

# BAHRAIN

*A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement*

*After Months of Deliberations at the International Court of Justice*

## Qatar is Happy, Bahrain is not Sad, Both Are Angry

After four months of deliberations, the International Court of Justice at the Hague gave its verdict on the Bahraini-Qatari dispute on 1st July 1994. The sixteen-man panel of judges headed by Mohammed Bedjawi, the Algerian judge decreed that the International Court has the authority to take up the case of the border dispute between Qatar and Bahrain. This is what the Qataris wanted. However, the Bahraini side was not totally unjustified in objecting to the Qatari unilateral approach to the problem. The Court confirmed that "all" areas of border disputes between the two neighbouring states must be included and not only those desired by each of the two states. By 30th November 1994, both countries have to submit either a joint case or two separate cases to include the disputed territories. The panel accepted the Qatari view that both agreements of 1987 and 1990 between the two countries and with the mediation of Saudi Arabia are binding and, accordingly, the Court, has to take up the case.

For more than half a century, the border dispute between the Al Khalifa of Bahrain and the Al Thani of Qatar has been lingering on. In 1939, the British who had a long-standing relation with both sheikhdoms, decreed that the Huwar islands belonged to Bahrain. The Qataris never acknowledged this ruling and have always insisted on their sovereignty over them. Bahrain, on the other hand, have always considered parts of Qatar belonging to them. Most notably has been Zebara, a derelict town that had for almost a century been the capital of the Al Khalifa rule over both Qatar and Bahrain. Since they moved down the Gulf from Kuwait in mid eighteenth century, Zebara and indeed all of Qatar were under their direct rule. By suggesting otherwise, the Al Thani have infuriated the Al Khalifa beyond limits. The two tribes have never been on good terms. When the Al Khalifa finally settled in Bahrain a century ago, the rising sheikhdom of the Al Thani has always been viewed with hostility and rejection from the Al Khalifa.

There are four main areas of dispute at the moment. Whilst Qatar claims the islands of Huwar, which are nearer to its borders than to Bahrain, the Al Khalifa have laid claim to Zebara, Facht Al Dibel and Jarada. The first is a shanty town near the north eastern tip of the Qatar peninsula. The other two are coral reefs which are submerged at high tide. The whole exercise so far has been to decide whether the international court of justice can take up the case or not. Having decided to look into the matter with a majority of 15 to 1, the Court will now proceed to study the case in details. The relations between the two countries have al-

ways been tense, and no cordial attitude has ever existed between the two neighbours. Both are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council which was formed in 1981 as a political and economic bloc. Although the GCC presented a solid face throughout the Iraq-Iran war of the Eighties, the assumption has always been that it was not going to become a formidable force to be reckoned with regionally.

Cracks appeared in its ranks almost immediately after its formation more than a decade ago. The Omanis have preserved their anonymity and did not encourage the hostile attitudes towards its neighbours. A degree of solidarity was achieved in the first few years, but that began to fade away soon. In 1986, a major dispute developed when the Qatari boats and aircrafts attacked the Facht El Dibel where the Bahraini authorities were building a monitoring post. A total of 29 workers on the Bahraini side were taken prisoners by the Qataris, and the Saudis had to intervene forcefully to bring about a hasty arrangement which allowed the Bahraini workers to be released. In 1987 an agreement was reached after the Saudi mediation and it is this agreement and the one endorsed by both parties in Doha on the fringe of the GCC 11th summit in Qatar which laid down the basis for the present court ruling.

The court verdict which followed the appearance of the representative of the two governments at the Hague in March 1994, has opened the way for a protracted procedure which may take several years. Thousands of documents are being studied by legal experts and historians to determine the ownership of the disputed area. It is expected that the Huwar island will be returned to Bahrain especially that the British had decided more than six decades ago to keep it with Bahrain. The Qataris know the verdict in advance but going to the Hague was the most practical avenue to settle this account. The question will now arise whether the two sides should agree on a joint case or whether they should go to the court on separate cases. The Bahraini foreign minister has already welcomed the court ruling but invited his counterpart to attend a meeting to prepare the agenda for the joint case. The Qataris are hesitant in their approach and are unlikely to agree to a joint approach. Whatever the verdict of the court, the Qataris will feel relieved and will not have a difficult task informing their people of the decision.

