

BAHRAIN

A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement

Oppressing the Oppressed in Bahrain Unprovoked Attack on a Mosque Leaves Deep Scars

The American envoy to the Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities under 1503 procedure, Mr. Shafiel, should, by now, have started pondering whether his proposal to the United Nations at Geneva a year ago was worthwhile. The events of the last twelve months have become a landmark in a country which had been assisted by diplomats such as Mr. Shafiel, in retaining its stature as a country "respecting" human rights. It will be extremely difficult for the American envoy, and indeed to any other European diplomat to justify the continuation of the Emergency Laws in Bahrain at a time when even Saudi Arabian, well known for her traditional values and lack of any constitution, could afford some sort of openness. In this respect two points of view seem to dominate the argument.

On one hand, the people of Bahrain, be it on popular or professional level, feel they have, over the last two decades, been wronged by their government of the Al Khalifa. In 1975, the present Amir, Sheikh Essa bin Salman Al Khalifa, dissolved the parliament after suspending the constitution. In the two decades that followed, a state of emergency became the rule. Hundreds of people were imprisoned, many more were exiled, and scores tortured to death. Under these draconian laws, any person suspected of political activities may be held for up to three years, renewable, without charge. The Minister of the Interior, is empowered to act as he wished to hold citizens without any legal cover. The Al Khalifa were so fond of the State Security Law that they had to dissolve the parliament for refusing to approve it.

The Emergency Laws have enabled the government to ban any public activity without the consent of the Ministry of the Interior. Gatherings are banned, and organisations are not allowed. There are exceptions to these rules but it applies especially when it comes to political or religious matters. It was under the pretext of "unauthorised" meeting that the attack on the gathering at "Mo'min" mosque on the night of 19th January took place. Riot police in full gear surrounded the old building at the heart of the capital, Manama, using tear gas and truncheons. The result was the burning down of the mosque, insuring tens of people, and the arrest of more than 26 people. So far 16 of them have been released whilst the others are being subjected to torture. The attack was unprovoked, and on the contrary, the speakers at the gathering which was held to commemorate the fortieth day after the demise of the late Grand Ayatullah Golpaygani, urged constraint and good discipline. As the speakers were uttering

these words, the sounds of the tear gas shells exploding the courtyard of the mosque were echoing on the walls of the surrounding houses.

This blatant violation of basic liberties has reopened discussions on the wisdom of the lifting of international monitoring of human rights abuses in the country, which had been imposed in February 1992. The imposition of the monitoring procedure on Bahrain followed a period of mass arrests, detentions and expulsions. Thousands of Bahraini citizens are stranded outside the country and are not allowed back unless a "pardon" of the Amir is issued. That could only be achieved through a humiliating procedure most people find it extremely humiliating. Those who had returned without begging the Amir were immediately turned back. Last December Amnesty International issued a report on this problem and urged the Bahraini government to improve her human rights records especially in this matter. Whilst tens of young men remain in prison (some for over 12 years), the lack of international action against the Al Khalifa government could only prolong the suffering of Bahraini people.

The tension in the country is a direct product of the continuing situation in which emergency laws have been firmly followed by the security forces. The government is proud of being seen a harsh one. There is not a great dissimilarity between the rulers of Bahrain and the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hushing. Both represent a minority government ruling a majority Shia population, both are suppressive, and both enjoy being seen in this context. Infact, the Bahraini premier, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, has often expressed his admiration of Saddam Hussain. He instructed his foreign minister to advocate the lifting of sanctions on Iraq, to the annoyance of the Kuwaitis.

The mentality of oppression may explain the fierce opposition of the Al Khalifa family to any form of internal openness, a fact that is often highlighted by the campaign of terror waged by the security apparatus in the last twenty years. The people have resisted the policies of hegemony, and offered enough sacrifices, both human and material, to ensure an end to this state of affairs. But the regime has responded to the popular demands for political participation with more oppression. The situation has deteriorated to a level whereby it is almost impossible to imagine a solution short of a commitment by the Al Khalifa to respect human rights, ratify international conventions in this respect, and restore the country's constitution. To the government, this seems a challenge which they believe they could take up with the hope that their power will eventually

prevail. In the pursuit of this goal, a lot of suffering has been endured by the Bahraini people, a fact which is often ignored by the western countries propping up the tribal system in the Gulf.

