

BAHRAIN

A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement

The World Must Intervene to Stop Repression in Bahrain

The Sheikdom of Fear

Four months into the popular movement in the Gulf state of Bahrain, and the situation is as rampant as ever. The people are insisting on their demands at the centre of which is the restoration of the country's 1973 Constitution, whilst the Al Khalifa government continues to adopt heavy-handed policies to crush the people. Reports of deaths and injuries dampen the hope that the regime will come back to its senses and take seriously the legitimate rights of the people. The situation has boiled down to a statement with daily demonstrations and protests in various forms and shapes. But this status ante could not go on for a long time. It has now transpired that the opposition is so serious about achieving its goals that no matter what sacrifices may be necessary, the political situation in Bahrain must never be allowed to slide back to its state prior to the uprising. This message is clear from the releases of the various groups outside the country and from the leadership of the people inside.

It is with regret that the Al Khalifa of Bahrain should view the situation in a black and white image. They have persistently said that they would not allow the integrity of the government to be undermined and that they would resist people's demands if that meant more bloodshed. This is one of the strong basis for the opposition's argument that the present regime has failed its national and international obligations. A government some times concedes to the legitimate demands of the people. It is beyond comprehension to assume that the use of force will ever sort out a messy situation. It is only dictatorial regimes that insist on not bowing to the wind. These rulers have often landed themselves and their people in trouble. Germany was destroyed fifty years ago as Hitler insisted on opposing the world. As the West prepares to celebrate the Golden jubilee of the end of the Second World War this summer, many lessons are being reiterated, the most important of which is that dictators must not be allowed to pursue their own agenda of destruction and human rights violations. The world paid heavily to end the Nazi phenomenon, but new forms of racism and tribalism have emerged.

Another more recent example is that of Saddam Hussain. Here a whole nation being held to ransom after two decades living under his dictatorship. For a long time, the West remained silent on what was taking place within Iraq. Little attention, if any, was paid to the deteriorating record of abuses of the basic values of human existence. When the time of reckoning approached, the past history was uncovered to the horror of the world.

Although much smaller in volume, the Al

Khalifa regime is no smaller a threat to peace and security of the region. Although it is a regime that could not pose a threat to western interests, the people of Bahrain are being victimised in such a way that could enrage other people of the region. There is a limit to what the people could take in terms of suffering and ill-treatment, and once emotions erupt, the results could be catastrophic. The Prime Minister of Bahrain, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, has often expressed admiration towards the character of Saddam Hussain. His treatment of our people is a testimony to the style of repression and mass punishment the world has so categorically opposed. The silence of the countries of interests in the region is not conducive to the eventual state of affairs in the Gulf. There are already signs of discontent amongst citizens of other Gulf states, and voices are being raised against the lack of action on the part of the international community towards the situation in Bahrain.

The prospects for eventual change in the region have improved recently. The Saudi regime has now become under the scrutiny of the international community. Several critical reports on the internal situation in the Kingdom have appeared in reputable publications such as the "Time" and "The Economist". Discussing an inevitable change in the regime is now ripe amongst journalists. The "Economist" also published a report on the situation in Bahrain implying that action has to be taken with regards the implementation of the constitution in order to restore peace to that country. It is therefore becoming clear that interest is at last being expressed in the affairs of the region. The concerned powers have now realised how dangerous the political stagnation could be, and that serious address of the situation in both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain must be considered a priority.

The people of Bahrain have now established themselves as both genuine in their demands and serious about getting along to achieve them. They have undertaken many initiatives to that end and have faced enormous difficulties. No less than ten people have been killed with hundreds injured and thousands jailed.

The Al Khalifa tribal government has embarked upon a reign of terror unprecedented in the Gulf states. The latest example of this being the siege of the village of Nuwaidrat since 22nd March 1995. Arbitrary arrests, looting, forced break-ins to the houses, are tactics that have been employed to bring the people to their knees. This followed the arrest of a prominent figure from that village, Mr. Abdul Wahab

Hussain, few days earlier for sponsoring the popular petition demanding the reinstatement of the Constitution. Together with five others, the group has addressed the Amir, Sheikh Isa bin Salman al Khalifa in the most polite way urging him to fulfil his commitment and restore the Constitution. This policy of collective punishment has driven those on the fringe of politics to side with the popular uprising to the dismay of the government.