The border dispute between Bahrain and Qatar is a test case for the rest of the region. The Saudis started a row with Qatar that has caused so much damage to the cause of the GCC that the Saudis must now be wondering how to deal

with the mess left behind. It is now known in small circles that the decision to attack the Qatari border post of Al Khafous in April 1992 was taken by the defence minister, Prince Sultan bin Abdul Aziz without informing the King. But the monarch had to go along with his brother, knowing the negative outcome in both cases. It is a case of misjudgement that has led to the humiliation of Saudi Arabia on several occasions. The Saudis are not used to disobedience by other Gulf states. The Qataris have rebuked the monarch and his emissaries on several occasions, and embarrassed Riyadh throughout the episode. In the bilateral meetings between the two sides since the eruption of hostilities two years ago, there was an agreement to form a joint committee to look into the case and propose solutions. But so far nothing is forthcoming from the committee.

The course of the case at the International Court of Justice will be followed closely by the Saudis who have so far failed to forge agreements with their neighbours on the border problems. The Bahraini government has dented its reputation by refusing to submit to the court at the beginning. Some local commentators attributed this attitude to the nature of the regime of the Al Khalifa. They have always preferred settlement of such cases outside the Law. Internally, they have suspended the Constitution since 1975, and the country has been run by royal decrees. The government is very sensitive to the idea of courts, legal representation and lawyers. The Bahraini Bar Association has often become a target for the hostility of the regime towards the professional bodies. This mentality of refusing to rule within a constitutional framework is partially responsible for the lack of enthusiasm to go to the Hague. But under the international monitoring, the Al Khalifa of Bahrain had no alternative but to submit to the will of the court.

The next four months will be particularly hard for the government of Bahrain whose premier paid a visit to Riyadh last month to see if it could do anything to salvage the situation. King Fahd received the delegation which also included the foreign minister and the minister of transport (who is the son of the prime minister) and issues of financial support and closer cooperation were discussed alongside the dispute with Qatar. It is difficult to see how events will go from here, but there is only little hope for optimism. So far the behaviour of the Gulf regimes has not confirmed seriousness and adequate understanding of the ambient situation. A serious deliberation by these regimes on all cases of concern is the starting point for a regional and local settlement.

# The Outrage of the Dispossessed

## Why Bahrain has so many jobless citizens?

On Wednesday 29 June, some 300 jobless gathered at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the aim of bringing their plight to the attention of the officials. The final objective was nothing short than getting a serious help from the authorities in order to find decent jobs.

The Under-secretary who came to speak to the unwelcome guests (at the insistence of the group) found himself surrounded by people fed up of hearing nice conciliatory statements. These people rightly felt that they have nothing to lose further. Already, they have suffered a great deal. One thing for sure is that the group shared one common goal, namely that of getting employed. The mood among the unemployed was quite peaceful and this really positively influenced the authorities who found sincerity in the cause and process alike.

The officials took pain informing the invited group that the Ministry is serious enough about finding solutions to their on-going troubles, but this was a hard sell argument. The mistrust level between the Ministry authorities and the people has reached unprecedented levels. This is due to the fact that many old promises made by the governmental officials have been broken time and again.

Here are some examples of what some of those gathered had to say. One complained of his spouse threatening leaving home if the husband continues failing to find a job in order to sustain a reasonable living condition or with dignity. Another jobless complained that for a few weeks he had failed to change his underwear simply because he cannot afford buying due to the fact he has no source of income. Maybe the guy was exaggerating but he certainly drove the point home. These stories were read out loudly; at times the group used to break in laughter just to ease the tense environment. The officials tried to entice some of the unemployed in order to break their joint steadfastness. When one was told that he should give his full name and his case would be looked after, the unemployed declined and declared that he likes to be the last among the company to be offered a job. Such stories kept lifting the morale of the jobless people.

