

BAHRAIN

A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement

The War Against Democracy

Saddam Hussain and Gulf Tribal Regimes Are Alive and Well

This month Kuwait is embracing itself for the second anniversary of the Iraqi invasion of its territory, a memory that every Kuwaiti likes to forget because of its nightmarish reflections. However, it is almost impossible to ignore that sad episode which had caused unlimited damage not only to Kuwait but to whole Arab and Muslim nations. What makes that anniversary even more sour is the fact that the perpetrator of the crime is still at large and has escaped unscathed from the tragedy that had befallen the Kuwaiti and Iraqi people. Saddam Hussain is alive and well in Baghdad. Furthermore, the Iraqi dictator is beginning to realise the weakness of the alliance which had managed to expel his forces from Kuwait and inflict irreparable damage on Iraq's infrastructure.

When the Iraqi tanks rolled through the streets of Kuwait city on 2nd August 1990 having crossed unchallenged the common border in the early hours of that day, the world's reaction was unanimous in condemning that flagrant aggression. The Gulf regimes passed through a fearful nightmare for several weeks before the United States of America managed to mobilise an allied force unparalleled in recent history. By the end of the year more than half a million troops had encircled the Iraqi occupying forces and were poised for war, a war that almost everyone loathed but appeared unavoidable in light of the American insistence on settling scores with Baghdad's regime. Most Gulf regimes had given up sovereignty over their lands and the allied forces became the unchallenged masters of the land.

Needless to say that the strongest advocate of the war were Kuwait's Al Sabah ruling family who had seen their 250-years rule in the emirate crumble within hours of the invasion. They were subsequently accused by their own people of abandoning the land without any resistance. Apart from the few soldiers who were on the borders at the time of the invasion and who tried to hinder the advance of the invaders no serious challenge was offered. But for few weeks after the occupation had started, young Kuwaiti men took up arms against the Iraqis and stories of brave and daring operations were reported. Meanwhile the Al Sabahs were enjoying the safe havens offered to them by the Saudis in the city of Ta'ef which became their headquarters from which they launched their world-wide appeals. The other Gulf rulers exhibited a united front to the outside world. But old rivalries surfaced behind the scenes. The most serious of these was the demand of the Emir of Qatar to list his dispute with the Al Khalifa of Bahrain on the islands of Huwar on the agenda of the 10th GCC Summit in Doha in December 1990. That meeting was the first of

its kind since the invasion and was thrown into turmoil as a result. The Saudis intervened and succeeded to freeze the dispute for six months during which the two parties would attempt to reach a settlement with the help of the Guardian of the Holy Haramain, King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz. The wrangling of the Bahraini and Qatari Emirs was taking place whilst the war was only two to three weeks way. This behaviour, although not new, caused a feeling of disappointment among diplomats who viewed the whole affair as childish.

Despite the internal disputes the rulers of the Gulf countries managed to concentrate on the issue of the liberation of Kuwait. That solidarity enabled the Gulf alliance to appear as a coherent force although breaches of this unity surfaced on several occasions. Among these was the reception of the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tareq Aziz, by Sultan Qaboos in Muscat at a time when the Arab regimes were divided in their stands vis-a-vis Iraq. The Omanis have always distanced themselves from the Saudi policies and view themselves as rivals to Al Saud. At the same time, the military alliance forged by the United States of America after successful manipulation of the United Nations and its Security Council was going ahead with the military option after the UN gave a deadline of 15th January 1991 for Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait or face war. As the deadline approached tension was rising high not only in the Gulf but elsewhere in the world. Finally a destructive war was waged against Iraq and Kuwait was 'liberated' within six weeks.

