to sell more. The government lists Bahrain as a ‘core’ market for arms sales, despite its human rights record.

UK arms export licences were temporarily withdrawn during the repression of 2011, but only after huge public outcry. Business returned to normal as soon as possible.

The UK government continued to license the sale of weaponry of the type used in repression. Other UK sales include Fighter Trainer aircraft and transport aircraft. There was a major (unsuccessful) push to sell Eurofighter Typhoon combat aircraft to Bahrain in 2013. The UK government has also provided training to the Bahraini military and internal security forces.

In recent years the UK has renewed its military involvement in the Persian Gulf, involving a permanent new military and ‘security’ presence. War on Want has documented this “new British imperialism”. The UK has signed new military and ‘security agreements with Bahrain and completed a new naval base in 2018.

This relationship, and the business interests of arms companies, has led the UK government to offer uncritical support for the repressive Bahraini regime.

ARMED_exports_to_bahrain_(2015–2017)

UK military export licences

£53.8M

EU military exports

€128.8M

BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

BIRD’s mission is to promote human rights and effective accountability in Bahrain. It works alongside NGO coalitions, international bodies, members of the British-Bahraini community, Bahraini activists, and the UK public to raise awareness of the human rights situation in Bahrain.

birdbh.org  twitter.com/BirdBahrain_
facebook.com/Bahrain-Institute-for-Rights-Democracy-667215573317777/home
**BAHRAIN & DSEI**

The UK government always invites Bahrain to send a military delegation to DSEI. Bahrain was still invited to attend in 2011, even after its high profile repression of protests in the country.

At DSEI 2017, a signing ceremony took place for the UK to take part in the Bahrain International Airshow (BIAS). During it, the Bahraini Minister said “We look forward to seeing many of the capabilities on show here at DSEI exhibiting at BIAS next year.”

Many of Bahrain’s international arms suppliers attend DSEI, including suppliers of small arms and crowd control equipment. BAE Systems and Otokar have supplied armoured vehicles for use in Bahrain, and Lockheed Martin has sold combat aircraft.

“Bahrain’s allies have remained largely silent in the face of human rights violations that they would loudly denounce were they taking place in a less strategically important country”

Nicholas McGeehan, Human Rights Watch

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**WHAT YOU CAN DO**

- Sign the petition to Stop DSEI at [www.caat.org.uk/stop-dsei](http://www.caat.org.uk/stop-dsei)
- Join and share the Stop DSEI 2019 Facebook event
- Share our [Stop DSEI 2019 video](#): find it on Youtube, Facebook and Twitter