

# BAHRAIN

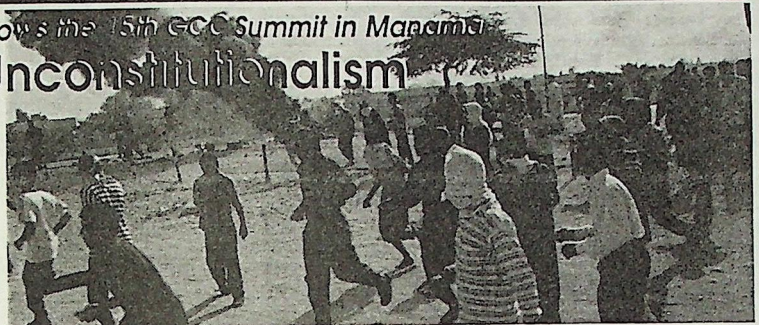
*A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement*

## The Blood of Martyrs Overshadows the 15th GCC Summit in Manama Uprising Against Unconstitutionalism

Whatever "successes" are claimed for the 15th summit of the leaders of the countries comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council, the events in Bahrain, prior to, during, and after the Manama summit have left no doubt about the fragility of the internal situation in the Gulf. Despite their attempts to level the blame of the instability on anyone but themselves, the Gulf leaders have been subjected to the most horrifying experience as they struggled for three days to ignore the sounds of firearms, helicopter gunships, and tear-gas grenades exploding barely a kilometre away. The Meredian, owned and sold recently by Ali bin Khalifa, the Minister of Transport and the son of Bahrain's prime minister, had just been inaugurated and prepared to receive the annual ritual. Being on the outskirts of the town of Sanabis, residents of the hotel, including the foreign ministers of the GCC countries, who were holding their final meeting before the summit, must have heard the sound of the guns and other lethal weapons as they sprayed the young men as they carried their grievances to the streets. The bullets fired on the demonstrators meant the end of an undeclared truce between the government and the people, who have been at a virtual war for many years. It is a war between the pro-democracy constitutionalists and the totalitarian despotic clique that has ruled the country with an iron-fist policy.

Many questions are being asked, however, by observers and politicians alike; Who gave the orders to shoot unarmed and peaceful demonstrators? Why should the freedom of expression be banned in modern time and age? Why is the Al Khalifa government adamant in its refusal to restore the Constitution? What is the role of the British officers managing the Bahraini secret service, and headed by the notorious Ian Henderson, in the events? Should the world tolerate this degree of totalitarianism in countries whose governments have consistently denied their subjects any degree of freedom? Why are the Western countries, especially the United States and Great Britain, silent on the whole affair? These questions and many others will impose themselves as the crisis deepens in the region. As the 15th GCC summit in Manama has proved, the priorities of the Gulf rulers are not the development of their countries in modern ways but the containment of the rising popular anger as demands for political reforms are audaciously ignored.

The fashion often reiterated by officials is that demands of reforms are synonyms of extremism and fundamentalism. Although these slogans are outdated, certain circles in the West prefer to believe them in order to justify prop-



ping up absolutist regimes such as the tribal ones in the Gulf. Sultan Qaboos of Oman spoke the minds of the rest when he encouraged his colleagues to concentrate on the issue of extremism that was threatening the security of the GCC countries. However, this issue is not raised in a country like Kuwait, which has allowed a degree of freedom of expression and political participation. The issue of the rights of women remains to be settled even in Kuwait. This is why the popular petition which has been at the centre of the recent crisis in Bahrain, has clearly addressed the issue of women on equal footing with the demand for the restoration of the Constitution. The opposition in certain Gulf countries is well ahead of the tribal regimes, especially in Bahrain. Here, the people are demanding the rule of Law and Constitution whilst the government prefers to rule the country under emergency laws and royal decrees. Ironically, this outdated version of governance still attracts the admiration of the West on the pretext that "these regimes are allies" of the West. Instead of supporting the Constitutional movement, the West has gone along the logic of the governments which label any demand for reforms as an evidence of extremism.