The internal disputes amongst the regimes of the Gulf have surfaced again. Since the liberation of Kuwait sixteen months ago, tension has been rising in the region and the world is beginning to wonder what future lies ahead for the region. The Bahrain-Qatar dispute shows no sign of abating. The dispute on the islands of Huwar is on the agenda of the International Court of Justice at the Hague, and a serious debate on the issue by the court is expected towards the end of the year. The relations between Bahrain and Kuwait are not healthy, to say the least. The Al Sabahs have stopped financial aid to Al Khalifa for months and have taken steps to punish Bahraini workers in their country. Last month more than 15 Bahrainis were detained by the Kuwaiti Special Branch, abused, tortured and some of them deported. So far four of them are in Bahrain telling the story of their ordeal to the people and the feelings are rising against the Al Sabahs.

On the anniversary of 17th July marking the end of the monarchy in Iraq, Sultan Qaboos of Oman dispatched a telegram to Iraq's Saddam Hussain congratulating him and expressing good

wishes towards himself. Prior to that, Bahrain's Premier, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman sent Saddam Hussain a telegram to congratulate him on the advent of an Islamic Feast. (See Voice of Bahrain No. 7 of last month). Furthermore, Sheikh Khalifa asked for restoration of relations with Baghdad in an interview with the "Financial Times" on 20th June 1992. An uproar followed in the Gulf and the feelings are rising high especially in the echelons of power of the ruling tribes.

Kuwait is now passing through a difficult phase both financially and politically. Last month the government intervened to settle a serious crisis engulfing its financial empire especially within its foreign investment. Serious corruption was reported and the much-applauded foreign investment is now reported to be less than US\$ 40 bn. Prior to the Iraqi invasion, the figure was in excess of US\$ 100 bn. Criticism has surfaced about the investment policies adopted overseas with many assets being sold at knock-out prices. On the other hand, the internal situation in Kuwait is showing signs of fatigue. Many incidents of shootings and explosions were reported recently. Although the motives behind such acts remain unclear, diplomats believe these acts of violence may be the prelude to suspend the long-awaited elections for the parliament. Fingers of suspicion point to Riyadh as the most likely sponsors of acts of violence as a means to press the Al Sabah to cancel the forthcoming elections. The democratic challenge is now engulfing the ruling tribes of the Gulf, and it is not surprising to see attempts to forestall the Kuwaiti experiment.

Many politicians around the world are now wondering whether the aims of the war to liberate Kuwait were fulfilled. Saddam Hussain is still in power in Baghdad, and his people are pinned down by his merciless campaign to suppress opposition to his rule. The allies have failed to bring about a change of regime in Iraq, leaving Saddam with a free hand to deal with his opponents and continuing to pose a threat to his neighbours. At the same time, issues relating to political reforms in the Gulf are side-tracked and the regimes are racing against time to bring the Kuwaiti experiment to an end. No talk of democracy is permitted in any of the six countries comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council. The American President is busy with his election campaign and expresses little interest in either removing Saddam Hussain or calling for democracy in the Gulf. One is compelled to ask whether any of the aims of the war of the liberation of Kuwait have been achieved. The Iraqi forces have been defeated but Saddam Hussain and his likes have claimed victory!

Zakhem : Indicted for Financial Irregularities

Sam Zakhem, the U.S. Ambassador to Manama from 1986 to 1989 will stand for trial on 12 counts. Mr. Zakhem together with two other associates were indicted by the U.S. Attorney in Denver, Colorado.

The story dates back to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Subsequently, Ambassador Zakhem spearheaded a campaign to help convince the American public that it is in the U.S. best interest to get involved in the conflict. The former envoy headed a group calling itself "Coalition for America at Risk" or COFAR, describing themselves as patriot volunteers aiming at winning support for an active U.S. policy in the Gulf crisis. When the U.S. media uncovered a link between the organization and the Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington, the group disbanded COFAR and established the Freedom Task Force. The association was incorporated in Colorado.

The July 1992 indictment charges that Mr. Zakhem and his two immediate associates took some U.S. \$7.7 million from the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission in the U.S. capital. The group gathered many right wing conservatives and spent \$2.2 million on media appeals and direct mail solicitation.

