

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Catherine Ashton

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice President of the European Commission

Brussels, 24 March, 2011
Our Ref: B1055

Disappointing Council conclusions and further remarks on Bahrain

Dear Baroness Ashton,

Following our recent correspondence, Amnesty International would like to express our deep dissatisfaction with the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council of 21 March regarding the developments in the southern Mediterranean, particularly its conclusions on Bahrain, as well as subsequent statements made on the subject by senior EEAS staff.

We believe that the Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on Bahrain do not sufficiently address the gravity of the situation and the extent of human rights violations in that country, as explained in our letter of 17 March and the accompanying report *Bloodied but unbowed: Unwarranted state violence against Bahraini protestors*. We are also deeply shocked and concerned about the unacceptable remarks made by your senior advisor, Robert Cooper, in the European Parliament on 22 March. During a discussion of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr Cooper appeared to excuse and justify the Bahraini security forces opening fire with live ammunition on protesters as acceptable under the circumstances. We expect Mr Cooper to retract his statement and make an immediate public apology.

In these circumstances, we urge you to make a further statement unequivocally condemning the use of excessive violence against protesters by police and security forces, calling on the Bahraini authorities to protect peaceful protesters from excessive force by police or violence by others and to allow access to medical attention. This statement should also call for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to conduct a full, thorough and transparent investigation into the killings and attacks on protesters and the assaults on health and medical workers. Finally, we ask you to initiate the formal suspension of the supply of all weaponry, munitions including ammunition, and related equipment used by the riot police and security forces in Bahrain and to conduct an urgent comprehensive review of all arms supplies and training support.

We are at your disposal to discuss these issues in greater depth and look forward to receiving your response to this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Nicolas Berger
Director
Amnesty International EU Office