The failure of the Manama summit to address the real issues facing the region, is clear from the list of priorities on its agenda. The signing of the Security Agreement proposed more than a decade ago and shelved over the years reflects the growing concern amongst the GCC leaders vis-a-vis the popular demands for reforms. The people of Bahrain have shown beyond any shadow of doubt, how people can rise up to the challenges of despotic regimes and win the psychological war. The government of Bahrain has failed in almost every move to quell the disturbances which continued throughout December. The security forces have killed at least three people, injured more than ten, detained hundreds of people and deployed various forms of riot controls some of which are internationally prohibited including live ammunition. The people put up a fierce resistance to the attempts of the government to falsify the real issue. It is now clear to the world that the

people of Bahrain want nothing less than the restoration of the Country's Constitution of 1973. Whatever the Al Khalifa family has said, it has failed to address this core problem, and none of the officials has ever commented on the question of the restoration of the Constitution. This dilemma of the regime is shared by other governments of the region, most notably, Saudi Arabia which has taken practical steps to crush the uprising, including the despatch of troops across the causeway to take up positions around the towns and villages. This outrageous interference in the internal affairs of the country is a further evidence that the Saudis have more sinister plans in the Gulf.

The people of Bahrain have sacrificed their youth to achieve a noble cause; the rule of law in a country ruled by the enemies of the Constitution. On the other hand, the Al Khalifa have shown readiness to use unlimited force to crush people's demands. They had arrested a leading figure in the pro-democracy movement, Sheikh Ali Salman, with the belief that his detention would end the popular demand for the Constitution. They have failed. The shadow of martyrs of the cause will haunt the killers for a long time to come, and the many hundreds of detainees are yet another reminder of the cruelty of the Al Khalifa. This government which has failed in almost every foreign encounter seeks to retain a degree of credibility through the systematic butchering of her own people. The Al Khalifa have relinquished Bahrain's sovereignty over the two islands of Greater and Lesser Bayna, and the oil-rich field of Abu Sa'afa to the Al Saud, lost sovereignty over the Fasht Al Dibel and Jarada reefs and may lose the legal battle over the islands of Huwar to Qatar. Their military victory over unarmed young men seeking a just cause, cannot restore the integrity of the regime. The only way forward after what has happened is to abandon the policies of nepotism and accept the logic of the people. The restoration of the Country's Constitution is the way to peace, tranquillity and prosperity. The hostile and cruel policies of the Al Khalifa have failed. It is time to change track and identify with people's demand.

## The Government Has No Option But to Restore the Constitution December Uprising: A New Chapter in Bahrain's History

The total number of people killed by the security forces is still to be confirmed. Many people are believed to have been killed. On 17 December, the security forces using live ammunition shot two people dead in Sanabis and Jedhafs, 3 miles west of the capital, Manama. They were: (1) Hani Abbas Khamis, 23 years old, Sanabis. A university student in his final academic year; (2) Hani Ahmed Al-Wasti, 22 years old, Jedhafs, an employee at the Ministry of Health who was preparing for marriage in few days; (3) Haji Mirza Ali Abdul-Redha, 65 years old man from Al-Qadam village. He was killed after police stormed Musharraf Mosque in Jidhafs on 20 December. It is believed that other people may have been murdered but their bodies are yet to be released from Salmanya Hospital, which now incorporates an 'excluded area' for those injured during the uprising. Family visits are strictly forbidden.

There are many people in critical conditions. One of them had an operation to remove 50 splinters from his body. Amongst the injured are Badir Habib Jumaa, 21 years old from Sanabis (suffering from two bullet wounds in the chest abdomen); Riyadh Ashoor, 29 year old from Sanabis is still in intensive care unit; Mansoor Abdul Redha, 18 years old from Bani-Jamra (suffering from a bullet wound in his knee); Hussain Al-Nashaba, 21 years old from Nuaim (hit by a bullet in the back); Sadeq Khamis, 24 years old from Sanabis (shot in his shoulder); Hussain Ramadhan, 15 years old boy, was hit by two bullets in the chest on 19 December in Sanabis. On 18 December, Mrs. Zainab Al-Rashed - from Daih - was hit in the eye by bullet fragment when she resisted the dawn-raiders before they arrested and detained her son. Her eye has now been removed by doctors. Another lady from Jedhafs is also in hospital suffering from bullets wounds. Hussain Abdulla from Dair is lying in hospital suffering from sever wounds; Ali Mohammed Ismael, 52 years old man from Bani Jamra had three broken ribs caused by police beating.