In order to get rid of the uncompromising assembly, the Under-secretary then asked the unemployed to come back on Saturday to follow up on their cases. The Under-secretary made a conscious decision.

News of the events at the Ministry became the favourite topic at the Thursday evening informal meetings and gatherings in many places. Thursday evening to Bahrain is like Saturday night to London. Still, the mood was that of happiness among in circles if only because the unemployed brought their plight to the attention of the officials in a very peaceful manner. And more importantly, the authorities, who were surprised by the move, reacted in a manner not commensurate with the rulers' style. Thus, the officials were good listeners, at least for this time.

Official newspapers for their part disguised the actual story. They headlined that the authorities will be finding jobs for at least 100 jobless in a matter of one week. One problem

with the media in Bahrain is that it purposely cheats and attempts to deceive the public in every opportunity.

Come Saturday 2nd of July and the story is that of an assault on a peaceful gathering. Having heard of the apparently positive outcome of the Wednesday meeting, many more people became early birds at the Ministry of Labour. Some people arrived late at the scene because they had to catch buses of Bahrain's extremely poor public transportation system.

Asked of their intention, the jobless declared that they have come here at the request of the Under-secretary who told them to come back on Saturday. But this time, the group was confronted with many police and members of the elite Special Forces. Suddenly, the police and soldiers brought their wrath at the uninvited company and chased some of them into the busy Isa Town junction, only to have some of the jobless hit by passing cars. According to well placed sources, some of the jobless people raised slogans which the authorities found unpleasant. Some of the group had to perform their daily prayers. This is said to have bothered the Special Forces in particular. Consequently, some members of the group came under attack and many panicked. While fleeing, windows of a car belonging to a prominent security officer, Abdul Salam Al-Ansari, were broken by stone throwers.

News of the incident became the main topic at the luncheon break, the main meal in Bahrain. Still, one has to credit the authorities for keeping story from reaching many expatriates in the country. Newspapers on Sunday, the day after the events, declared that the officials are serious about the issue of local unemployment, and claimed that there would be a crackdown on companies failing to employ locals. As such, the real story was presented in a different fashion and the regime was given credit for a new tough policy against some firms.

Employing Bahrainis is not a problem with major firms such as Alba, Bapco and other giant concerns. The difficulty lies with the small and medium sized firms who employ primarily expatriates. Practically, there is little the regime can do.

A member of the appointed Consultative Assembly was privately asked about the incident. He provided the most honest answer by reversing the argument and stating: Do you really think that the Consultative Council will ever attempt to curb national unemployment? He continued: It is myself (a businessman), the rest of the Council members (mostly businessmen) and the members of the ruling family who flood the country with cheap labour from the far east and sub-Indian continent. Do you want us to suggest something else that will reduce the rate of return on our business operations?.

Given the troubled economy and the need for foreign and local alike the authorities cannot apply pressure on these firms. The regime needs companies and especially international firms; hence, it cannot force them to employ Bahrainis. The trouble is that Bahrain's regional rival, namely Dubai, is always ready to offer firms what Bahrain fails to grant

them.

Following the incident which has bothered and awakened the regime, officials at the Ministry of Labour took some bold initiatives from the very next day. We have learnt that the Under-secretary and many other top officials engaged at phoning activity lobbying the day after the incident. They kept calling the personnel and top management figures at many firms begging them to employ some people. As an incentive, the authorities asked the firms to employ how many they so desire but do not pay them handsomely. Thus, they are to be employed in the private sector but be paid like those working for the government.

A few days after the event at the Labour Ministry, the Amir met key members of the Kanoo family at the Riffa palace. The fact that the Amir met rich Kanoos at prime business time raised eyebrows among those who follow events closely. As it turned out, the meeting had to do with the Amir begging Kanoo to reverse a decision of sacking no less than ten Bahrainis. The Amir, in emotional terms, painfully described the urgency of the situation and how important it is to employ more Bahrainis let alone laying off others.