Despite what the US and her allies have done to shelter the Al Khalifa, time has now come to take steps to ensure their credibility as champions of democracy and human rights in the world. Little benefit is expected from the continuing support to repressive regimes such as the one in Bahrain. Any support for the Bahraini government must be a qualified one. Constitutional rule must be upheld if the issue of human rights is to be respected. Indeed, there is little room for a violent overthrow of the regime, especially in the light of the fact that the Bahraini people are known for their peaceful nature and love for their country. There is no evidence to suggest otherwise. But there is plenty of evidence to support the claim that the regime is a repressive one. The Americans and the British know this fact and their intelligence reports can only confirm this.

The recent event in which harsh measures were taken against the innocent civilians by the repressive security service has brought to the limelight what has always been said about the nature of the government. Today, Bahrainis from all walks of life have a unanimous view that their rulers have little respect for human rights and have shown little enthusiasm for the rule of law. The general mood of the inhabitants of the Gulf island of Bahrain is that of gloom and despair. Families have been shattered by the events of the Mo'min mosque, and are allied in their grief especially those whose sons are still in detention. Some governments have relied on the step proposed by Mr. Shafiel at last year's meeting of the Subcommission on the prevention of discrimination and the protection of minorities under 1503 procedure, to suggest that the government has initiated a process of improvement of human rights. The records of the last years suggest a totally opposite view.

There is not much time for argument over this issue especially that the young Bahrainis who were arrested during the attack on the mosque and those who had spent in prison over 12 years are still behind bars. What is at stake here is the life and death of a nation under the rule of the repressive regime of the Al Khalifa. Humanity makes it necessary for friendly nations and freedom-loving people to rally behind the noble cause of the Bahrainis; the establishment of the rule of law according to the constitution of the country. Failing that implies a total withdrawal from the human commitments, an eventuality everyone loves to hate.

While the West Fosters Al-Khalifa Security Forces Storm a Peaceful Gathering

What started as a peaceful and traditional gathering in a mosque in the Bahraini capital of Manama was turned into a major unhappy incident. On 19 January, the Bahraini security forces staged an unprovoked show-down with several hundred people who assembled at the ancient mosque of Mo'min at the heart of the capital, Manama. The meeting was a traditional commemoration of the death of a senior religious figure. The Mo'min Mosque was encircled by security units led by a member of the ruling family, Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa and the director of Manama police stations, Abdul-Salam Al-Ansari. The Al-Khalifa officer gave the gathering in the mosque five minutes to evacuate. Then at 9.45 p.m. local time, the security forces deployed tear-gas with another form of gas which caused many people to fall down. The prison cells were full of people arrested on the spot.

More alarming is the fact that the Interior Minister enjoys unaccountable powers under the provisions of the State Security Act of 1974. The latter empowers the Interior Minister to order administrative detention of any political suspect for up to three years, renewable, without trial. Categorising religious commemorations and other similar functions as "political" exposes the thousands of people participating in these traditional activities to harassment similar to the notorious oppression campaigns witnessed in the Eighties. The ruling family circles have indicated their determination to encounter any call for restoration of the suspended constitution and parliament with all harsh means available to them.

Indeed this has been the essence of the unprovoked concentrated attack on Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, member of the dissolved parliament and an ex-judge at the religious high court, who alongside five other personalities sponsored a petition, signed by several hundred personalities and submitted to the Amir (ruler) in November 1992, calling on him to reinstate the dissolved parliament and reactivate the constitution.

Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri was again targeted by the authorities. He has become a regular guest at the secret police headquarters. This time, he was summoned to Al-Khamis Police Headquarters on Wednesday 19 January (before the meeting of Mo'min Mosque), and was threatened of grave consequences if he attended. Although he did not attend, Al-Jamri was again summoned to the Al-Khamis Police Headquarters on Saturday 22 and on Sunday 23 January. Several hours of interrogations were concentrated at one point: either Al-Jamri lists the names of those responsible for organising the commemoration at Mo'min Mosque, or he would be held responsible.