The authorities ordered all doctors to report names of people requesting treatment from bullet wounds. The police used special types of bullets that explode in the body spreading glass-type sharp particles, many children have suffocated from smothering-type of tear gas.

Mass arrests were taking place every where. For example, on 23 December, dawn raids on Sitra resulted in more than 40 people detained, some of them wives and sisters taken hostages to force their relatives to give themselves up. The authorities ordered the municipality workers not to collect rubbish in Sitra. A group of people volunteered to clear the mounting refuse, but were arrested. In Ras Romman the same thing was happening. Mr. Majid Milad's wife was arrested until her husband gave himself up.

Sheikh Mohammed Ali Al-Ekri (about 60 years old) was arrested after writing a letter to the Emir requesting a meeting about the events. He had spent 5 years in jail during the Eighties and the "Times" newspaper of 11 January 1983 sponsored him as a "Prisoner of Conscience". Sheikh Mihammed Al-Tal also disappeared.

The last thing the GCC heads of states

expected whilst attending their annual summit in Manama, was to smell tear gas. But they did. Moreover, they witnessed the Bahraini capital and nearby areas engulfed in fire as pro-democracy demonstrators were being shot at by security forces. On 20 and 21 December, demonstrations spread to Bahrain University campuses (both at Sukhair and Madinat Isa) as well as in Sanabis, Manama and villages along the north-western Budayaa Highway of Bahrain. Around 300 university students were picketing everyday and classes are suspended. Many people were injured and reports speak of many victims on the streets and in hospitals around the country. On 22 December, demonstrations continued in Dair (in Muharraq island) and in several villages in the central and south-western areas of Bahrain.

On 13 December, Sheikh Ali Salman (whose arrest on 5 December sparked-off the uprising) was brought before the civil court. Fifteen lawyers volunteered to defend him, amongst them are Ahmed Al-Shamlan, Mohammed Ahmed, Salman Seyadi, Abdulla Hashem, Abdul Shaheed Khalaf, Hasan Bedaiwi, Jalila Al-Hullaibi, Layla Al-Mahari and others. The judge could not prove any charge against Sheikh Salman, given the strength of the defense and decided to postpone the trial till 20 December.

On 20 December, Sheikh Ali Salman was not present at the court room. But the public prosecutor read a ministerial order announcing that Sheikh Salman is now detained under the provisions of the State Security Law. Sixteen lawyers have consequently demanded that Sheikh Salman must receive an independent medical examination to verify reports that he has been either tortured or killed (since he has not attended the second hearing on 20 December).

By 25 December, it was known that three hundred (300) prisoners were detained and held under the provisions of the State Security Law. The latter empowers the interior minister to order the administrative detention of any person for up to 3 years without trial. It is worth noting that it was this law that caused the dissolving of the National Assembly, when all deputies refused to pass the law. Under Bahrain's constitution, no document can become law unless both the National Assembly and the Amir (head of state) approve the draft.

The number of prisoners was reported last by AFP (on 22 December) to be more than 1600 people. The whereabouts of many people are not known, whether in hospitals, detention centres or in hiding. It is reported that the prisoners are held in concentration camps purposefully constructed with barbed wires inside the Qala' Fort in Manama. A recently released detainee reported that all forms of torture are being used to force the detainees to sign prepared papers containing false confessions. He identified two people whose figures were deformed due to torture: Hussain Al-Tattan and Jaffer Al-Sayyah.

On 20 December, seventy members of the Bahrain community in London picketed in front of the Bahrain Embassy protesting against the killings and oppression in their country. The

"Independent" newspaper quoted eye-witnesses comparing Bahrain with the Palestinian Intifada. Eye witnesses in the capital, Manama, said they heard bursts of automatic weapon fire on 20 December, reported the "Independent" of 21 December.

