

BAHRAIN

A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement

Arrests Are Not the Answer

The Saudis Have Failed to Understand the Message of the "Committee"

When Abdulla Al Mas'ari, an elderly man in his sixties, announced the formation of the Committee to Defend the Legitimate Rights in Saudi Arabia early last month, he might have envisaged a smooth propaganda campaign given that the Americans are theoretically not opposed to such moves. He must have, by now, realised that was an illusion. In a country where the regime is sensitive to anything that may be interested as a challenge to the authoritarian rule of the House of Al Saud, the formation of a human rights group is seen as a declaration of war against the system. After all, the regime views the issue of human rights only in the context of what preserves the system and what threatens it. The use of sword for the beheading the people and cutting their hands and feet is the norm in Saudi Arabia, and the King has an absolute power which many not be challenged by any other body, be it governmental or public.

The human rights group is now known to have existed in response to the continuation of abuses of the most basic human values. For the last sixty years, the people of Saudi Arabia have been subjected to the most ruthless regime which has claimed countless lives. It was considered the most backward in the Arab world for many decades. Then the oil boom led to unlimited financial income to the Arabian oasis enabling the government in Riyadh to invest a sizeable proportion of the oil income in political and media projects. Following the death of President Nasser of Egypt in 1970, the political arena in the Arab world remained without leadership for few years until the new financial power of the Saudis paved the way for political domination unparalleled in recent years. Together with a gigantic media empire, the two arms enabled the Saudis a leading role surpassing any other Arab country. The signing of the Camp David peace treaty with Israel by Egypt removed the latter from the political map of the Arab world leaving a vacuum which the Saudis were more than willing to fill.

Outside propaganda against the Saudis became negligible compared with the newly-established mouthpieces throughout the Arab world, and the oil wealth served as a catalyst against the immediate emergence of any political challenge inside the country. The last twenty years that followed witnessed the most brutal campaign against dissidents inside Saudi Arabia and outside it. In 1981, for example, a notable writer, Nasser Al Saeed, whose book "the History of Al Saud" infuriated the rulers in Riyadh was snatched by a leading Palestinian group from Beirut and handed to the Saudis for the sum of US\$ 5 million. The financial power

of Saudi Arabia was becoming the crucial factor in the formation of the Arab political situation. Huge programmes of armaments were launched and almost all decent writers in the Arab world were bought, leaving no room for criticism for the Saudi monarchy. The continuation of the Iraq-Iran war which was largely financed by Riyadh helped polarise the situation in favour of the Saudis. The two largest powers in the region; Iraq and Iran were locked in an unwinnable war to the advantage of the Saudis which kept looking at the war with satisfaction.

The end of that war coincided with wider political changes in the world. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which had been dominated by the Saudis and whose existence was owed to the war began to exhibit visible cracks with the eruption of various border disputes. The last of these was the Saudi-Qatari dispute which almost led to an all out war. Last month, the Saudi Defence Minister, Prince Sultan, was in Doha trying to salvage the situation after everything else had failed. A new political equilibrium was taking shape. Saddam Hussain snatched the opportunity to launch his ill-fated invasion of Kuwait with the anticipation that little care would be given to the issue. That event turned out to be short-lived and could not mend the cracks in the main body of the GCC. No sooner had the war ended in 1991 than did the whole saga of internal feuding within the GCC countries start. The Bahraini-Qatari dispute came to the open in a serious manner. The issue of Al Khafos border dispute between Riyadh and Doha dominated the scene for several weeks causing serious dents to the image of Saudi Arabia and the whole GCC.

It is this background that had put the seeds of discontent in Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti episode was expected to signal a shift in the internal policies of the Gulf regimes especially the Saudis. So far little seems to have come out of it at the level of political reforms. Kuwait managed to pull through the crisis and emerge more confident to re-launch its democratic experiment, and the first post-war parliament came to existence last autumn after an election campaign that infuriated the monarchy in Riyadh. The Kuwaitis attempted to play down the event but in a small and interacting arena like the Gulf that proved impossible. With last month's elections in Yemen, the Saudis became sandwiched between two neighbours with a reasonable experience in democracy. The Saudis have all along attempted to put up a brave face by reiterating their exhausted argument that they had distinctive traditions and customs that do not permit democratic prac-

tices. The Saudi nationals who have become educated and are well aware of what happens in the outside world, thanks to the most advanced satellite systems, could not stomach the continuation of the old-fashioned policies.