The regime has itself to blame for the miserable unemployment problem. Bahrain's arch political enemy, namely Qatar, keeps making a point of such troubles facing Bahrain. Also, Bahrain's arch business enemy, namely Dubai, does not fail to take note of such developments. The message is that unlike Bahrain, Dubai is a trouble-free environment.

Many observers in Bahrain strongly believe that the authorities made a strategic mistake. The policy a few decades ago was that of purposely making many Shiite Muslims unemployed. The Shiites make the majority among the local population. The objective was that of making many Shiites hungry enough in order to force them to listen to the regime. This may have worked in some cases. One way the regime carried out its goal was through opening up the doors to the expatriates who happen to be either better skilled or cheaper in terms of cost compared to the locals. For its part, the authorities made it a point to alleviate the case for Sunni Muslims by employing them in the massive defence, intelligence agencies let alone other public entities. Maybe the regime is serious now with respect to alleviating the jobless problem; but the choices are limited and maybe there is little the government can do to remedy the problem.

The government is in need of foreign firms and local investment, hence it cannot force these companies to employ Bahrainis especially in the presence of Dubai, the main commercial enemy of Bahrain's rulers.

The prime minister was quoted in 1981 as saying: I will bundle every Bahraini Shia in a sack and throw him in the sea. He certainly managed to make the ratio of foreign to national workforce as 65% to 35%.

The achievement of the rest of his promise and its consequences remain to be seen. The only advice for the premier is that his policy may back-fire.

## Unified Yemen Emerges Victorious GCC: Disastrous Miscalculations

Once again the Gulf region is in turmoil. But this time the problem is not internal but an external one with regional implications. The most immediate consequence is a political one. The Yemen crisis has proved to be a difficult one. Four of the six countries comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) supported the secessionists in the South and almost recognised their "Democratic Republic of Yemen". It was the western veto on that line of action that prevented these states from taking the disastrous step of condoning the partitioning of that country. Saudi Arabia took the lead in lobbying for the Socialist Party worldwide. Hundreds of millions of dollars worth of equipment and cash were poured into Aden before and during the seven-weeks war. Kuwait also a leading role in supporting the secessionists and made a humble contribution, estimated by some sources, at US\$ 400 million. The President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, was one of the first to call for a ceasefire and recognising the partition of the country.

The folly of these states did not, however, change the course of events. The war was fought bravely by both sides, but it was evident from the beginning that it was losing gamble for the southerners. The Saudi camp only added fuel to the war and contributed towards its prolongation. On the other side, Oman took a neutral stand not being able to forecast the outcome. With a long border with south Yemen, they did not want to antagonise the Socialist Party by declaring a total alignment with their foes. As the war wound up, Sultan Qaboos realised he had been misinformed about the way the war was being conducted. He immediately assigned the file of Yemen to the powerful Minister of Information, Abdul Aziz Al Rawwas. He flew to Sanaa and expressed his country's solidarity with the legitimate government of Ali Abdullah Saleh. Furthermore, he assured the leadership in Sanaa that the political leadership who took refuge in his country would not be allowed to engage in any subversive activity against the government. He said that Ali Salem Al Beidh, the leader of the secessionists, had retired from politics.

Those words of the Omani minister contrasted with those coming from Riyadh, Kuwait or Abu Dhabi which are still advocating the cause of the Socialist Party and warning Sanaa of a possible guerrilla war by the remnants of the southern forces. It is ironic that the socialists who had been at loggerheads with the traditional rulers of the Gulf should become heroes in their eyes. The Saudis have definitely got it wrong this time.

What makes the Saudis at more pains is the fact that their northern but much smaller neighbour, Qatar, has all along sided with the victorious North Yemen. The extent of the Qatari support of Sanaa was much more than anyone would have expected. Political gestures were taken including a resolute stand at the United Nations Security Council. The Qataris resisted any move to recognise the partitioning of the country and opposed a GCC-sponsored resolution calling for a ceasefire at the beginning of

June. The Yemenis could not have dreamt of a more supportive ally throughout the crisis. Teams of medical doctors were in action in the North, whilst financial support from Doha did not stop. The Qatari foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani did not try to conceal his real stands and has often declared his independence from the rest of the GCC stands. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the Qatari policies over the last two years have done more damage to the Saudi prestige worldwide as well as at home than any other stands from other countries.