A statement was issued on 17 December by Bahraini notables condemning the actions of the government and calling for the immediate release of Sheikh Ali Salman and other prisoners. The statement affirmed the aims of the demonstrators by calling for the return of parliamentary life, allowing freedom of press and expression, releasing all political prisoners, stopping the violation of civil rights, especially the right to travel and return back home.

In Sanabis, Daih and Jedhafs clashes between demonstrators and police continued until the early hours of Monday morning, 19 December. The National Bank of Bahrain offices in Jedhafs were damaged by police missile fire. The University of Bahrain is currently the scene of clashes as students gathered to mourn one of them, Hani Abbas Khamis, who was killed on 17 December. Funerals were held in many parts of the country, with speeches condemning both the ruling family, Al-Khalifa, and the British security chief, Ian Henderson. Clashes were erupting wherever these funerals had been held. The authorities cut off public utilities (water and electricity) to critical areas. Armoured vehicles were also deployed, and road checkpoints are now common along major roads. Chronology of events started as follows:

\* The Bahrain's security forces started their crackdown on pro-democracy movement on 5 December, and have unleashed an oppressive campaign to divert attention from a petition being submitted to the Amir (ruler of Bahrain) demanding for the suspended constitution and the parliament dissolved since 1975 to be re-activated. What enraged the authorities is the fact that the petition, the second in two years, has been sponsored by all sections and political tendencies in Bahrain including, for the first time, a female university professor, Dr. Moncera Fakhroo, representing women rights. This comprehensive political action has ridiculed the government's attempts to drive a wedge between the various religious and national groupings. The fourteen sponsors of the petition represent the Shia and Sunni communities, secularists, liberals and Islamists. Such a nation-wide consensus has not been seen since the fifties, and this explains the government's ferocious clamp-down on the pro-democracy movement.

\* On Monday 5 December at 2.00 am, the security forces carried out a dawn-raid on the residence of Sheikh Ali Salman in Bilad-al-Qadeem (5 kilometers southwest of Manama). This signaled the start of the latest crackdown. Scores of youth were arrested in similar dawn-raids. On Monday morning, crowds started to assemble in a mosque in front of the residence of Sheikh Salman. Similar gatherings took place in other mosques including the grand Khawajah Mosque in the capital Manama, where Sheikh Salman leads the daily prayers. Between Tuesday and Friday 6-9 December,

## December Uprising... (Continued from last page)

security forces were deployed around mosques and other areas in the country. Hundreds of people were arrested and are undergoing interrogation and torture. The demonstrations by now have spread to most areas in the country. On Saturday 10 December, a delegation of four people arranged for a meeting with the prime minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, but were turned away. On 12 December the delegation then met the minister of interior, Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al-Khalifa, who turned down their plea to release Sheikh Ali Salman and other prisoners.

\* On Tuesday 13 December, armed security forces attacked the demonstrations in Bilad-al-Qadeem and Makharqah district of Manama. Barrages of tear gas and rubber bullets rained down on the peaceful gatherings. In Manama, the demonstrators broke away and spread in the old market (souk). Confrontations followed with many injuries and a damage to properties. From Wednesday 14 December onwards, demonstrations erupted all over the country. In Sitra (the oil island), men, women and children demonstrated continuously. The security forces blocked all the roads and used helicopters to fire rubber bullets. In Duraz, northwest of Bahrain, similar demonstrations took place all days and nights. Then, the marches spread to Bani-Jamra, Qadam, Barbar, Abo-Saibaa, Massala, Karrana, Bilad-al-Qadeem, Sitra, Manama, Muharra, Hidd, Dair, Karzakkan, Demestan, Jidd-al-Haj, Ras-Romman, Sanabis and other areas.

\* Security forces blocked the main Budayya Highway on Friday 16 December, while their helicopters continued raining rubber bullets and tear gas on north-western villages extending from Jidhafs to Duraz. Hundreds of people were arrested on the spot and during dawn-raids all over the country. A state of emergency was implemented. The reserve military forces were called up and columns of military vehicles marched from Saudi Arabia across the bridge linking the two countries. The town and villages of Sitra island were besieged and a major security crack-down resulted in scores of arrests. Fire and smoke together with tear gas were visible from far distances in many parts of the country. As the Amir celebrated his 33rd enthronement day on 16 December, a complete black-out on news was imposed. News-agencies were prevented from reporting the events.