The last two years have seen a popular awakening in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and determination to achieve some rights which they are, hitherto denied. Mosques became launching pads for fiery sermons and calls for respects of human rights and political reforms. Universities reacted actively to the calls and lectures and leaflets became popular in a country that had been kept in seclusion for decades. Arrests were made, but to no avail. The educated elites of Saudi Arabia were so incensed by the unrepentant and unyielding official remarks that people such as the seven dignitaries whose wealth and well being would normally prevent them from taking part in political activities reacted angrily and challenged the regime in an open way. To declare the formation of a human rights group in Saudi Arabia is tantamount to declaration of war against the state.

The authorities, in their customary manner, reverted to the official religious body; the Commission of the High Scholars, to declare the committee illegal. The verdict was immediately used by the government to dismiss the seven people from their posts and close the offices of those who were not official employees. Moreover, scores of people who declared their support to the group were rounded up and put in jail. The notoriety of the Saudi jails is beyond description. A virtual state of emergency is now prevailing in cities such as the capital, Riyadh and Qaseem, from where the majority of the signatories had descended. The political situation is tense and reaction of the allies of the Saudis has still to come. The Americans who had held a meeting with the opposition group have so far confined their reaction to defending that meeting and have refrained from condemning the government's action outright.

The event has highlighted the urgent need for the overhaul of the political system in the Gulf which is long overdue. If people are to be arrested simply because they sign a petition calling for political reforms and respect of human rights as had happened in both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, then there is nothing sacred in the life of man on this earth. Indeed political stability is the ultimate aim of anyone who has interest in the region but what price this stability? It is time to reassess the priorities of the political dealing and wheeling in the Gulf region if a human catastrophe is to be averted.

Long Prison Sentence is a Prelude to Deportation

On 30th April 1993, a young Bahraini citizen who had spent 13 years of his life in prisons for his political views was deported to Syria. He had just completed 5 years in jail which was his last sentence. This is certainly contrary to all policies and practices of civilised nations and is bound to have serious consequences.

Amnesty International is concerned that he has served his sentence, and if the authorities have any reason to deport him they should make this clear and allow him proper opportunity to defend himself in a court of law.

Al-Sayyid Hashem al-Musawi, was arrested in 1988 on political grounds and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. He had finished serving his sentence in early April 1993 but has been kept in custody. Recently he was reportedly asked to sign some documents forbidding him to engage in political activities. His family was told by the Ministry of the Interior to choose a country to which he would be sent.

Amnesty International gave the following background information to the case:

"The forcible exile of Bahraini nationals suspected of political opposition activities remains one of Amnesty International's concerns in the country. While dozens of Bahraini nationals who had been forcibly exiled, apparently for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression, were permitted to return to Bahrain after living abroad for many years, many others were not.

According to information received by Amnesty International (AI), victims of forcible exile from Bahrain are frequently given no reason for their deportation and are denied the opportunity to appeal the decision to expel them or challenge its legality through the courts. Not only is such practice in contravention of inter-

national human rights standards (Geneva accords), but it would also appear to be in violation of Article 17 (c) of Bahrain's Constitution, which states that it is forbidden to expel or to prevent Bahraini citizens from returning to Bahrain."

Following Mr Al Musawi's deportation AI issued a statement extracts of which are as follows:

Amnesty International has learned that al-Sayyid Hashem al-Musawi, a Bahraini national, was deported to Syria on Friday 30 April 1993.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters in English or your own language: - expressing regret at the deportation of al-Sayyid Hashem al-Musawi;

- urging the authorities to reconsider their decision and to allow him to return to Bahrain.