Inside Saudi Arabia more than fifty notable religious scholars signed a petition in support of Sanaa against her socialist foes condemning the secessionists as infidels and anti-Islam. The petition was seen a rebuke to King Fahd's policies and an embarrassing development. It is also an indication of how much the regime is losing grip on events inside the country. With a rising opposition activity inside and outside the Kingdom, the guardian of the Holy Haramain has a serious cause for concern. With the influence of the Saudis over events and stands in the Gulf region eroding at the present pace, it is difficult to see how long the GCC enterprise will survive longer. Although the Qataris have reiterated their support of the GCC alliance, it is difficult to dismiss the disastrous effects of their stands on the morale within the it. In the words of a veteran politician of the GCC, "the Qataris have emerge the real winners from the Yemeni war".

It is in this context that the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have been exchanging views on the feasibility of confederation between their two countries to replace the ailing Gulf Cooperation Council. Although the Kuwaitis have denied the news in this regards, it has long been known that members of the Kuwaiti ruling family have been entertaining the idea. The late Sheikh Jaber Al Ali had often discussed the possibility of a confederation with Saudi Arabia in his Diwanayah (reception place). After his death, King Fahd received his six sons at his office in Jeddah to express his condolences for the demise of the champion of the Kuwaiti-Saudi confederation. However, it must be said that the implementation of such an idea will be extremely hard. The Kuwaitis are known for their liberal political views and they will resist fiercely any attempt to bring them under a more stringent Saudi domination. The lack of freedom in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is enough to rebel any idea of closer cooperation.

This state on instability in the hearts and minds of the Gulf rulers cannot be underestimated. The consequences of the Yemeni crisis remain to be felt and understood. But what is clear is the fact that the shape of the future Gulf on its Arab side is being re-appraised by its rulers and monitored by outsiders. Four years after the disastrous Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the situation in the Gulf is far from settled. With the ongoing political manoeuvring, it is fair to say that Saddam has, once again, proved to be hard to defeat. He has just

launched a campaign of terror against his own people inside and outside the country. The southern marshes are being bombarded continuously and no one is seriously contemplating a serious action to put an end to the misery of the marsh Arabs.

On the other hand, Saddam Hussain has launched a campaign of terror against his foes both inside and outside the country. Earlier this year, an Iraqi opposition figure, Taleb Al Suhail, was gunned down in Beirut by an assassin from the Iraqi embassy. Although the Lebanese government protested harshly and sent some Iraqi diplomats back home, the incident passed away quickly. Last month, Sayyed Mophammad Taqi Al Khoei, the son of the late Grand Ayatullah Abul Qassim Al Khoei was killed in an orchestrated car accident. Three more people were killed with him when their car was run over by a large vehicle. All indications point to a professional assassination plot. The martyr, Al Khoei, had been summoned several time prior to his death by the security service and asked to stop the activities of the Khoei Foundation in London. When he refused to intervene, he was summarily liquidated.

It is therefore ironic to see that Saddam Hussain who had been badly defeated in the 1000 hours war is still in position, and is capable of tracking down and killing his opponents without fearing any reprisal. This is at a time when his enemies, namely the Gulf regimes, have become so fragmented that the whole GCC alliance which comprises them is threatened with collapse. Questions are being asked in the streets of the Gulf capitals; why is it that the region has been so humiliated that even its rulers could not agree on a unified policy? Is the dictatorship? the selfishness? the policies of outright domination? lack of democracy? or is it simply the natural course of political collapse when the rulers are unfit to rule?