However, the resolve of the people is such that the era of fear has now passed. Foreign powers are expressing concern that such a movement may be a prelude to a wider movement to effect political change in the Gulf system of government. Despite the fact that the people of Bahrain have not called for the overthrow of the Al Khalifa dynasty from power, and have confined their demands to the restoration of the Constitution, the government has failed to address the crisis in an objective manner. This has led to a spiral of incidents that could escalate into a violent confrontation between the unarmed civilians and the heavily armed mercenaries. Here, the position of the British officer, Ian Henderson, is crucial. He has ordered the mass-detentions, torture and killing of innocent civilians. The British government has distanced itself from his acts but failed to justify its reluctance to demand his expulsion from Bahrain. After all, he was installed at the head of the security apparatus in 1966 by the British under whose protection Bahrain remained until 1971. His heavy-handed tactics have so far failed to silence the people of Bahrain, and some analysts fear that unless he is recalled from Bahrain, the situation may deteriorate further.

There does not seem to be any other way forward than the restoration of the Constitution. The opposition has addressed wise men within the Al Khalifa family, if there are any of them, to put an end to the monopoly on power being adopted by the Prime Minister. They have been warned that everyone in Bahrain, including themselves, will continue to suffer the effects of instability and uncertainty if he is allowed to have his own way. Four months of non-stop people's protests must be enough to make everyone realise this is not the way to run a country. Dictatorship is out of fashion, and people's blood could not go in vain. The constitution is a guarantee of stability, security, and, hopefully, prosperity. We hope this message will be delivered by the personalities who are scheduled to visit Bahrain later this month to address the Third Annual Gulf Economics Forum. Surely, foreign investment could not come when blood spills in the streets.

More Citizens Killed, Detained and Tortured

Uprising-2: The Arrest of Abdul Wahab Hussain

* 8 March: Mr Hussain Ma'atooq, a 12 years old handicapped person died after being paralysed by a security forces helicopter that circled at a low level around the house of his parent in Daih village. The young person was on the roof at that time and as a result his health deteriorated causing his death.

* 16 March: A mass demonstration took to the streets of Sanabis, west of the capital Manama, today at 3.30 p.m. local time. The Pro-Democracy campaigners distributed pamphlets in the past few days announcing that the demonstration would take place. The security forces were put on full alert around the surrounding areas. Despite the heavy presence of the latter, hundreds of people emerged from the streets of Sanabis (one-third of whom were women) carrying placards with slogans highlighting the nature of the movement. The slogans, written in Arabic and English, included "We are not Saboteurs, We demand restoration of the constitution, Get-rid of Ian Henderson", and many others. Photographs of those killed by police were distributed showing the bullets-riddled bodies.

Afterwards, the security forces attacked the pro-democracy demonstrators with rubber bullets and tear gas. The marching people scattered in Sanabis and Daih. Sheikh Mohammed Ali Al-Ekri, 60 years old from Daih, was arrested today. He has been arrested many times before. Last December he was arrested and spent two months in jail. In 1979, he had been detained for 50 months without trial. Sheikh Al-Ekri is well known for his opposition to the government's policies.

Mr Ahmed Radhi Al-Meqdad (26 years old, and preparing for marriage) was participating in the demonstrations that took place in Daih and Jidhafs. He suffered from a direct hit and is in a critical condition in Salmaniya Hospital.

Also today, in Sitra, the oil island, another demonstration took to the streets and clashed with the security forces. Last night, demonstrations spread to Karranah, Jed-al-Haj and Meqshaa. The demonstrators raised the usual demands for restoring the constitution and release of political prisoners. Clashes continued until mid-night, and residents could not go to sleep because of the intensity of tear gas and rubber bullets until early hours of the morning.