On Sunday, he was informed that those arrested are now being interrogated by the Intelligence department and that he (Al-Jamri) will be summoned by the Intelligence after finishing with interrogating the youth. The "finishing with" terms are key-words used by Bahrain's security forces to signify extreme torturing and harassment.

The harsh action taken by the security forces

against the peaceful gathering is hard to understand let alone to justify. Political observers of Bahrain, which enjoys close ties with West, are puzzled by the continuous oppressive policy of the Bahrain government, in the light of moves towards openness in other Gulf states. Three months ago Saudi Arabia reached a deal with its Shia minority which resulted in the freeing of all their political prisoners and the return of their leaders from exile.

Bahrain's security forces stormed the peaceful meeting at Mo'min Mosque in the capital Manama. Gates were smashed, books were burnt, attendants were beaten, tear-gassed and many were arbitrarily arrested. The meeting was a traditional religious one, but the security forces provoked a confrontation in the hope of frightening those people organising or attending mass gatherings. The Al-Khalifa ruling family, monopolising the government, judiciary, commerce and public functions, fears mass gatherings of any sort since these may serve as platforms for speakers calling for the democratisation of the old-fashioned tribal political system. Thus, the ferocity of the attack on 19 January. Reports from the scene spoke of the mayhem that followed; people stampeded to escape the fire which destroyed carpets and books only to face the truncheons and shields of the police. Prison cells were packed with those arrested on the spot. Twenty six names were confirmed to have spent several nights after the attack. Sixteen were known to have been released after intimidation and torturing at Al-Adleyya prison cells. Ten confirmed names remain in detention for indefinite periods while being ill-treated. These are:

- (1) Mohammed Hassan Kadhem, 50 years old, from Manama; (2) Mohammed Mahdi Al-Zayer, 27 years old, from Abo-Sayba'; (3) Majeed Milad, 27 years, Ras-Romman; (4) Hussain Al-Sairafi, 50 years, Manama; (5) Mohammed Al-Mahhari, 27 years, Moqusha'a; (6) Abd-Allah Sengais, 28 years, Sanabis; (7) Sa'ed Ahmed Abdul-Nabi, 28 years, Sanabis; (8) Ja'afar Al-Ekri, 27 years, Al-Daih; (9) Hassan Ahmed Al-Ekri, 22 years, Al-Daih; (10) Ali Hussain Omran, 25 years, Manama.

Those detained and released include: Hussain Ma'ayouf (Al-Daih); Aqueel Mattar (Ras-Romman); Redha Al-Shuwaikh (Manama); Tawfeeq Al-Mahroos (Manama); Ali Sa'ed Ja'afar Shehab (Qadam); Abbas Ahmed Jassim (Qadam); Isa Abd-Ali Abdul-Hadi (Qadam); Abbas Hameed Mohammed Ali (Qadam); Hussain Abdulla Ahmed (Al-Dair); Shaker Ahmed Ghoolom (Al-Dair); Mahmood Ahmed Ghoolom (Al-Dair); Yaser Abdulla Hassan (Al-Dair); Mohammed Ali Jawad (Al-Dair); Nazar Sa'ed Eid (Al-Dair); Ahmed Abdulla Al-Howtah (Al-Dair); Hussain Isa Al-Taweel (Al-Dair).

As usual the government sent its emissaries to sense the depth of frustration amongst the people. The emissaries informed that the government is determined to abolish all programmes which don't possess permission from the Interior Ministry and that the decision is still in place for attacking and detaining those defying the new regime.