APPEALS TO

1) His Highness, Shaikh Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, P.O.Box 555, The Amiri Court, Rifa'a Palace, Rifa'a, Bahrain

Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 8666 Qasar BN, 8500 Qasar BN

Salutation: Your Highness
2) His Excellency, Al-Shaikh Mohammed Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior, P.O.Box 13, Manama, Bahrain

Telegrams: Minister of Interior, Manama, Bahrain

Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 833 ALAMAN BN

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Al-Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Prime Minister of Bahrain, PO Box 1000, Manama, Bahrain and to diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country.

Henderson Defeats Another Rival

Ian Henderson won the day when Jim Bill (another Briton) retired last December from his position as Director General of Public Security. Then, the rival was a member of the royal family, Ibrahim bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, who was the deputy of Jim Bill (at least by name). The deputy was supposed to take over upon the retirement of the director. However, the former was ousted and no mentioning of his name in media any more and more importantly Ian Henderson was put in charge.

After the demise of Ibrahim Al-Khalifa, another rival to Henderson surfaced, Mr.

Hasan Isa Al-Hasan. The latter heads the Training and Operations Directorate responsible for anti-riot squad, protection of diplomats and members of the royal family amongst others. Mr. Al-Hasan was expected to gain his promotion for deputy-directorship. Instead, Henderson accused Al Hasan of levying from the Indian and Pakistani expatriates imported to work in the Interior Ministry an amount of BD 600 (\$1600) each, and therefore, Al-Hasan may be charged and tried. Whether he will be tried or not is immaterial. Henderson managed to get rid of another rival and maintain his position as absolute secret ruler.

Many OBUs Are Leaving Bahrain

The banking sector is one of the strategic options which was taken to diversify the economy. The viability of this sector is a concern nowadays.

The first bank opened in Bahrain was today's Standard Chartered Bank back in 1921. Only in 1957 did National Bank of Bahrain open its doors. British-administered Currency Board was in charge of the financial affairs during the 1950s to early 1970s. In 1965, the Dinar was established to replace the Indian Gulf Rupee. Bahrain Monetary Agency better known as the BMA was founded in 1973. There are several forms of banking in Bahrain including commercial and investment. But of all, Offshore Banking Units activity-the subject of this report-is the most outstanding.

Beginning 1975, the BMA through its mostly foreign advisors, thought cleverly of attracting a special form of banking into Bahrain. The decision was prompted by the eruption of civil war in Lebanon. Banks leaving Beirut found an extraordinary welcome in Manama. The authorities attracted OBUs; these are banks that are based in Bahrain but conduct business mostly beyond Bahrain's coastline. The Lebanese war and wealth accumulated from the rising oil prices of 1973-75 made Bahrain a natural place.

All in all, the Bahraini officials invited the banks before others, hence achieved results. Still, it is true to point out that declining oil forced the planners to engage into strategic

thinking. The first OBU was Citibank, still regarded as one of the most respected banks in the region. By 1982, the OBUs rose to 72 and then to the peak of 75 a year later. In 1980, Arab Banking Corporation or ABC decided to incorporate in Bahrain following the other giant, Gulf International Bank or GIB. Nonetheless, ABC is having hard times due to Libya's one third ownership while GIB is suffering from Iraqi bad loans and stake.

The decline of OBUs started in the mid 1980s. From 75 in 1983, the number of OBUs fell to 68 in 1986 and to 56 in 1989; as of 1991 there were 47 OBUs and worse yet 44 in 1992. The trend is driving the regime crazy.

There are many reasons for the deterioration. Partly this was due to competition from the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia (contrary to the officially stated policy of GCC economic integration). Dubai has been attracting banks. The authorities have seen banks closing their offices in Manama citing poor Gulf economy only to open a branch in Dubai. In fact, Dubai is infamous in Bahrain. Bahraini press is not friendly to Dubai and anyone who had been associated with Dubai and its ex-ruler.

Also, for years, Saudi Arabia firms have been depending on Bahrain banking but that changed in the 1980s when King Fahad decided to allow foreign banks engaging in joint venture with Saudi banks, hence the Al Saudi Al Fransi Bank and many others. Other reasons include bad loans, regional wars and tensions

among GCC states including Bahrain and Qatar, the U.A.E. and Oman, and Saudi Arabia against the U.A.E., Kuwait, Oman and lastly Qatar. Bahraini press makes no mentioning of departing banks but runs lengthy news stories of banks opening fresh branches.