17 March: Mr Abdul Wahhab Hussain, was arrested from his house in Nuwaidrat village. Mr. Hussain is a prominent leader of the opposition and a member of the committee which submitted the pro-democracy petition in November 1992 and a member of the new committee that sponsored the current petition (with more than 25,000 signatures) calling for restoration of the constitution and parliament. His arrest came after a mass demonstration took to the streets of Nuwaidrat yesterday following a speech delivered by Mr Hussain. He commented on the prime minister's statements that denounced the pro-democracy opponents as saboteurs. Mr Hussain invited the prime minister to initiate a dialogue with the opposition to resolve the crisis. This, Mr Hussain argued, would be better than threatening the use of more force against a peaceful movement. The security forces

responded by staging a major crackdown on many parts of the country. Many people, including entire families were arrested. The arrest of Mr. Abdul Wahhab Hussain will certainly fuel more unrest.

Mr Abdul Wahhab Hussain, one of the opposition leaders, was arrested on 17 March after delivering a speech in his village of Nuwaidrat inviting the prime minister to initiate a process of dialogue to end the crisis. As a responsible person, he sponsored the pro-democracy petition being submitted to the Amir (Head of State) calling for the restoration of the constitution.

His arrest sparked-off a new wave of protests and the government's irresponsible behaviour exacerbated the situation. Mr Hussain had been spotted in Isa Town Police Station blind-folded. Later on, he was to be taken back to his house, hand-cuffed with a bleeding nose. The police searched the house of Mr Hussain, while his family looked with horror at their hand-cuffed bleeding father. This is a government that takes pride in torturing its citizens.

Mr Hussain is 42 years old holds a senior post in the Ministry of Education. After graduating from Kuwait University in the late seventies, he returned to Bahrain to participate in leading the pro-democracy movement. He was instrumental in disseminating and campaigning for the first petition submitted in November 1992, calling for the restoration of the constitution. Also, he was a member of the committee which submitted the petition to the Amir. When that petition was ignored by the government, he joined the leadership of the second petition.

The security forces attempted to divert attention from the petition by arresting Sheikh Salman on 5 December 1994. This arrest sparked-off public anger and the uprising started. On 15 January 1995, the security forces forcibly exiled Sheikh Ali Salman and several other leading personalities. Public anger and frustration increased as the security forces killed more people by the use of live ammunition. The uprising intensified after the end of the holy month of Ramadan (end of February) after the prime minister declared his pride in the way his security forces dealt with the demonstrators, whom he decided to call "saboteurs" linked to foreign quarters. This has back-fired again and fuelled more protests. The government struck with ferocity and arrested the senior leading personality, Mr Abdul Wahhab Hussain. This, we believe will ignite more unrest and protests. This has already started. Last night, Sitra, Nuwaidrat, Duraz, Sanabis and Bilad-al-Qadeem witnessed some of the worst confrontations with the security forces. Bahrain is destined for a bleak future as its prime minister declares war against his citizens.

21 March: The continued arrest of the leading pro-democracy personalities, Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain (on 17 March, from Nuwaidrat) and Mr Hasan Mushaima'a (on 18 March, from Jedhafs) is proving to be a costly adventure for the government. Several schools witnessed students' protests and walk-outs. The students of Nuaim Secondary School, Salmaniya Interme-

diate School, Al-Jabreya Technical School, Sheikh Abdulla Secondary School and Sheikh Abdul Aziz School staged large demonstrations chanting "We are not saboteurs, We demand restoration of the constitution". Duraz and surrounding villages boycotted the schools for the past two days.

* The security forces attacked and burnt several mosques in the village of Nuwaidrat, where Mr. Hussain comes from. The mosques were stormed by the security forces who are staffed and led by non-Bahrainis. Doors were smashed, and contents were scattered. More than fifty people were arbitrarily arrested from Nuwaidrat during the last 48 hours. The security forces are behaving in a criminal manner while arresting the innocent civilians. TV sets, videos, jewellery, cash and valuables disappear after the storming of houses to arrest the youth.

* Several lawyers have volunteered to demand the release of Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain. Mr Hussain is a well known figure in the intellectual and popular circles. A new turning point is emerging after his arrest.

* The people of Jedhafs staged a mass demonstration today protesting against the arrest of Mr Hassan Mushaima'a. The demonstration started from the house of Mr Mushaima'a and marched through the town towards the market (town centre). When the demonstrators reached the market the security forces have already taken their positions and started firing rubber bullets and tear gas at the demonstrators. Clashes followed with more people arrested.