One More Military Agreement With The US

On 21 January 1994, the Defence Minister (member of the ruling family, Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, signed another military agreement with United States of America. Al-Ayyam daily reported that the agreement concerned the security arrangement in military cooperation in the Gulf. Bahrain has been the station for the US forces since 1947. In 1971, a military agreement swapped the Jufair naval base from Britain to the US. In 1973, the Americans used Bahrain to assist the Israelis engaged in war with the front-line Arab states. The Australian Jewish volunteers were stopping over in Bahrain before transportation to the front line. Bahrain was then heavily criticised and that resulted in a verbal suspension of the agreement. The verbal suspension gave the US administration one year to evacuate. In 1974, it was extended (verbally) until 1977, when a modified agreement was signed. The military base changed its title the "Administrative Support Unit", nothing more. When Iraq invaded Iran, the US, then supporting Iraq, used Bahrain as a front station in its quasi-war efforts. After the invasion of Kuwait, Bahrain emerged as a central base for all US military activities, including harbouring two carriers full of prostitutes to serve the US troops. Since then, there has been an increase in the number of military agreements covering all external security arrangement. It is for this reason that the Al-Khalifa feel secure enough to continue in their absolute and feudal style of governing. While the Americans guarantee the external security, the British, through Ian Henderson and other British officers, guarantee the internal security for Al-Khalifa ruling family. The question the people of Bahrain ask is that: How far are both powers prepared to go to protect the feudal regime in the name of Gulf-oil security?

Premier Antagonises Kuwait

Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, is not only the Prime Minister, but also the top businessman in the country enjoying privileged insider information. This is the secret of the successes of his Unitag Group of Companies chaired by Jamil Wafa. Unitag never suffers from any economic downturn and the Group was eager to get a good share of the business that was to be generated by the post-liberation Kuwait. This didn't happen as the Kuwaitis handled most their contract without the need for Bahrain's services. So Sheikh Khalifa was angry. He warned Kuwait in 1992 by calling for restoration of links with the regime of Saddam. Now he is on at it again. However, this time, an "ex-revolutionary" writing in local press is the mouthpiece of his highness the premier. Aqeel Swar column appearing frequently in Akhbar Al-Khaleej is calling for establishing strong links with the government of Iraq. This has angered the Kuwaitis, and rushed their foreign minister to Bahrain. Khalifa message is clear; Give me contracts and I will shut the mouth of Aqeel Swar. People close to the premier's circle speak of an Iraqi offer to Unitag to act as an agent for some Iraqi oil exports and other commercial operations.

Background to The Mentality of The Ruling Family Banning All Independent Public Functions

People inside and outside Bahrain were surprised when they heard the news of vicious attack on Mo'min Mosque on 19 January 1994 and the burning of its carpets and contents. To understand what lies in the minds of those who gave the attack orders it is necessary to study the behaviour of the Al-Khalifa ruling family.

Bahrain is a typical modern example of a totalitarian feudal regime. Any activity or function, whether political or not, that takes place in the country must come through the ruling family or their organs. "Representation" is a fundamental concept in a free society. The idea is that a person or a group of people is representative or typical of a larger group or community. Such a person or group is identified as representative because it reflects the characteristics of the larger group. So elected MPs represent their constituencies, and those elected or who emerge amongst the community represent the interest of the community.

In Bahrain, no person or group is allowed to claim representation of certain people or interests. Early in the Eighties, the authorities managed to link all the clubs to the Supreme Council of Sport and Youth under the chairmanship of the Heir Apparent and another member of the ruling family, Isa bin Rashid Al-Khalifa. Now no club can function without the blessing of the controlling agency. Many clubs are implicitly forced to declare the name of a member of the ruling family as their honorary president to be able to receive the aid and attention necessary for them to exist. The law also dictates that any activity must be sanctioned by the controlling agency or the club would be closed. So clubs are not representatives of their communities, they are there as long as they satisfy the members of the ruling family. Sport associations are by far the strongest in the country, and nearly all are headed by members of the ruling family.

So is the case with professional associations. Medical doctors, lawyers, engineers, artists, sociologists, writers, and the rest are very clearly briefed by the Information Ministry (the controlling agency in this case). They exist as a get-together club of people with similar professions. Since the ruling family member have not, up until recently, bothered to seek further education, there are no qualified professionals amongst them. So commoners thought they had an easy ride. Not at all. The ruling family interferes at every occasion to prove their presence. The Society of Engineers is experiencing difficulties after the collapse of the (not-acceptable to the ruling family) elected committee. All professional societies are barred by law from "meddling in politics". The lawyer society challenged this clause, but have not been able to implement its independence.