\* The demands raised by demonstrators were clearly stated in pamphlets and speeches. These include: (1) Releasing Sheikh Ali Salman and all the others detained since the start of the uprising on 5 December. (2) Formation of an independent commission to investigate who ordered and started shooting and killing demonstrators and punishing them (3) Return of constitutional life and fixing a date for legislative elections (4) Releasing all political prisoners, who were in jail before the uprising (5) Allowing the return of political exiles without any pre-conditions (6) Abolishing the State Security Law of 1974 (7) Expelling the British officer, Ian Henderson, who has masterminded the oppressive campaigns for the last thirty years.

## A Police State Can't Be Polite..

Bahrain, as the Economist once described, is a polite police-state. Polite in the sense that political physical killing was meant to be kept to a minimum. May be so, if compared to the Death Squads of South America. The British officers running the intelligence department of Bahrain, killed only six people under torture in the Eighties. A similar number of people died under torture in the Seventies. However, Henderson's men made the maximum number of killing in a month last December. Those tortured to death in the Eighties included: Jamil Al-Ali, Karim Al-Habshi, Sheikh Jamal Al-Asfoor, Mohammed Hassan Madan, Mahdi Ibrahim and Dr. Hashim Al-Alawi. Some others died in mysterious circumstances after being released from custody. Looking at the situation differently, from the point of view of human dignity, rights and honour, the killing of even one person under torture is a ruthless crime. Had the government of Bahrain been a different one, that is not being propped-up by US military and UK security officers, the killing and torture would make headlines and the UN might consider serious measures to put an end to violation of human rights. When in 1992, the UN Human Rights Commission listed Bahrain under the monitoring scheme, the US representative Mr. Schattock, saved no effort to get Bahrain off the list. The Bahraini authorities and British security officers have prevented Amnesty International from inspecting the conditions of political prisoners. It is now four years since Amnesty was promised a visit. The same thing happened to Lord Avebury, Chair-

man of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Committee. When he was just about set-off to Bahrain in November, the authorities delayed his visit indefinitely. What goes on in Bahrain's jails is much below the lowest standards that can ever be accepted by civilised people. In fact, the Amir (head of state) and Ian Henderson (head of intelligence) always compare themselves to Saddam of Iraq and declare that if the prisoners in their hands were in Iraq, they would have been hanged without question. Comparing oneself to the devil or Saddam, will always show that there is a long way to go before attaining the highest level of ruthlessness.

Indeed, Ian Henderson does not need to be like Saddam. After all, Bahrain is an island of around half a million people with two points of exit/entry to the country. There is no army to fear, thanks to the US military presence in the region. But Henderson is certainly capable of being a customised Saddam of Bahrain. To be fair, Bahrainis are not violent in their nature, and have always resorted to peaceful means. Surely, the like of Henderson would not be able to continue enjoying themselves while creating miseries to others, had they been in a different country. This non-violent nature is not to be regretted. It has saved shedding blood of people, at the time when the unarmed opposition were being killed and tortured to death. May be it is time for the West to stand by their slogans and end the selectivity that characterise their relationship with the oppressive regime in Bahrain. This can be achieved at least by condemning the British officers who are torturing pro-democracy activists. Lord Avebury did the right thing by standing for liberalism.

## Lord Avebury: We Should Not Tolerate Henderson

The "Independent" newspaper of 22 December 1994 published the letter sent by Lord Avebury, Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group. The letter stated the following:

Sir: The reason for the demonstrations mentioned in Michael Sheridan's article "Violent Shia protests embarrass Bahrain" (20 December), was the demand for restorations of the 1973 constitution, under which the state had an elected Parliament. The Emir dismissed the Parliament in 1975 and has ruled by decree since then. The arrest of Sheikh Ali Salman for voicing this demand was only the spark which set off the unrest of the Parliamentary Humad if he had not spoken out, others would have done so.

A petition signed by more than 25,000 people, calling for the restoration, was to have been presented on or about 16 December, the Bahraini National Day. The leader chosen to present it was Dr Abdul Latif El Mahmoud, a Sunni Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Bahrain, but it was supported by people from every section of the community.