* Mr Abdul Hadi Khalil from Jedhafs town is suffering from security persecution after the arrest of his younger brother. His clinic (Al-Zahra'a Clinic) in Manama was raided on 18 March and all medical equipment were scattered around the place. It was not known what were the security forces looking for.

* It has been reported that the Director of the Coastal Guards, Sheikh Abdul Aziz Atteyatula Al-Khalif (a member of the ruling family) is engaged in a power struggle with his British boss, Mr. Ian Henderson regarding the way to suppress the uprising. The former was appointed to head a committee responsible for taking decisions on cracking down the uprising. Mr Henderson finds it difficult to delegate his absolute authority to any one else, hence the personality clash.

22 March: Students all over the country are taking action demanding the release of the two pro-democracy leaders, Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain and Mr Hassan Mushaima'a, who were arrested on 17 and 18 March. Strikes and clashes in schools took place in Duraz, Nuaim, Salmaniya, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Sitra, Al-Jabreya, Bilad-al-Qadeem, Jedhafs, Ahmed Al-Omran, and other schools. The security forces attacked the students using tear gas and rubber bullets. The students called for the release of Sheikh Mohammed Ali Al-Ekri and Messrs. Hussain and Mushaima'a.

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More Citizens Killed, Jailed and Tortured (.....continued from last page)

* The security forces staged a savage attack on Abo-Saiba'a Primary School. The young boys were attacked with tear gas, rubber bullets and received severe beating by batons. Several children aged eleven years old were taken prisoners, amongst them Ali Mirza Isa and Jasim Mohammed Mahdi (both from Maqaba village).

* Eleven people were brought before the State Security Court (held in the Coastal Guards Base in Muharraq) accused of participating in pro-democracy demonstrations. The British-led security forces are levelling falsified charges in a desperate attempt to divert attention from the killing and mass jailing of Bahrainis. The eleven youth are; Hussain Al-Tattan (29 years old, employee), Salman Al-Nashabah (29 years, engineer), Nazar Al-Qarea (27 years, unemployed), Raed Al-Khawajah (22 years, unemployed), Ahmed Nema Hashim (25 years, employee), Jaafer Sabah (25 years, employee), Abbas Al-Arabi (31 years, driver), Majid Milad (27 years, teacher), Jaafer Sla'il (28 years, clerk), Jawad Marhoon (23 years, farmer) and Abdul Jabbar Al-Asfoor (24 years, technician).

* The people of Jedhafs demonstrated in front of the house of Mr Hassan Mushaima'a, demanding his release. The demonstrators raised placards declaring that they demand restoration of the constitution. The police attacked the peaceful demonstration deploying the bullets that explode in bodies and scatter glass-type particles. Helicopters were also deployed for firing tear gas and rubber bullets.

* The security forces encircled Nuwaidrat village, arrested scores of youth. Then, they attacked the house of Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain. The family of Mr Hussain were threatened that the house would be set on fire unless they hand in the letter written, signed by six popular leaders (including Mr Hussain himself) and faxed to Mr William Powell, the British MP who visited Bahrain with three other MPs between 12 and 16 March.

* The Interior Ministry announced that a member of its intelligence department was killed in Nuwaidrat area. The officer, Ibrahim Rashid Al-Saeedi, was participating in the attack on Nuwaidrat. The siege of Nuwaidrat began from this day onwards. More than 500 youth were rounded up (Nuwaidrat inhabitants are around 4000 people). Every single house was broken into and looted. Those inhabitants who were outside their village could not return back and had to find shelter in other places. The police used red paint to mark-off the houses searched, hence a red-cross meant that house had been invaded and some of its residents have been arrested; a cross inside a circle meant that the house was broken into but no one was there to be arrested. Each house was raided by police squad of 30-50. The police helped themselves to all valuables in the houses. Some house lost even fridges, let alone videos, golden items and cash. Many women, children and elderly were beaten-up.