The Labour and Social Affairs Ministry control all the other types of societies, including charities. The Ministry has the power to ban any activity or society. Ten years ago, in February 1984, the Ministry ordered the closure and confiscation of properties belonging to the Islamic Enlightenment Society. The empty and vandalised buildings of the society stand idle on the main highway at the entrance of Duraz village. The society was running three schools

and two institutions for further studies. All were banned, after the arrest of some society's members on charges of belonging to a political movement.

Another example is the Labour Ministry controls the General Committee of Bahraini Workers and has the powers for accessing all records and files as well as banning the committee if it ever dared to claim representation of anybody. Look at any activity in Bahrain and you will easily see how it existed as long as it satisfied the interests of the ruling family.

The Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs launched its campaigns in the early Eighties to ensure absolute control over all religious affairs. First it initiated a plan for regulating the religious courts. There is no problem in regulations. Only that in Bahrain, the legislative powers are in the hands of members of the ruling family. So once the first draft is passed as law, the next update is mandatory. Now the ministry is trying to control all activities in the mosques and be able to ban a person or activity whenever that person or activity threatens the interests of the ruling family. Many attempts were made using soft means. For example the "Awqaf" religious trust department was given the green light to question and demand permissions for activities. They were disregarded. So the ruling family deployed the Interior Ministry.

Last year, the people running or participating in religious activities witnessed an upsurge in detections and intimidation. It is not that these didn't exist before, but in the past a person was blamed for many other "crimes" listed in the State Security Law, such as talking about a political issue. This time people were bluntly told that they were attending religious activities without permission. What permission? People never took permission to go to mosques. Open confrontation began last year when Sayyid Alawi Al-Alwai (in-charge of the religious house Ma'tam Al-Qasab) was arrested and tortured. Later, in December rubber bullets were used to disperse crowds heading towards Ma'tam Al-Qasab to participate in another religious activity.

Reuters reporting from Bahrain on the storming of Mo'min Mosque quoted an Interior Ministry source saying that the authorities used normal procedures to cancel an un-permitted activity. This is a dangerous indication, that the authorities are standing by their atrocities and are intent on repeating the same attack when the next activity is arranged. However, it must be mentioned that the Al-Khalifa government never expected to face such internal and external exposure to the attack. Fearing that international investigators may rush to the scene of the attack, the authorities prevented anybody from entering the mosque before repairs and damage is cosmetically eliminated, so as to prevent anyone from photographing and documenting. On Wednesday, 26 January, the public challenged this new trend by attending a similar mass-gathering in the nearby Khawajah Mosque. The authorities sent their security units but stayed out of attack. This challenge will continue. The Interior Ministry would wait for better

opportunities to attack and in a way less dramatic, but may be more effective. The Bahraini people cannot afford to allow the confiscation of the last thing they have as independent, their prayers and religious activities. The authorities would be wiser to stay-out and learn from others who attempted to burn religious place.

Seyyid Al-Ghoreifi Forcibly Exiled

On 16 December 1961, the current ruler (Amir) of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa assumed power following the death of his father. Since then this day was proclaimed as "Enthronement Day" and later as "National Day". This year the Amir celebrated his thirty-second anniversary as absolute ruler. The last 32 years have witnessed the most bleak period for the opposition. After 32 years, the Amir is proud of his oppression. There are now people who left the country since 1962 to escape persecution and are not able to go back. Last December, Amnesty International issued the strongest condemnation, yet, of forced expulsion of Bahrain nationals. Since last year, many of those wishing to return were forced to apply for a "royal pardon" declaring their repentance. Last December, the Amir announced that 64 more people were granted permission to return upon receiving appeals from their families. The announcement declared that the Amir pardoned these people who committed "crimes" against the state. At the same time the authorities have been busy expelling others upon their returns. Amnesty International presented few cases to highlight the problem on the commemoration of the "National Day". There are many more, notably the case of Seyyid Abdulla Al-Ghoreifi. Seyyid Al-Ghoreifi, a prominent religious scholar possessing a valid Bahraini passport. After the dissolution of the National Assembly, Al-Ghoreifi was requested by Dubai notables to teach religion and lead prayers. In November 1989, the Dubai Special Branch abducted him from the high street and handed him to the Bahraini counterpart. After one week of interrogation, he was deported by force to Syria. After spending two years in Damascus, he went to Mekka (Saudi Arabia) for Hajj (pilgrimage). After liberation of Kuwait, he was invited in December 1991, to lead prayers in a leading mosque. In June 1992, he joined the Kuwaiti pilgrims to Mekka (Saudi Arabia). Upon his return, he was expelled to Saudi Arabia. He had to suffer four months in Saudi Arabia waiting for an explanation. On 29 October 1992, he was arrested by the Saudi Special Branch and handed over to Bahrain. Over the Bahrain-Saudi Causeway, he was subjected to eight hours of interrogation. Later he was allowed to go home to his family in Nuaim (a district in the Bahraini capital Manama). The next day that followed (29 October) he was summoned to the Bahraini Interior Ministry. Over there, a British Security Officer by the name Albert, informed Al-Ghoreifi, that he would be deported again. In a matter of one hour, Al-Ghoreifi was forced to board a plane destined to Damascus. Up until now, no explanation or charges were brought against Al-Ghoreifi.

