Local Groups activity pack, May 2014

Background information for Mahdi Abu Dheeb’s case

Bahrain is one of the few countries in the Gulf to have a tradition of independent trade unions. These trade unions are non-sectarian and cross the Shia and Sunni communities. Defending the right of workers’ to organise is crucial for the global unions and Bahrain is a priority country of concern for the both the International Trade Union Confederation and the 30-million strong teachers’ global union Education International, with whom we are collaborating closely on the case.

In the UK, the TUC and teacher’s trade unions have been especially supportive of our activism in support of Mahdi Abu Dheeb and the Bahrain Teachers’ Association. Over the Easter weekend during the last two years hundreds of teacher delegates at the conferences of the NUT and NASUWT took part in a photo solidarity action calling for Mahdi to be freed. Scores of activists at our AIUK AGM earlier this month also joined in. In due course we will broadcast the Flickr stream of photos into Bahrain to show solidarity with the hundred and sixty and more teachers who remain sacked and to show our support for Mahdi’s family and friends.

The plight of the BTA also featured in an SMS Pocket Protest on 8 November 2012 when over 3000 appeals were sent to the Ambassador in London.

In February this year, Mahdi Abu Dheeb’s colleague and deputy, Jalila al Salman, visited the UK at the invitation of the teaching unions and she spent time with Amnesty staff and activists. During her visit she repeated her appreciation to Amnesty International: “all your efforts shine a light on human rights abuses in Bahrain. The authorities know that they are in the spotlight and will be held to account for their abuses.”

Mahdi’s dreadful plight also resonates with our upcoming end torture campaign.

According to the NGO Bahrain Watch, the Bahraini government has recently spent at least £21 million on public relations firms to improve its image. The UK is a country of significant influence on Bahrain. Together we can make a difference.

**If you want to reach out to teacher trade unions, or your city’s/county’s trades council please email Shane Enright (Community Organiser – Unions and Workplaces) for contact details shane.enright@amnesty.org.uk**

“Bahrain: Children in a Maze of Injustice (16 December 2013)

http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/MDE11/057/2013/en

 ‘Freedom has a price’: Two years after Bahrain’s uprising (14 February 2013): http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news\_details.asp?NewsID=20635

‘Bahrain: reform shelved, repression unleashed’ (21 November 2012)
http://www.amnesty.org.uk/news\_details.asp?NewsID=20459

For International trade union research on freedom of association and workers’ rights in Bahrain see:

http://www.ei-ie.org/en/websections/content\_detail/6411

http://survey.ituc-csi.org/Bahrain.htm