25 March: The security forces attacked and started a fire in Duraz Intermediate School to revenge against the young students who have

gone on strike. The people of Duraz hurried to the scene and clashes erupted with the British-officered security forces. Mr Hamid Abdulla yousif Qassim, 17 years old, who was hit by a rubber bullet in the forehead around 3.00 pm. He was taken away by police. The next day his body was delivered to his family. Photographs available with "Voice of Bahrain" show all the signs of torture, including a completely scissored whole finger. The young person was tortured to death after his arrest despite the fact that he was injured before arrest. Mr. Qassim was a student in the Al-Jabreyyah Secondary school which is boycotted by its students. The funeral of Mr Qassim (the tenth martyr) was a major event itself. Many thousands of people defied the security forces and marched through the streets of Duraz raising banners and slogans against the government. Sheikh Abdul Ameer Al-Jamri led the prayer and procession after delivering a speech condemning the killing of innocent civilians by the security forces.

* Another young student is lying in hospital suffering from similar injuries. Mr. Hussain Hassan Al-Ahdal, also 17 years old from Duraz.

* Students of primary, intermediate and secondary schools started an open-ended strike on 25 March. The following schools took the lead: Sheikh Abdul Aziz (where Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain taught, Bilad-al-Qadeem, Nuaim, Ahmed Al-Omran, Isa Town, Sheikh Abdulla Technical, Duraz Intermediate, Abo-Saiba'a and Jedhafs. Many other schools are joining the strike. The University students continued their activities inside the campuses declaring the demands of the opposition.

* 27 March: The prime minister commissioned one of his men, Ahmed Mansoor Al-Aali, to convene a meeting in the village of Aali to extract condemnation of the opposition. The meeting failed in its aims. There were several failed attempts to incite sectarian hatred but all have been exposed as the work of the intelligence department. In one incident the intelligence department distributed a pamphlet signed by a Shia name but full of erroneous and non-Shia terminology.

Lord Avebury Questions HM Government on Bahrain

On 23 January, the Lord Avebury asked Her Majesty's Government: what information they have about the number of people killed and arrested respectively in the demonstrations for the restoration of the 1973 constitution in Bahrain, since 7 December 1994.

On 1 February, Lord Inglewood answered for HM Government: One policeman and two civilians were killed during the demonstrations in December 1994. There have been unconfirmed reports of two further civilian deaths in separate incidents in January.

It is difficult to be precise about the total number of arrests. We believe that 500 or so have been detained, many of whom have now been released.

The Economist: Will Britain Assist Democracy in Bahrain?

The Economist of 25-31 March 1995 (Volume 334, No. 7909) published an important article about Bahrain. The influential magazine questioned whether the UK government would use its influence in Bahrain to bring about political reforms in the same way as the US used their influence in Kuwait. It has already been noticed that the British Embassy in Bahrain treat the events differently from those of the US, Japan and France. While the latter provide generally accurate accounts, the British Embassy always plays down the uprising. The Economist wrote the following:

"For a few brief months, some 20 years ago, Bahrain's elected parliament and liberal constitution shone a brave message across the murky waters of the Gulf. In 1975, the light went out: the regime dissolved parliament and suspended the bits of the constitution that enshrined civil liberties. Last October, a committee of 14 prominent Bahrainis politely petitioned for a return to the good old months. A defensive regime-the ruling al-Khalifa family-which has an even more defensive Saudi Arabia breathing down its neck, responded aggressively, cracking down on all dissent.

Three Bahraini clerics who advocated democratic reforms in their sermons were deported, and sought asylum in England. Their deportation sparked violent protests, leading to half-a-dozen deaths and several hundred arrests. Last week one of the original petitioners was arrested. More demonstrations and arrests followed.

Bahrain linked by causeway to Saudi Arabia, matters more than its 400,000 citizens (plus 150,000 expatriates) and modest natural resources might suggest. America's navy has facilities there; so does Britain's air force. William Perry, America's defence secretary, came visiting this week to press for continuing vigilance against Iraq and Iran. Iran has, at various times, cast territorial eye in Bahrain's direction. The shah liked to think of it as Iranian property; the mullahs, in the early 1980s, caused considerable trouble when they tried to spread their revolutionary creed to the island.