The Al-Khalifa May Learn a Lesson International Condemnation of Attack on Mo'min Mosque

Amnesty International led the international condemnation of the Bahraini government and issued the following urgent action referenced "Al Index: MDE 11/02/940" and titled "Fear of Torture/Legal Concern", as follows:

((Bahrain: Mohammed Hassan, 'Abd 'Ali Sengais, 'Ali Said Ja'far 'Alawi Shabib, 'Abbas Hamid Mohammed 'Ali, 'Isa 'Abd 'Ali 'Abd al-Hadi Muhsin, Faisal Shakhouri, Hassan Ahmed al-'Ikri, Ridha Jawad, Hussein Mansour, 'Abbas Ahmed Jassim, Ra'ed al-Khawaja, Mohammed Mansour al-Mahari, Mohammed al-Sayrafi, Mansour al-'Ikri.

Amnesty International has received reports of arrests at al-Mu'min Mosque in Manama on 19 January 1994. Those named above are believed to be among those detained, but the total number of those is not known. They are being held in incommunicado detention, and there are fears that they may be subjected to torture. Their whereabouts are unknown.

The arrests allegedly took place on the evening of 19 January as members of the majority Shi'a community were gathered at al-Mu'min mosque for the 40th day commemoration ceremony of the death of Ayatollah Golpayegani. The gathering was reportedly a peaceful one. According to reports the mosque was surrounded by police and those inside given five minutes to leave. The police then entered the mosque using teargas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd. An unknown number of arrests took place at the mosque while others were arrested later at their homes. Some were allegedly beaten at the time of their arrest.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters either in English, Arabic or in your own language:

- requesting the authorities to initiate a thorough and independent inquiry into the reports of arrests and beatings by police during what appears to have been a peaceful ceremony on 19 January at al-Mu'min Mosque in Manama, and to make the findings public;

- urging that the whereabouts of all those detained be made known to their families immediately;

- seeking assurances that all detainees are now being humanly treated in accordance with international human rights standards, and that they are being granted access to lawyers and relatives;

- expressing concern at reports that some of those arrested have been beaten and seek assurances that they have received medical attention, where necessary;

- urging the immediate and unconditional release of any who are held solely for the non-violent expression of their conscientiously held beliefs.

APPEALS TO: His Highness Al-Shaikh 'Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Office of His Highness the Amir, The Amiri Court, Rifa'a Palace, Rifa'a, Bahrain. Telexes: 8666 Qasar, BN 8500 Qasar BN, Telegrams: His Highness the Amir, Manama, Bahrain. Faxes: +973 778884, Salutation: Your Highness

His Excellency Al-Shaikh Mohamed Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior, PO Box 13, Manama, Bahrain, Telexes: 9572 PSMKT BN or 8333 ALAMAN BN, Telegrams: Minister of Interior, Manama, Bahrain. Faxes: +973 276337 or 290526 or 754303. Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: His Excellency Al-Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa Prime Minister of Bahrain, PO Box 1000, Manama, Bahrain. Fax: +973 533033 and to diplomatic representatives of Bahrain accredited to your country. **PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 7 March 1994).