OBUs have been helping the economy considerably. Many buildings in Bahrain's fashionable Diplomatic Area belong to the diverse financial institutions. Some several hundred are employed in the banks though the regime deceives the public into believing that thousands of Bahrainis work for the banks; salaries in the OBUs have always been the most competitive and dream for many. The highest salaried person in Bahrain in 1987 was an American banker with U.S. \$ 250,000 annual pay. Many of the hotels are dependent on business brought about by the banks; so are the restaurants and telecommunications.

In 1989 and in order to send a strong signal to the banking community the Amir elevated the Governor of the BMA to the level of a minister. Certainly the message was noted but not appreciated. There are talks of installing a member of the ruling family as Governor of the powerful BMA.

The OBUs made up some 13% of the economy in 1982 but only half that towards the end of the 1980s. Total assets in the OBUs are at least 15 times more than the size of the domestic economy. Still, total assets of the OBUs have been dropping from some \$72.6 billion in 1989 to less than \$60 billion in 1990 as a result of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait.

The Ever-Widening Gulf Between Them

The Quest for Stability in the Gulf is Marred by Internal Problems

The Gulf region is passing through difficult times with internal as well as external challenges posing real threat to its stability. The end of the Gulf war has not ended the crisis engulfing the region, and the ongoing wrangling among all those with interest in the Gulf is not making life any easier. In order to put events in context, several developments have been highlighted here:

1. Saudi Arabia, the largest of the six states comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is undergoing political and social changes that may threaten its elusive calm. Last month's events can only add to the fears that the status quo there may not survive for long. Signing a petition or forming a human rights committee is a normal occurrence in other countries but not in Saudi Arabia. In a country where authoritarian rule is the order of the day such initiatives could lead their sponsors to their abrupt ends. The Saudi government have, over the past two decades invested heavily in projects that have often yielded results in times of crisis. The Saudi media empire is so vast that no other Arab country could compete with it. Thus when the seven sponsors of the human rights committee started their campaign their calls fell on deaf ears as far as Arab media is concerned. Apart from few commentaries in western media, the committee found itself cornered in Riyadh with no prospect of an immediate coverage of the developments related to their venture.

However, the insistence of the group on getting on with their work despite the immense pressure from the government and the religious bodies aligned with its policies, is a sign that the situation in the Kingdom may never remain the same again. It is expected that, as time passes, more converts to the cause of the committee may make the task of Al Saud more difficult. This may be so especially in light of the fact King Fahd has shown himself unable to take major decisions in difficult situations. Even during Iraqi occupation of Kuwait it was the Americans who pressed the Saudis to escalate the situation and let it go for a full scale war with the Iraqis. Some observers believe that King Fahd's days may now be numbered especially that the chain of claimants to the throne is so long that it is impossible to let him enjoy the kingship for the rest of his natural life span.

2. The Yemeni elections that took place last month is a new dimension whose impact is yet to be felt in the region especially in Saudi Arabia, Yemen's immediate neighbour and her historic protagonist. In a region which has, so far, managed to prevent modern-style parliamentary experiment, what happened in Yemen two years after the unification has stunned the ruling families and caused a serious debates in political and intellectual circles. How on earth could a Saudi national with a doctorate from an American university stomach the fact that he is denied the most basic right of political participation whilst the poor Yemeni illiterate enjoys a full-scale political participation unhindered by spent excuses? Furthermore, more than fifteen months have now passed since King Fahd promised his people to form a consultative council

whose members were to be hand-picked by the king himself, but no progress has been here. The only thing King Fahd has so far done is to appoint Mohammed Ibrahim bin Jibair as the chairman of the council. He has already started his main function; meeting foreign guests and pretending to represent the council, which is no more than an empty building.