Like the mullahs, nearly two-thirds of all Bahrainis are Shia Muslims. The al-Khalifas and other well-established families are Sunni. Unemployment is high and rising, especially among the Shias, who are barred from the security services and other jobs thought to be sensitive. Economic grievances make Shia voices louder than others in protest. But dissent cuts across sectarian and class divides. It is neither exclusively Shia nor hardline Islamist. The committee that drafted the petition for democracy and basic rights includes Sunni religious leaders and a Sunni feminist professor.

As a sop, the Bahrainis have been given an appointed advisory council on Saudi lines. They despise this, looking instead to Kuwait's parliament, re-established after the Gulf war against strenuous opposition from the Saudis, who do not want anything smelling, however faintly, of democracy in their back yard. The Americans, uneasy at the thought that they had gone to war to rescue an unconstitutional monarchy, urged Kuwait's rulers to hold an election. Britain carries weight in Bahrain. Will it help the reformers? They aren't holding their breath."

An Embarrassing Dictatorship Fails to Woo the Outside World The Al-Khalifa are Heading in the Wrong Direction

Where is Bahrain heading is a question that no one knows. The government and security forces have escalated the situation and killed ten innocent civilians up until 26 March. Moreover, the lawyers defending those brought before the State Security Court have evidence that the security forces were behind sabotage. In one case, that of burning Sanabis Club, the accused were arrested several hours before the fire started. While those who are supposed to preserve law and order engage in criminal offences, the government is suppressing international reporting and spreading misinformation saying that they have restored law and order. They also tried to seek the endorsement of British Parliamentary delegation and invited four MPs (Mr. William Powell, Mr. Tony Marlow, Mr. Martin Redmond and Mr. Bill Etherington) who visited Bahrain between 12 and 16 March. Although the government controlled their itinerary very tightly to prevent them from seeing what's happening, it is understood that the delegation advised the government to engage in a dialogue with the leaders of the opposition.

While in Bahrain, the opposition managed to speak by phone to Mr William Powell on Thursday 15 March. A letter was prepared by six pro-democracy leaders and faxed to the delegation (see the letter below).

Mr. William Powell was also invited by the son of the Heir Apparent (Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa) to chair a half-day seminar entitled "Britain and the Gulf" to be held on Sunday 27th May 1995, from 4pm to 8.30 pm at the Bahrain Sheraton Hotel (which is owned by the Heir Apparent. Other invited personalities include Lady Olga Maitland (Conservative MP), Colonel Michael Dewar and Mr. John Bulloch. All these personalities are well aware of the situation in Bahrain. The

ruling family is desperate and would go for anything to whitewash and legitimise its oppression. It is expected that the government would attempt to isolate the invited speaker from knowing what goes on outside the hotel. But the events in Bahrain have reached such a state that the government will find it hard to conceal the situation.

More embarrassing for the government is the fact that a major conference is to take place in the Meridien and Holiday Inn Hotels between 10 to 12 April. The Third Annual Gulf Economic Forum has been arranged to receive international personalities, including Saudi Finance Minister, Iranian Petroleum Minister, Mr F. W. de Klerk of South Africa, Lady Thatcher (UK), Mr. Moeen Qureshi (Pakistan), Dr. Kurt Waldheim (Austria), Mr. Les Aspin (USA), Mr. Claude Cheysson (France), Ms Margret Tutwiler (USA), Mr Edgar Meister (Germany), Mr Tayoo Gyohten (Japan), and many other distinguished people. This is a very important public relation exercise where the government is aiming to attract international business community to think of Bahrain as the financial capital of the Middle East. These people look for stability and security before investing their money. The government of Bahrain is heading the wrong way by killing its own citizens and jailing thousands. The situation is not likely to calm down and indeed the speakers may find it hard to speak while smelling and inhaling tear gas fired at unarmed citizen demonstrating a mile or two away from the hotels.

