

Human Rights Watch Says West Must Press Bahrain on Opposition Arrests



New York, January 19 (RHC)-- Human Rights Watch, the HRW, has urged Western governments to break their silence on Bahrain's continued detention of opposition figures. On Sunday, a regional deputy at the HRW criticized Bahrain's Western allies for their silence on the regime's indiscriminate incarceration of opposition figures and activists.

"Bahrain's allies in London, Paris, and elsewhere have largely stayed silent as Bahrain has filled its jails with the people who hold the key to the political solution the UK and U.S. claim to support," said Joe Stork, who serves as the HRW's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa region.

Bahrain has arrested tens of activists and opposition figures over the past months, including the most prominent opposition leader, Seikh Ali Salman, who was arrested on December 28, 2014, on charges of promoting regime change in the Persian Gulf monarchy.

Manama's detention of Salman, who leads the influential al-Wefaq party, has triggered massive condemnation inside and outside the monarchy, with leaders, governments and international organizations across the world calling for his immediate release.

The HRW official called on Manama to immediately release Salman as the government has "failed" to provide evidence that he has really collaborated with foreign elements in an attempt to change the regime.

Bahrain, a close ally of the United States in the region, has been witnessing almost daily protests against the Al Khalifa dynasty since early 2011. Bahraini forces have killed close to 90 activists over the past three years while hundreds of protesters as well as notable opposition figures continue to remain under arrest in the regime's notorious prisons.

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