The key charges are based on the fact that the group failed to reveal its true nature, namely that it represents foreign interests and took the remaining \$5.5 million as profits without disclosing them in their tax returns. They met several members of the U.S. Congress but intentionally hid their association with the Kuwaiti Embassy, hence violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The law requires that Congressmen must be aware of the political interest of such persons. Mr. Zakhem and his associates likewise failed to register with the Justice Department that their two organizations represent foreign government interests. Moreo-

ver, the ex-Ambassador received a big portion of the remaining \$5.5 million but deliberately hid the amount from Internal Revenue Service.

Mr. Zakhem and his two key partners are to stand for trial. The Ambassador is regarded as head of the group. If convicted on all 12 counts, he will be sentenced to up to 40 years behind bars. Mr. Ra'ed Al Rifai, the spokesman for Kuwaiti Embassy in Washington, said that there would be no comments, but he praised Mr. Zakhem's efforts during the Gulf crisis.

Mr. Zakem ran but failed to win the Republican nomination for the Senate in Colorado earlier this year. He is a native of Lebanon. When he was appointed as a US ambassador in Bahrain in 1986, he stayed at a semi-palace in Muqsha's village. One of the first things he undertook was to hold a meeting with the seniors of the village offering to expedite their interests by using his influence with the Khalifa government.

During his work in Bahrain, envoy Zakhem spared no time in gathering U.S. support for Iraq's war effort against Iran. He was a frequent visitor to Saddam Hussein, and played a role in convincing the then president Reagan not to retaliate for Iraq's "mistaken" attack on USS Stark which killed 38 US soldiers. Instead Zakhem pressed the Administration to toughen its stand against Iran. He got what he asked for. Just prior to his leaving Bahrain at the end of his assignment, Mr. Zakhem promised that his son John would one day become the U.S. president. Certainly such hopes are dashed given his father's shattered reputation. In various talk shows in the U.S., Zakhem tried to portray the regime in Bahrain as a close friend of Washington and that Al Khalifa were the first in the Gulf to grant facilities for the U.S. Navy. More importantly, he consistently claimed that the Gulf could not sustain a democratic process.

Bahrain's Trade: A Downward Trend

Bahrain's trade position in the year ending December 31, 1991 compared to 1990 turned from bad to worst. The country's exports of products and services dropped by 27% to BD334.6 million (U.S. \$888 million) while imports rose by BD3.9 million (\$10 million) to BD 452.3 million (\$1,200 million). The trade deficit stood at a record \$312 million representing 35% of the total exports.

The petroleum industry represented 77% of the total exports currency value in '91. This despite oil revenues decline by 31% or BD112.9 million (\$300 million). Non-oil exports fell by 13.2% or BD11.4 million (\$30.2 million). The figures are quite disturbing and alarming. Disturbing in a sense that the oil industry has become very unpredictable in its outcome. No explanation was provided for the sudden decay. Certainly, the poor state of the refinery is partly to blame. The maintenance cost is proving too cumbersome. Recently, the government decided to go ahead with a \$500 million modernization programme despite the nation's pathetic financial status and difficulty in securing a favourable deal.

The plunge of non-oil exports is upsetting. Expectations have persisted that non-petroleum sales would offset the dwindling oil revenues. It remains to be seen if the investment in the aluminum industry would pay off. All regional countries save Kuwait (and Bahrain) are experiencing a steady increase in non-oil exports.

There are substantial capital outflow in the form of remittance by the expatriate community, much to the disappointment of the balance of payments. Reforms by the New Delhi Indian authorities have led to 100% growth in the amount of remittance to India in 1991. The situation is worsened by the plunge in grants from Kuwait, the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia.