Other countries in the region are not in a better position. Bahrain, for example, is in a state of internal tension following the signing of a petition by six people calling for the restoration of the constitution and the calling for elections. The group is under severe pressure to rescind that petition and stop agitating people by encouraging them to ask for their constitutional rights. One of the sponsors of that petition, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri is banned from public appearances and is under the threat of deportation. Thus in a region where signing a petition, or declaring the formation of a human rights group is viewed as a serious crime, elections the Yemeni way is bound to have serious consequences. The Kuwaiti elections had caused a furor last year and led to deterioration in relations between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and are under constant threat.

3. Another sensitive issue in the Gulf region is that of security. President Mubarak of Egypt was on a tour to the Gulf last month to convince the rulers to activate the military part of the "Damascus Declaration" an alliance proposed immediately after the war with Iraq comprising Egypt, Syria and the six GCC countries. Mubarak's message was based on exaggerating Iran's threat to the stability of the GCC states, a notion which is not believed by these states. Although some promises were made to make part of the US\$ 10 billion promised by the GCC states at Kuwait's summit in 1991 available to both Egypt and Syria, Mubarak appears to have failed in his mission. This is partly due to Iran's immediate reaction to Mubarak's visit by sending her Foreign Minister, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, to the GCC capitals extending his country's cordial relations with them. The Americans and British were, not un-surprisingly, cool about the whole episode, and Washington was quick to reassert her commitment to defend the rulers of the Gulf states. Furthermore, joint manoeuvres were conducted in Kuwait with French, British and American forces to stress the western role in the security of the Gulf. For a long time to come, this issue will remain the hot cake and differences will remain as to what constitutes a threat to the security of the Gulf.

4. The Gulf states are passing through one of the most severe financial periods since the mid seventies when the oil boom made the region better off. During the Gulf War Saudi Arabia paid out US\$ 55 billion to the allies towards the war efforts. The 1993 balance sheet is expected to show a deficit of US \$7.4 which the government hopes to cover by loans. Bahrain's budget deficit for the current financial year is expected to exceed US\$ 100 million, and the government is still looking for ways of covering it. Kuwait's deficit for the year 93/94 is estimated at US\$ 6.6 million. The govern-

ment is proposing reductions in the public spending in the region of 10 percent. Members of parliament have called for a reduction in spending on the lavish construction projects and armament programmes. In 1991/92 the deficit was over US\$ 5.33 because of the costs of reconstruction programmes, pay rises for the public sector, and the scrapping of the hard debts amounting to more than US\$20 billion.

These financial difficulties are not helped by the decline in oil revenues which have been dwindling over the last decade due to overproduction principally by Saudi Arabia. It will take a good effort and self discipline to bring these economic problems under control. The worsening internal political situation in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and possibly United Arab Emirates and Qatar increases the pressure on the governments and makes their position untenable.

5. The inter-Gulf relations are not helping the cause of stability of the region. The border disputes are a cause for serious concerns and only little is being done to address these problems seriously. To underline the seriousness of the matter, last month's visit by Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz, the Saudi Defence Minister to Qatar could not bridge the gap between Riyadh and Doha on the issue of the border dispute that had erupted in a bloody confrontation last year. Kuwait, on the other hand, is having nightmares with the emergence of Iraq Iraq's Saddam again as a powerful military power with the connivance of the very people who had taken part in the "Desert Storm" operation barely two years ago. An electronic wall is being constructed by western companies along the Kuwaiti-Iraqi border as a means of minimising cross-border incursions which are making life difficult for the Kuwaitis.

It is very difficult to be optimistic about a stable Gulf in the face of governmental refusal to come to terms with the public demands for more participation and respect of human rights. Unless the internal front is solidified, external threats will always look bigger than reality.

Unwillingness and Inability to Combat Unemployment

No more serious problem faces the authorities today than that of the extremely high unemployment rates. Here is why.

