



Progress And Reform In Bahrain

(NAPSA)—When 35 people tragically lost their lives in the wake of street protests in Bahrain, its rulers decided to deal with the disaster promptly and truthfully.

In an unprecedented move, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa appointed an independent commission of international human rights experts—the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry—to investigate and make recommendations.

The wisdom of this, in contrast to other parts of the Arab world, is reflected in a national dialogue and important recommendations to strengthen democracy and allow peaceful protest in Bahrain.

Bahrain has also been undertaking major human rights reforms: strengthening the laws, providing more effective judicial oversight and better police training—leading American and British police experts have been hired to lead police reform—and supervising what happens to people held in police custody. The International Red Cross has agreed to inspect all the detention facilities in Bahrain to be sure the human rights of detainees are being maintained.

The government proposed that parliament change the law to give greater protection for freedom of expression and assembly and ensure Bahrain's human rights laws are in line with international standards. Already, women are politically empowered to an extent that is rare in the Middle East—there are 11 women out of 40 in the appointed upper chamber.

In his speech on the Independent Commission report, King



Human rights reforms and progress are being made in Bahrain, an important U.S. ally in the Middle East.

Hamad urged all Bahrainis to address mistakes and promote a community based on tolerance, pledging an environment of “a pluralistic, cohesive and prosperous society; a society that guarantees the rule of law and human rights; a society that ensures the tranquil pursuit of opportunities and fulfillment for everyone.”

Bahrain's commitment to human rights reform was reaffirmed when the Independent Commission published its report, which included 33 recommendations for government action and reform. An independent and impartial national commission has been established to implement the commission's recommendations.

The real story in Bahrain is of an Arab government resolving to improve its country's governance, to strengthen judicial procedures, and to entrench human rights in accordance with the best possible international advice.