The case is so desperate to an extent that Bahrain threatened the fellow GCC members of resuming ties with the Baghdad regime. Bahrain's premier made headline in June throughout the world in his call to review links with the Iraqi dictator. Last month, Kuwait expelled 15 Bahraini workers for unspecified reasons. This is linked to the remarks made by the Prime Minister. The Al Khalifa have hoped that Kuwait would allow some Bahrainis to work in the post-liberation to help with the acute unemployment problem in Bahrain. These Bahrainis were not competing with Kuwaitis because of doing jobs the nationals refrain from taking.

Bahrain's trade with the U.K. is illustrative of the country's merchandise account. In 1991, Bahrain's imports from the U.K. rose by 16% to an equivalent of U.S. \$278.3 million while exports fell by 19.4% to \$73.8 million only. The imbalance in trade will become worse as revenues from oil dwindle. By the end of the century, the problem will become sharper, especially as the revenue from oil makes up some 60% of the national GDP.

Oil Discovery: So Far So Bad

Results of the drilling activity thus far have been frustrating. The first of the three wells drilled by Harken Energy Bahrain has failed to note reserves of a commercial quantity despite the search for 4,000 meters below the ground. Harken is associated with one of President George Bush's sons, and it has been struck with financial wrongdoing. The company says it is determined to continue its effort. Bahrain National Oil Company (BANOCO) chief Mr. Moh'd Saleh al Shaikh announced during the 60th anniversary of the country's oil discovery that \$20 million has been set aside to help in the drilling of 50 inshore wells. Bahrain's only inshore oil well is that of Jebel Dhukan. By the most optimistic estimates conducted by the state-owned BANOCO, the nation's inshore reserves based on current production of 43,000 barrels per day, will be depleted by the year 2003.

Bahrain's oil was discovered in 1932 after Iran but before Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter. However, the country sold most of its oil during the 1960s and early '70s when nominal oil prices were extremely cheap as the producers were controlling the oil flow.

Second Manama Muharraq Causeway Is Delayed Again

The Ministry of Works, Power and Water which is in charge of the second Muharraq causeway project has recently asked the seven bidders to resubmit lower dollar amount for their bids or start bidding for a new design. The project was originally submitted for bidding in 1990 but later postponed by fixing the blame on Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. In January 16 firms were asked to bid but only seven had responded. More importantly, the project's fund was reduced by half to \$46.4 million. The drop in the appropriation will adversely affect various parts of the project, and now traffic signals would replace fly-overs as proposed originally.

The project was initiated because the old causeway linking the capital to Muharraq which includes the international airport badly needs maintenance. This is another example of the hardship the country is undergoing as a result of Al Khalifa mismanagement.

Home Thought

FT Says: Al Khalifa Are Liberal, But Are They?

The Financial Times Newspaper calls it "stable, progressive and liberal", Amnesty International accused it of "the use of prolonged, incommunicado detention, which can facilitate torture and unfair trials of political prisoners". The object of these two contradictory assessments is none but the government of Bahrain. You can make up your mind. Here are some clues.

Infact, the FT report on Bahrain last month failed miserably to sustain the claims of its headlines. Indeed, the Prime Minister, according to the newspaper's reporter Mr. Roger Matthews, is emphatic he will not try to set the pace for political liberalisation. So, it is not liberal. Is it progressive? No, says the reporter, "on the contrary, the traditional family-oriented, paternalistic style of national management shows every sign of persisting". There you are, then, but why? Is it true that "there is little demand for change?" Tell this to the scores of political prisoners who faced trials (more like tragic farces) often presided over by judges from the ruling family, they are eager to defend: Tell this to the families of those who died under torture and maltreatment over the last decade.

The survey on Bahrain, carried out by this reputable businessman's newspaper is full of contradictions and mistakes. You will not be blamed if you get confused. At times you would think an article is describing Sweden, so liberal and so democratic. In other areas, you would imagine that Pol Pot regime of Cambodia is the subject of the analysis. There are fake allegations, too, especially when describing the majority Shia Muslim community. It claims that "many are of Iranian descent". One does not know where did

Mr. Matthews get this classification of the Bahraini Shia from. Could it be from government sources?