In 1991, Bahrain had a total population of 518,243 of which 63% or 326,493 were Bahrainis and the balance expatriate. More importantly, in 1991 again, of the labour force of 201,800 only 90,100 or 44.6% were Bahrainis and the rest represented the non-Bahrainis. The CIA puts unemployment at 10% or some 9,100 but all Bahrainis know that the actual figure must be much higher. In early 1993, a local magazine (Al Mawakif of 11 January 1993) spoke of 20,000 Bahrainis with no jobs or 22% of those eligible to work. The rate is closer to the realities. Still, only 28% Bahrainis belonged to the work force in 1991. At least 37% of the Bahrainis are below 14 years of age. They

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The 1974 State Security Law is a Tool of Repression

The opposition has always called for the abolition of the State Security Law issued in 1974. What is the background? The roots of the problem goes back to the fifties. Between 1954-56 the national movement managed to unite the various sections of the society and called for modernising the political system through the introduction of parliamentary democracy. The British government (Bahrain was effectively controlled by Britain until 1971) sided with the ruling family and deployed the British army. The uprising was suppressed, its leaders were deposed to St. Helena, the state of emergency was declared and the special branch was established.

Bahrain was the centre of a relatively free press and was the envy of others in the Gulf. But between 1956 to 1965 not a single publication was permitted. In 1965 another uprising took place. Again the British army was deployed, the special branch was restructured (Ian Henderson was installed as its chief) and a new law was issued replacing the state of emergency laws. The 1965 Law of Public Security was issued by the Ruler of Bahrain and its Dependencies on 17 April 1965, stated the following:

1. This law shall be known as the Law of Public Security - 1965 and shall go into effect on 22 April 1965.

2. If, in the opinion of the Ruler and at any time, a crime is committed or is about to be committed by a person or group of persons which is sufficiently grave and dangerous to threaten the national security, the Ruler may put Article 3 of this Law into effect until further notice.

3 (1). If a proclamation is made concerning the previous article, the Ruler may, as long as this article is operative, issue any orders which he deems essential for the public good, safety and security.

3 (2). Whatever orders are established under Section (1) of this Article will supersede any contravening laws.

Then another order followed on 22 April 1965 titled "Proclamation According to the Law of Public Security-1965" stating the following:

We, 'Isa bin Sulman al-Khalifa, Ruler of Bahrain and its Dependencies, proclaim on this date, 22 April 1965, the following:

Since we believe that a crime has been committed or is about to be committed which falls under Article 2 of the Law of Public Security-1965, we therefore proclaim that by the authority given to us under said Law, we hereby put Article 3 of said Law into effect. It shall remain in effect until we withdraw it.

Public Security Order No.1 According to Article 3 of the Law of Public Security - 1965

Considering our proclamation of 22 April 1965 and in according with the Law of Public Security-1965, we, 'Isa bin Sulman al-Khalifa, order the following:

1. This Order shall be called Public Security Order No.1/1965 and shall go into effect beginning 22 April 1965.

2. If in the opinion of the Ruler the detention of any person is in the interest of public security, then the Ruler may issue an order for the detention of said person.

3. The detention of any person under this Order shall be considered legal, and said person shall be detained at a place designated by the Ruler and according to the Regulation issued by him.

Bahrainis lived under the mercy of these rules and Ian Henderson until Britain withdrew from the Gulf and Bahrain was proclaimed

independent in 1971. Then, the ruler needed some public support against persisting claim for Bahrain's sovereignty by the ex-Shah of Iran. Constitution was drafted and a Constituent Assembly was formed to debate it. A National Assembly was elected later on comprising 30 elected members and 14 ex-officio ministers. Bahrainis thought the gap between the government (though dominated by the ruling family) and the governed has been bridged. But after a year an half the ruling family couldn't withstand public accountability and decided that parliament was a nuisance. Although the Constitution specifies the sharing of the legislative power between the ruler (Amir) and National Assembly, the parliamentarians were surprised to read in the official gazette a new law issued on 22 October 1974 by the Amir, stating the following "Decree Law on State Security Measures".

Article 1: If there is serious evidence that a person has made statements, committed acts, undertaken activities or external security of the country, or to the country's religious or national interests, or to its fundamental structure, or social or economic systems, or amount to discord, which affects, or could affect, relations between the people and the government, or between the various institutions of the state, between sectors of the people, those working in establishments and companies, or which aim to assist in the commission of acts of sabotage or harmful propaganda, or the dissemination of heretical principles, then the Interior Minister is empowered to order the arrest of the said person, place him in one of Bahrain's prisons, inspect him, inspect his residence, inspect his work-place and take whatever necessary to gather evidences and complete investigations. The period of detention shall not exceed three years....