Few if any of those involved in the demonstrations were from the Persian-speaking minority, which constitutes 15 per cent of the population. There is no question of revival of

Iranian claims to Bahrain, which were disposed of by the United Nations nearly a quarter of a century ago.

We have a list of 79 people arrested since the troubles began on 5 December but we know that the actual total is much higher. Four people are known to have been killed by the security forces, and others are critically injured. Under the emergency law prevailing in Bahrain, a person may be detained without charge for three years, and the detainee may be renewed indefinitely.

Michael Sheridan does point out that a British citizen, Ian Henderson, commands the security apparatus of Bahrain, and many people here will be surprised that we should tolerate an arrangement which associates us with abuses of human rights in another country.

I had hoped to visit Bahrain as the guest of the Government in November, but the authorities cancelled at the last moment, suggesting that early 1995 would be more convenient. Recently they again put me off, without suggesting that an alternative date. It might help to restore confidence in the Bahrain Government's good intentions if they would reinstate their invitation to me, for a January visit.

Yours faithfully: ERIC AVEBURY  
House of Lords, London SW1  
20 December.

## Bad State of the Economy Exacerbated the Situation Nepotism with a Chronology of Failures

December 1994 marked a new chapter in the struggle of the Bahrainis against the despotic rule of the Al Khalifa family. Throughout the country demonstrators had one thing in common, namely that of restoring the constitution and having a say in the running of the country's affairs. This is the case where the inhabitants are denied to have a say in the government and administration of the nation. The basic demands of the rallies are nothing short than the full implementation of the country's constitution and the return of the parliamentary life in addition to freedom of expression and press. Bahrainis rightly believe that they deserve to live in a civilized manner.

The pro-democracy uprising showed very clearly that the authorities could not tolerate any sort of peaceful calls for political liberalization. Instead of entering into talks with the leaders of the pro-democracy uprising, the regime employed its arsenal of weapons and caused killing and injuries in scattered parts of the country. It is claimed that these weaponry systems were bought from the U.S. and U.K. for defensive purposes. However, the regime proved that it was ready to do away with its commitments regarding the use of weapons. Worse yet, forces were imported from Saudi Arabia to help crush the uprising.

Western countries need reconsider their ties with the rulers of Bahrain if only because of persistent human rights violations and absence of political participation. The rulers certainly deserve strong condemnation by the international community.

Aside from the just political causes behind the pro-democracy and pro-political liberalization demonstrations, economic reasons likewise played a critical role. The country suffers from an acute unemployment problem. Discrimination is widespread based on religious and tribal backgrounds. Corruption is the name of the game in the country. In short, an elite is ruling and benefiting from the country's resources while the majority are treated as beggars.

The labour market is one of the strangest in the world. There are too many expatriate workers, period. As of 1992, some 237,800 comprised the labour force; of these, some 143,400 or 60% were expatriates and the balance were Bahrainis; unfortunately, many or some 15,000 expatriates happened to be without jobs.

Bahrain's population in 1992 stood at 519,400; of these, some 190,200 or nearly 37% of the total were expatriates primarily from India, Pakistan, the Philippines and others.

The issue is not that of having expatriate workers or not. Definitely, the need for professionals and unskilled workers is there but the question is asked to what extent. There is a need for some sort of planning and program. What bothers the regime is to allow the people to have any kind of say in the nation's administration. The presence of so many expatriates is partly responsible for the 20-30% jobless problem among the locals.

The labourers in Bahrain enter the coun-

try formally with a government document known as NOC or no objection certificate. The document effectively translates that the authorities have no objection for the entrance to the country of the Asians and others. The critical reason for these people to come to Bahrain is working. The authorities charge handsomely for issuing the documents. Here the interest groups (Bahrain's version of political action committees or PAC who solicit Congressmen in Washington) play their roles. Some people especially members of Al Khalifa and some influential families and persons have become ultra rich from trading into the NOC documents.

Many of the expatriates are in the country in the form of free visa. These Asians are brought by a member of the Al Khalifa or other influential figures and damped in the local markets to find jobs. Worse yet, these free visa holders are badly treated and provided with poor housing with totally inadequate access to health services.