The fact is that, the Shia families have lived in the island for hundreds of years before they were invaded in 1782 by Al Khalifa family. They are either indigenous Arab inhabitants or migrants from Najd, Hijaz and Hajar (eastern province of what is now Saudi Arabia). While most Shia families still maintain their links with their relatives on the Arabian side of the Gulf, most of their fellow Sunni Muslims come from Iran. This is not a statement of race supremacy, but an attempt to establish a historical fact.

In any case, Al Khalifa ruling family is not duly concerned with religion or origin. Its main preoccupation is to cling to power and silence any opposition to its practices of abusing this power. Witness the report of Amnesty International cited above. On page 63 of this 1992 report, it documents the case of Dr. Abdul Latif Al Mahmood. An assistant professor at Bahrain University, Dr. Al Mahmood is a prominent Sunni scholar. He was arrested on 14th December 1991 for giving a lecture at Kuwait University on the Future Perspectives of the GCC. Although he was subsequently released after spending two weeks in jail, and following immense international pressure, he is now barred from teaching and preaching. Somehow, he is lucky, by Bahraini standards. Others are left to rot in sub-human jails for a long time and are still there. Some liberalism.

What is more worrying about the Financial Times Survey (14th July 1992) is their relentless and almost dogmatic attempts to find excuses for the Bahraini authority's failures, blunt violation of human rights and the lack of any political reforms. While the government's prob-

lems are clear facts and figures, the messages implied by the paper are more jumble bumble. Thus, while unemployment is estimated by Western diplomats, as mentioned by FT, to be running at up to 20 per cent, it is claimed by the paper that local people dislike particular forms of employment and private sector jobs!! Now, we understand why Bahraini graduates wash cars and work as porters at the main market in Manama, while foreigners from sixty countries represent more than fifty per cent of the work force.

Moreover, one article in the survey states that the "well-trained and British-advised security forces contain the threat". Everybody in Bahrain knows how these forces contain threats; torture, mass arrests, killing, deportation and all forms of fearful methods. You would think that if they were "British-advised (British-managed more precisely), they would promote freedom of expression and institutionalise opposition. No. Infact, "Bahrain is not tempted to make even modest political experiments", says one Freudian slip.

It is hard to comprehend, why would a publication as respectable as the Financial Times goes to a great length to justify a tribal dictatorship like Al Khalifa family. Bahrain is not even rich. Out of four pages of sheer drivel, there was only the equivalent of one page of advertisements, unless all the articles are paid for. In that case, we apologise for Mr. Roger Matthews, and his co-author, Mr. Mark Nicholson.

What on earth is wrong with the West? Where are the values of freedom, democracy and respect of human rights? One may understand why diplomats and businessmen in the West are protecting their chums in the Arab world. But, why journalists?

Ordeal of Bahraini Nationals in Kuwait

In the early hours of Sunday 28th June 1992 a massive "security" operation was launched by members of the Kuwaiti Special Branch in which many Bahraini nationals were seized. The raid was both unprovoked and unwarranted. In all, 15 people were arrested and taken from their homes to the new State Security Headquarters. They are; Muhammad Abbas, Khalil Ibrahim, Hussain Ali Hassan, Muhammad Redha Ghuloom, Mansoor Abdul Rasool, Abdulla Ibrahim Al Khal, Muhammad Abdul Redha, Mustafa Ghuloom, Hadi Al Sayyed Abdulla, Abdulla Muhammad Abdulla, Jassim Mansoor Hassan, Sayed Ali Muhammad Ali, Ibrahim Ali, Abdul Barr Abdul Redha and Saeed Ibrahim Al Khal.

The arrests were carried out in the most vicious way, during which beating, swearing and other kinds of abuses were used. The night raiders sifted through books, magazines, newspapers, ...etc. but nothing of a suspicious nature

was found. The books found at the house were of a cultural and educational nature. But interrogation continued with emphasis on sectarian affiliation and religious beliefs. The tactics employed by the security men included beating, swearing and other forms of humiliation. The Bahrainis remembered the ordeal of the Palestinians immediately after the liberation of Kuwait. It is reported that long-term effects of the torture are unavoidable.