Article 2: Courts sessions shall always be held in-camera, and no one is permitted to attend except the defendant, his representative and representative of prosecutor general. The sessions shall be held at the Supreme Court of Appeal...

Article 7: This law replaces the Law of Public Security and Public Security Order No.1.

The decree was signed by the Amir (ruler), the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister. At the preamble of the decree, it was stated that the law had been issued in accordance with Article 38 of the constitution. Article 38 states that "If anything occurred between the recesses of the National Assembly sessions or when the latter had been dissolved, the Amir is empowered to issue decrees which shall have the force of law, provided that these are not in violation of the constitution or the financial estimates indicated in the budget law.

These decrees must then be submitted to the National Assembly within fifteen days after issuance, if the National Assembly is functioning. Otherwise, the decrees must be submitted to the first session of the (newly-elected) assembly, following the previous one that had been dissolved or completed its term. In case the decrees were not presented to the Assembly, then they lose their legal status retrospectively without the need of another decree to state such invalidity. If the decrees were presented to the National Assembly and had been refused, then all provisions would be invalid retrospectively, and matters must be reviewed to cancel the legal effects resulting from these decrees".

The Amir disregarded all this when the National Assembly opposed the humiliating

State Security Law and dissolved the National Assembly in August 1975. The opposition therefore, has no option but to insist on the implementation of the constitution and invalidation of the State Security Law. The Al-Khalifa are cornered and have no choice but to comply with the constitution.

Unemployment .. Continued From Page 3

are yet to enter the working force. Hundreds of those graduating from the colleges and schools face uncertain future. The authorities have indicated their total inability (or lack of desire) to solve the problem by putting pressure on the private sector. The only exception is that of having the locals work in hotels serving the thriving alcohol and prostitution businesses.

Still, many of those employed are forced to accept very low pay jobs. A salary of \$500 per month is regarded as very good nowadays. Bahrain today is hit by high crime rate (car hijacking is taking place in Hamad town to the dismay of Detroit and Los Angeles gangsters), drugs and many other social diseases. Many are fixing the blame on the unemployment.

In 1959, Bahrainis represented some 65% of the labour force only to 44% in 1971, a situation that has not reversed since then. Combating this trend can be made possible by setting out a clear policy. For instance, a law is needed to prohibit employing unskilled low-wage workers imported from the sub-Indian continent and Far East. Workers needed to fill vacancies, which Bahrainis cannot fill, must be hired at the same rate as nationals, thus putting an end to covert slavery and disadvantaging nationals. More attention is required to the fact that the low economic growth means that the 20,000 national unemployed will continue to be so, especially as more and more low-wage workers are poured in the job market. So why not identify the strategic skills needed and train the nationals to take over. The 120,000 foreign work-force will need to be reduced to 100,000 by say 4 years.

This is easily said than done. The question raised is whether it is the inability or the unwillingness of the government to solve the unemployment problem. True, there are hard facts about nowadays economics. Technological advancements (replacement of people with machines) and low demand on goods and services, amongst other factors, are causing unemployment in advanced countries. However, the problem in Bahrain is more of unwillingness and inability of the government than any other thing.

Last month, the appointed Consultative (Shura) Council debated the problem. One member proposed the discussion of the rate of unskilled workers being imported into the country every month. The Labour Ministry resisted this call. Another member enquired about those unskilled workers imported on a "Free-Visa" arrangement. The agent supplying the market with unemployed workers, who will pay the importer a fixed rate of their salary once they are employed. Again this was resisted. Not least that most of the appointed members and members of the royal family are the main agents for these Free-Visa workers.

More important, the ruling family views the emergence of an indigenous working class is a potential threat. The absolute rule can't tolerate the emergence of a power base that may challenge its unquestioned authority. On the top of this, the government is not run by the most qualified people, rather by the remnant of power struggle within the ruling family.