### Mapp's Memoir Angered Al-Khalifa

Bert Mapp, a British journalist who spent decades in Bahrain and witnessed events developing and shaping dynasties and destinies. He decided to document his 40 years experience in Bahrain and wrote a book entitled "Leave Well Alone". Bert Mapp, aged 72, first attempted a book on Bahrain in the 1950s after working for two years as the editor of *Bapco* newspaper "The Islander". When he visited Bahrain after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Bert responded to his inner call for writing the book. His accounts were straight-forward. "Southend Standard" newspaper of 21 April 1994 reported that Bert Mapp spent 5000 pounds from his pocket to publish the book. The reason for this is the fact that Bahrain's government refused to sponsor its publishing unless Bert re-writes the book and praise the Al-Khalifa. Bert refused stating "if you drop a hint of feudalism it could be a cause of embarrassment if not offence in Bahrain". Bert decided to suffer the cost and speak his mind rather than complying to feudalism. The book price is 6 pounds or 7.50 by post. Purchase your copy of "Leave Well Alone", ISBN0-9521814-0-1, from Prittle Book Publishers, 120 Eastern Avenue, Southend, Essex SS2 4AT, Tel: 0702-613451.

## Amnesty International's Report 1994 No Respect for Constitution or Human Rights Standards in Bahrain

Around 40 political prisoners, including possible prisoners of conscience, continued serving long prison terms imposed after unfair trials in previous years. Thirty-three political prisoners benefited from amnesties. Sporadic arbitrary arrests took place, principally of members of the majority Shi'a community. Scores of Bahraini nationals were forcibly exiled from the country, although some were allowed to return after years abroad.

In January the newly created Consultative Council held its first session. The council has no legislative powers and its 30 members (15 Sunni and 15 Shi'a Muslims) were appointed by the Amir of Bahrain, Al-Sheik 'Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa. The 1974 State Security Measures, which permit administrative detention without charge or trial for up to three years, as well as provisions governing trial procedures for security cases, remained in force. Such legislation falls far below international human rights standards. No moves were made to introduce basic safeguards for detainees into law and practice.

Approximately 40 political prisoners, including possible prisoners of conscience, continued to serve long prison terms imposed after unfair trials in previous years. Most prisoners were held because of their alleged association with banned Islamic groups such as the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain and Hizbollah, Party of God. Some had been sentenced following an alleged coup attempt in 1981. Long term prisoners included Mohammad Jamil 'Abd al-Amir al-Jamri and Salah al-Khawaja (see Amnesty International Report 1993), who were serving 10-year and seven-year prison sentences respectively for offenses including membership of unauthorized organization.

Three amnesties for political prisoners and victims of forcible exile were declared by the Amir, in March, May and December: 33 prisoners benefited, including some who had been serving long prison terms. Among them were 'Abd al-Karim Bahar, a student, and 'Abd al-Hussein al-Mousawi, an electrician, both of whom were serving sentences of 15 years' imprisonment in connection with the alleged coup attempt.

Reports continued to be received of sporadic arbitrary arrests of members of the Shi'a community. For example, al-Sayyid 'Alawi al-Sayyid Muhsin al-'Alawi was detained twice, apparently following religious commemoration ceremonies. He was held for six weeks following his arrest in August and was rearrested in December. Al-Sayyid Dhiya' al-Sayyid Yahya al-Moussawi was reportedly arrested and detained after delivering a sermon in Manama mosque in September. Both were believed to be prisoners of conscience.

Scores of Bahraini nationals were denied entry when they attempted to return to Bahrain after periods of residence abroad. Ahmed Hussein Akbar 'Abbas was forcibly exiled from Bahrain in 1982 when he was stripped of his Bahraini papers and expelled to Iran. On his return to Bahrain in September with his Lebanese wife and four children, he was reportedly interrogated and beaten. He was then forcibly expelled to Lebanon, where he was also refused entry and returned to Bahrain. He was again expelled by the Bahrain Authorities to Lebanon, where he was given temporary residence.

Bahraini nationals who returned to Bahrain with expired passports after an absence of some years abroad were often issued with new one-year Bahraini passports, sometimes valid for two or three countries, before being forcibly

exiled from the country. Dr 'Abd al-Aziz Rashid al-Rashid, a doctor attempted to return to Bahrain in November. In the course of one week he was expelled from Bahrain four times, but repeatedly refused entry by other countries. He was finally issued with a new Bahraini passport, valid for one year, before being sent to United Arab Emirates. However, several Bahrainis who had been forcibly exiled from the country for long periods were allowed to return to Bahrain in 1993, although for some it had taken more than one attempt.