Apparently, the Interior Ministry which had failed to do anything substantial prior to the Iraqi invasion two years ago is trying to build up an empire of fear similar to that created by Saddam Hussain in Iraq.

This time, it chose Bahraini labourers who had come to Kuwait to play a role in reconstructing the country in a spirit of solidarity. The intensive interrogation and the severe torture they had to endure convinced them they had been wrong to come to Kuwait, and to

possess innocent motives. Although many Bahrainis do not share their government's attitudes and policies, it seems likely that this time at least Bahraini expatriates are paying the price of inter-tribal disputes. In 1986, Bahraini workers and students in Qatar were subjected to similar, though less harsh treatment by Al Thani's secret service.

The group was ordered to leave the country within a week, and their contracts with their employers were terminated. Most of them have now arrived in Bahrain and are recovering from their nightmares in the post-liberation Kuwaiti cells. Tempers are running high in Bahrain and people feel betrayed by the Kuwaiti government, especially the Al Sabah ruling family. They also express dissatisfaction with the lack of reaction from their own Al Khalifa regime. No lessons seem to have been learnt from the ordeal of the occupation of Kuwait. That is the sour fact which every national in the Gulf has to swallow.

Amnesty International's Report 1992

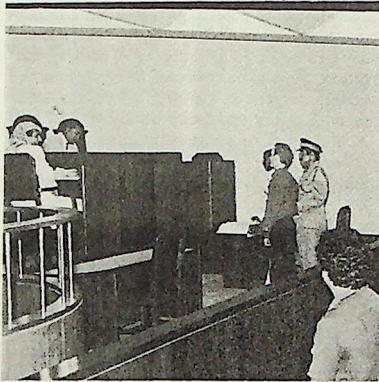
Bahrain: Human Rights Violations Continue

The human rights organisation, Amnesty International, has published its annual report of 1992. The report highlights violations of human rights in many countries of the world. In this issue, the special section on Bahrain is reproduced without comments:

Dozens of suspected government opponents were detained without charge or trial early in the year and held for several months. They included possible prisoners of conscience. Other government opponents were brought to trial and between 80 and 90 political prisoners sentenced after unfair trials in previous years continued to be imprisoned. Members of majority Shia community continued to be subjected to arbitrary arrests and detentions without trial on political grounds, particularly during the early part of the year at the time of the Gulf War. Dozens were arrested in Sitra, Bani Jamra and Ras Romman, and held under the 1974 Decree Law on State Security measures which empowers the Minister of the Interior to authorise administrative detention without charge or trial for renewable periods of up to three years (see Amnesty International Report 1990). Abdulla Fakhroo, aged 60, was arrested at the end of January and detained without charge or trial for over four days, apparently because he was suspected of opposing Bahrain's involvement in the Gulf war. In March, two Shia clerics, Al Sayyed Alawi Al Biladi and Al Shaikh Ali 'Ashoor, were briefly detained following a peaceful demonstration held in Manama to protest against Iraq's treatment of Grand Ayatullah Kho'ei. Most of those held in administrative detention were believed to have been released by the end of the year.

Other Bahrainis were detained when they returned to the country from abroad, apparently because they were related to political prisoners or government opponents. Some, who appeared to be prisoners of conscience, were held for days or weeks and then expelled from Bahrain. They included Atiqah Ali Ibrahim, the wife of a political prisoner serving a 15-year sentence in Bah-

rain. She was arrested with her two children at Bahrain International Airport when she returned to the country from Syria and detained for one week before being forcibly returned to Syria. In September, however, she was allowed to enter Bahrain and remain in the country. On 14th December Dr. Abdul Latif Al Mahmood, assistant professor of Islamic Studies at Bahrain University was arrested at the airport following his return from delivering a lecture on future perspectives for unity among Gulf Cooperation Council member states at a seminar organised by the University of Kuwait. Dr. Al Mahmood, a prominent Sunni scholar, was held until 28th December, when he was released on bail.