The hopeless information minister (Tariq Almoayyad) went out of his mind (as usual) to announce (27 March) that his government plans to build new hotels and host a major tourism conference as part of a drive to lure more tourists. He told Reuters the private sector in Bahrain would build 20 new hotels at costs

ranging between \$6 million and \$30 million each. It now has 44 hotels, including 10 five-star hotels. "We in Bahrain feel that tourism is becoming more and more important as a source of strength for our national economy", he said. Almoayyad also said that income from tourism was expected to soar to \$800 million before the year 2000 from around \$130 million in 1993. The number of tourists is also expected to rise to four million in the next five years from 1.7 million now. The government has spent millions of dollars to restore old buildings and forts, promote traditional crafts, and create more of leisure parks to lure tourists, he said. Travel agencies, airlines and tour operators from many Arab and European states are due to take part in the Arab travel conference opening in Bahrain on April 25, the minister said. Almoayyad said security and safety were important factors to attract tourists. "There were no problems to either tourists or tourist organisations and we don't expect any," he said in reference to the uprising since December. From experience, all predictions of Tariq Almoayyad proved to be false and indeed the truth is found by reversing his statements. He is politically dead. In one of the cabinet meetings both Ali Fakhroo and Yosif Al-Shirawi (Education and Development ministers) attacked him so harshly on his handling of news coverage since the 5th of December. The prime minister seemed to have instigated the harsh remark. It was reported that Almoayyad submitted his resignation, but the PM said to him "not now".

The ruling family cannot absorb the fact that the world is changing significantly, and its claim that backward tribal system are best suited for Bahrain do not attract a decent individual. The outside world and all the visitors to Bahrain will testify to the world the extent of internal oppression.

Pro-Democracy Leaders Appeal to British Parliamentary Delegation

Date: March 16th, 1995

To: Mr. William Powell, MP. Head of British Parliamentary Delegation & Members of the Delegation

We would like to welcome you and express our pleasure for your visit to Bahrain. It is certainly an opportunity to witness the level of modernity and development which Bahrain and its people have attained. We hope that you have been able to notice the civilised and the cultured attitude of our people, who achieved that despite the limited size of the country and its national income. However, since 1975 our country has been going through a constitutional crisis. In that year the Government of Bahrain dissolved the elected parliament and suspended certain articles of the constitution. The Bahrain constitution which was declared on December 6th, 1973, granted the people of Bahrain all human rights and civil liberties. In fact the declaration of the constitution meant that Bahrain shall enjoy a structured political development through the cooperation of the three branches of authority. But since 1975, Bahrain has not been enjoying real political stability. The Government has used the unconstitutional State Security Law, which was passed

without the approval of the parliament to suppress all kinds of opposition. In many cases the Government in fact did not abide by its own laws. Some detainees remained in prison for a period of nine years without trial exceeding the three years stipulated by the State Security Law.

In 1990, with the democratic fervour sweeping the whole world, we felt optimistic that our political life in Bahrain shall change. We also hoped that after the Gulf Crisis of 1990 restoration of democracy will eventually take place in Bahrain but nothing happened. However, on 15/11/1992 a group of approximately 300 political and professional figures petitioned HH the Amir. The petition demanded the re-implementation of the constitution and the restoration of the parliament. Instead, the Government established an appointed consultative council with limited powers. In principle there is no objection to the establishment of that council as part of the executive branch, but it cannot replace the parliament as a legislative body.

Recently, another petition which demands the implementation of the constitution and the restoration of the parliament was signed by approximately 22 thousands Bahraini citizens. Regretably, due to the tension engulfing Bah-

rain since early December 1994, we have not been able to deliver this petition to HH the Amir. In fact, we have tried several times to obtain an appointment with HH through the Chamberlain, but to no avail. We must stress that this petition acknowledges the constitutional legitimacy of the regime and its monarchy.

In this context, we would like to appeal to your democratic ideal, and your constitutional legacy for the support and understanding of the democratic cause in Bahrain. We hope that you would use your good offices to persuade the Government of Bahrain to open a dialogue to start democratic political reforms.

We are confident that your role in supporting the democratic demands in Bahrain will strengthen the friendly historic relations between our two countries and peoples, and shall enhance the common understanding in the future. Wishing a pleasant time in Bahrain, we hope that you will enjoy your visit. With our best wishes.

Signatures: Dr. Abdul Lateef Al-Mahmood, Shaikh Abdul Ameer Al-Jamry, Ahmed Essa Al-Shamlan, Ali Ghassim Rabea, Ebrahim Kamal Al-Deen, Abdul Wahab Hussain (arrested on Friday the 17th of March).