The news of attack on Mo'min Mosque was reported by BBC Arabic Service, Radio Monte Carlo, Radio Qatar, Al-Quds newspaper and Reuter among others. Reuter interviewed several people in Bahrain who witnessed part of the attack. Article 19, Arab Organisation for Human Rights, Islamic Organisation for Human Rights, Al Khoei Foundation, Dar Al-Islam, Religious scholars in Qum, Faith International, Bahrain Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and many other organisations joined in condemning the savage attack and burning of Mo'min Mosque.

Article 19 statement said: "Article 19, the International Centre Against Censorship, is deeply concerned about the arrest on the evening of 19 January 1994 of 14 Bahraini citizens of the Shi'a community. The arrests took place at al-Mu'min Mosque in Manama as members of the majority Shi'a community gathered peacefully in a ceremony to commemorate the 40th day of death of Ayatollah Golpayegani.

According to our information, the police entered the mosque using teargas and rubber bullet to disperse the gathering on the grounds that the meeting was not authorized. The police then started beating people and arrested many of them". "ARTICLE 19 believes that the authorities' violent dispersion of the religious gathering and the arrest of the 14 Bahraini citizens are grave violations of freedom of expression and religious beliefs guaranteed and protected by Articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, we strongly urge your government to release immediately and unconditionally those arrested and to initiate a thorough and independent inquiry into the attack on the Shi'a religious gathering by the police and to bring those responsible for this action to justice".

The Arab Organisation for Human Rights (AOHR) issued a statement condemning the attack. The AOHR expressed "concern about the news from Bahrain that a peaceful gathering on 19th January 1994 at Momin Mosque in Manama has been attacked by security forces". "Attacking religious places is contrary to Bahrain's constitution Article 22 which binds the government to protecting places of worship".

Hundreds of people gathered in Khawajah Mosque (Manama - near Mo'min Mosque) on 26 January defying the illegal ban on religious programmes. The audience listened to speeches

by several distinguished scholars warning the government of the consequence following the burning of Mo'min Mosque. The security forces were positioned at some distance from the gathering and were showing their readiness for a similar attack. It is only the international exposure that saved the peacefulness of the meeting.

The Islamic Organisation for Human Rights stated that "the closure of Mo'min Mosque and the arrest of several people who were praying there is a stark violation of freedom of worship, which is one of the natural rights recognised by Islam and International conventions. We call for an end to these violations and urgent release of those detained, opening the mosque, withdrawal of security forces from the area surrounding the mosque, guaranteeing the freedom of religious activities and rebuilding the damaged mosque".

The London-Based Dar Al-Islam condemned the government of Bahrain saying that: "these repeated attacks on religious activities are insulting to all Muslims and are bound to generate bad feeling amongst Muslims".

Leaflets were distributed inside Bahrain challenging the government to abide by the constitution and warning that the continuation of these atrocities will damage Bahrain's financial services position. A letter was also publicly distributed signed by "Son of Bahrain" and addressed to the Director General of Public Security, Ian Henderson, challenging him to declare publicly the legal background behind authorising the use of rubber bullets and tear-gas in mosques.

Al-Qusaibi's Novel Banned

Dr. Ghazi Al-Qusaibi, the Saudi Ambassador in London published his novel titled "Sheqqat Al-Hurreyya", ie Flat of Freedom, giving detailed insights on the trends attracting the youth studying in Cairo in the fifties and sixties. Bahrain was mentioned on several occasions. On one of them, the former ruler (father of the present one) visited Cairo and met with two Bahrain students. The ruler asked each one of them what they were studying. One of the students answered he was studying commerce. The ruler was surprised and wondered: Why do you need to study commerce while your father is already a businessman? Another place where Bahrain was mentioned is the case of the student who returned to Bahrain after completing his studies but was refused entry and was expelled to Beirut. Nothing has changed for the past thirty to forty years. Al-Qusaibi's novel must, therefore, be banned.

It is worthwhile that Al-Qusaibi is a very close person to both ruling families in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. He grew-up in Bahrain and wrote several poems about it. He served many years in Bahrain as Saudi Ambassador. Nonetheless, Al-Qusaibi stated some facts about the low level of intelligence of the former ruler and showed how little has changed since then.