Amnesty International expressed concern to the government about arbitrary arrests and cases of forcible exile, and called on the authorities to respect international human rights standards. The organization welcomed the releases as a result of the amnesties. In December Amnesty International issued a report, Banned from Bahrain: Forcible exile of Bahrain nationals, and called on the government to end its policy of forcible exile by issuing a public declaration on Bahrain's national day that all Bahraini nationals were entitled to return there.

In response to appeals on behalf of Mohammad Jamil 'Abd al-Amir al-Jamri, the Minister of the Interior denied that he had been tortured and said he had received a fair trial. Amnesty International's request for information regarding any investigation into Mohammad al-Jamri's alleged torture and a copy of the court's judgment remained without response. The Minister also informed Amnesty International of the release of two detainees whose cases it had raised in 1992. The Minister said that he had arrived in Bahrain with no travel documents with normal international practice. The response failed to take into account the obligation of all states to readmit their own nationals.

## AI: Forcible Exile Continues

Amnesty International (AI) issued two urgent actions on 23 June and on 18 July concerning the forcible exile of several Bahraini citizens. On 23 June, AI stated that it "has received reports that Nabeel Baqir has been forcibly exiled to Iran... Forcible exile of Bahraini nationals suspected of political opposition activities remains one of Amnesty International's main concerns in the country. While dozens of Bahraini nationals were allowed to return to Bahrain after living abroad for many years, scores more have been denied this right during 1993 and remain victims of forcible exile, apparently for exercising their right to freedom of opinion and expression. According to information received by AI, victims of forcible exile from Bahrain are frequently given no reason for the measure taken against them and are denied the opportunity to appeal the decision to expel them or challenge its legality through the courts. Not only is such a practice in contravention of international human rights standards, 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 prevent Bahraini citizens from returning

to Bahrain".

On 18 July, AI issued another urgent action stating that Abd al-'Adhim Derwish, a Bahraini national, is at risk of being forcibly exiled to Iran, apparently because of his political opposition activities. On 11 July 1994 he returned to Bahrain and was arrested for four days before being forcibly sent to Denmark, via Frankfurt. Because he didn't have any travel documents, the authorities at Frankfurt Airport sent him back to Bahrain, via Abu Dhabi, on 17 July. Another Bahraini national, Ali Derwish Moussa, who had been forcibly exiled to Iran two years ago, was sent back by the Iranian authorities to Bahrain on 5 July because he did not have any identity papers. He was arrested on arrival at the airport and held for five days before being forcibly sent to Lebanon. He was refused entry to Lebanon and was sent back to Bahrain on 13 July. There he was arrested and held for one day before being forcibly exiled to Abu Dhabi.

AI called on its supporters to send urgent messages expressing regret that nationals are forcibly exiled in contravention of international human rights standards and constitution; and seeking clarification of the current situation.

## HR Activist, Andrew Whitley, Trades Places

The US-based organisation, Human Rights Watch, served sacred purposes in its mission for protection of human rights in the world. One of its leading figures, Mr. Andrew Whitley, was responsible for the exposure of many human rights violations in the Gulf, as part of his previous role in the Middle East Watch. Recently, Mr. Whitley left his post at the Middle East Watch and visited Bahrain on a private mission. According to unconfirmed reports, the Ministry of Information had made a daring proposal and succeeded in commissioning Andrew Whitley for improving the image of Bahrain. As to the ways and means that such a task may be accomplished, the only clue is that Mr. Whitley is highly regarded in his capability of sensing the damages suffered by Bahrain due to its flagrant violation of human rights. This is not to say that Andrew Whitley has sold out. He may have thought that he could serve human rights better by working for a project sponsored by the Bahraini Ministry of Information. On the other hand, it would be very hard to see a critical report being authored and published using a dictator's money. Whatever may be produced should reflect reality and truth.