Bahrain Courts: Below International Standards

Between 80 and 90 political prisoners sentenced after unfair trials in previous years remained imprisoned throughout the year. They included possible prisoners of conscience. Most were allegedly connected with banned political groups, such as the Islamic Front for Liberation of Bahrain, the Islamic Enlightenment Society, and Hezbollah, Party of God. They included several dozen people sentenced in connection with an alleged coup attempt in 1981 (see Amnesty International Reports 1989-1991). At least 30 other political prisoners were believed to have been released in March and April after completing all, or all but a few months, of their sentences. Those freed included Tawfiq Al Mahroos and several alleged of the Bahrain National Liberation Front who had been jailed after an unfair trial in 1987 (see Amnesty International Reports 1988 and 1989). Others released later in the year included Omran Hussain Omran (see Amnesty International Report 1990).

At least 20 people were tried on political charges before the Supreme Civil Court of Appeal whose procedures fall far short of international standards for a fair trial (see Amnesty International Report 1990). Abdul Adhim Al Rayyes was sentenced early in 1991 to one-year imprisonment but was released as he had already spent a longer period in custody. The trial began of about 15 alleged members of a banned

political organisation who had been held since June 1990 and were said to have been tortured or ill-treated to make them confess. All but one were released on bail in October and their trial was still continuing at the end of the year.

Political prisoners continued to protest against harsh prison conditions and several hunger strikes took place. Conditions reportedly improved in some respects later in the year and some prisoners were transferred to hospitals for treatment.

Amnesty International sought information about possible prisoners of conscience, and expressed concern to the government about the use of prolonged incommunicado detention, which can facilitate torture, and unfair trials of political prisoners. It continued to urge the government to ratify the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, the convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and other international human rights treaties, and to apply their provisions in law and practice to safeguard human rights.

In April Amnesty International submitted information about its concern in Bahrain for United Nations (UN) review under a procedure established by Economic and Social Council Resolutions 728F/1503, for confidential consideration of communications about human rights violations. In May Amnesty International published a summary of its concerns in recent years in a report; Bahrain; Violations of Human Rights. In June the Minister of Interior wrote to Amnesty International in response to the report and the Organisation's submission to the UN. He said that Amnesty International's allegations were "malicious rumour and disinformation". He stated that there were no prisoners of conscience in Bahrain and that "allegations of incommunicado detention and ill-treatment are utterly refuted. He also invited Amnesty International to visit Bahrain, but by the end of the year no date for the visit had been agreed.

US Bases In Bahrain: Pocket Money For Al-Khalifa

More information was contained in a report published by the US Foreign Ministry on the latest agreement signed with the Al Khalifa government in October 1991. The report explains that the agreement grants unlimited access to Bahraini facilities allowing the US forces to store equipment and establish a central command headquarter for use in any future (oil) crises.

The report also mentions other facilities already available to the Americans, such as the running of Bahrain School by the American Ministry of Defence. However, the report failed to mention the amount of money paid to the Al Khalifa as a reward for converting Bahrain into an American military base.

Manama-Doha Rift Intensifies

The Qatari Foreign Ministry distributed confidential minutes of a meeting held on 25th December 1990 between Qatari and Bahraini officials in the presence of Saudi mediators. The minutes state that if by end of May 1991 a solution was not reached then both parties may file a case with the International Court of Justice at the Hague.

The Qataris also released a copy of their letter to the International Court of Justice dated 8 July 1991. However, Bahraini officials indicated that they were outraged by the Qatari move and expected them to jointly submit the case.

The Court called upon the Qataris to submit details of their case on 28 September and the Bahrainis to submit their replies on 29 December 1992.