

Protesters in Manama demand detainees' release

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Over 2,000 people took to the streets yesterday in Manama urging the authorities to release the detainees arrested during the recent disturbances.

Human rights activists and family members of the detainees marched from Ras Ruman to Bab Al Bahrain chanting slogans.

“ We want these men to be released by the authorities. Family members and lawyers are facing problems to meet their loved ones.

The authorities say the prisoners were not ill treated, then why did they stop the Bahrain Human Rights Society team to meet the detainees,” said Hassan Mushaima from the Haq Movement of Liberties and Democracy.

Riot police were stationed in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs premises and the open ground opposite the Ras Ruman mosque as a precautionary measure. Traffic was halted and diverted on Isa Al Kaber Avenue and vehicle access was prohibited on all roads leading towards Manama.

Activists waved placards and posters of the detainees while others distributed flyers during the march, which lasted for more than an hour. A sexagenarian was seen holding wooden board displaying tear gas shells and rubber bullets.

An official from the General Prosecution had said the authorities detained 22 men in connection with the incidents. Those detained are being charged for arson attacks and stealing a weapon during the disturbances in December last year.

Al Wefaq Deputy, Jawad Fairouz told the Bahrain Tribune, “ The detainees should be guaranteed a fair trial. The authorities should allow them to meet their families,” he said Braving the cold weather, demonstrators wore mufflers and earmuffs as they marched and waved yellow flags with women protesters following them. The peaceful protest was organised by several political societies and human rights group. The Vice Chairman of the now defunct Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Nabeel Rajab was supervising the protest, which ended at the starting point in Ras Ruman at 5 pm.

There had been a series of protest by families of the detainees outside the Public Prosecution against the alleged torture inflicted on their kin by the authorities.

The authorities have also been reportedly slammed by US based Human Rights Watch and local human rights group.

The Assistant Undersecretary for Legal Affairs at the Ministry of Interior, Brigadier Mohammad Rashid Buhamood, had said that a forensic expert from the Public Prosecution examined the men and there were no signs of torture.

Brigadier Ibrahim Al Ghaith of the Ministry had earlier told the Tribune that his department solved 24 cases since January last year and was investigating eight others. These cover complaints ranging from civil cases to those of mistreatment in prison.

Three International Human rights group will be monitoring the trial of the detainees tomorrow.

The groups are — Human Rights Watch, Defenders International (DI) and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH).

“ I have been assigned along with a UAE lawyer to monitor the court trials. A representative from FIDH has arrived in Bahrain to monitor the proceedings,” said Mohammed Al Maskati, President of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights.

Maskati who is assigned by DI could not monitor the last proceedings as he alleged the authorities had changed the timing of the last hearing from 10 am to 3 pm.

“ I have a permission to attend the hearing which starts at 2 pm tomorrow. We will be preparing a report which will be circulated to International Human Rights Organisation,” he said.