Publicly, top figures from the regime spare no time asserting that the flow of expatriates ought to be checked. The reality is that visitors to the airport are assured of witnessing one thing in common, namely the tens of expatriate workers who come on a daily basis. True some leave, but most of those who depart Bahrain return after vacationing in their home countries.

Pressure is being applied on the private sector to employ more and more locals. Certainly this is a futile policy because the private enterprises care about cost and other matters that are not favourable for employing the locals. A government-commissioned report in the early 1990s found that the Bahrainis make up only 25% of the total employment in the private sector. The study concluded that despite all the attempts, the private sector remains not receptive for employing locals. This is attributed chiefly to the availability of a much cheaper alternative or the skilled and un-skilled labourers from Asia in particular.

In other parts of the Gulf, the locals are mostly not interested in touching jobs occupied by expatriates. This is not true in the case of Bahrain, where the locals do all sort of works including washing cars, being porters carrying goods of the shoppers in the marketplace.

The following figures show a clear misgiving on the part of the authorities. In the first quarter of 1994, permits issued for fresh expatriates grew by more than 50% compared to the similar period in 1993; some 12,861 work permits were issued in the first quarter of 1994 compared with 8,323 in the first quarter in 1993, as per a report by the Economist Intelligence Unit on Bahrain for the third quarter of 1994.

Figures issued by the authorities claim that some 3,641 Bahrainis found jobs in 1993 versus 3,118 in 1992, showing nearly a rise of 17%. About 20% of the newly found posts went to females. Even if the figures happen to correct, the statistics are not encouraging whatsoever. Every year, hundreds graduate from the schools and several thousand locals enter the labour market not to mention the many already jobless. By one estimate nearly 5,000 people enter the

job market annually.

The age distribution is the alarming signal. As of 1989, 35.1% of the total population were classified as below 14, the necessary age to be included in the labour force. Most of the unemployed fall in the 15-24 category who make 15.7% of the inhabitants. With unemployment already dangerously high, one wonders of the future awaiting the new entrants to the labour force. With all the economical hardships, the government spends a great deal of the country's resources on the defense and interior ministries. As of 1994, together the two portfolios eat up some 26% of the total budget or nearly 30% of the total revenues aside from the deficit. The figures are not all inclusive as their are some special grants given to these two establishments from countries such as the U.S. (rent for using facilities), UAE, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The three Gulf countries consider the security of their regimes related to that of Bahrain and thus help the Bahrain fend off calls for democracy and civil liberties though financial and military assistance.

The spending on the military is certainly wrong for at times of trouble, the American and British forces are called in to help. It has never occurred to those employed by the military organization that they would ever engage into hostilities. For example, during the U.S. led war against Iraq, only one Bahrain soldier died but that not in combat; he died as a result of the explosion of a mine that he was playing with in Kuwait following the liberation. If it was not for the military, the government could certainly save a lot of money and spend that on the economic development.

Corruption has become an integral part of business. The country's resources are enjoyed by an elite. Most of them happen to be members of the Al Khalifa rulers; the others are members of some rich families and still others certain individuals by virtue of readiness to do anything for money. To start with, members of the Al Khalifa are exempted from all sorts of taxes, and utility charges. Top members of the ruling regime are entitled for free plots of lands from reclaimed areas of the country; then the recipients sell the properties for fortune. Moreover, government tenders cannot but pass through the Prime Minister and his son Ali. At least a 10% commission of the proposed business value must be pre-paid. There is no end in sight for the sorts of wrong doing committed by the junior members of Al Khalifa. Nepotism has become the most secured way of securing jobs.

When earlier in the summer, hundreds of jobless gathered at the Ministry of Labour with a clear demand, namely that the government does some to relieve the situation, they were suppressed by police carrying out a high handed policy of the Interior Minister, who is a close relative of the ruler. The regime is becoming aware that the masses are increasingly showing less and less fear of the state's massive security apparatus; to be sure, compared to the other Gulf countries including Saudi Arabia, the security agents of Al Khalifa are the most notorious. The uprising has come to herald a new chapter in Bahrain political system.