

# BAHRAIN

*A monthly newsletter issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement.*

## Are They Ready for Dialogue?

The elusive calm that appears to have replaced the daily confrontations between peaceful demonstrators and heavily armed riot forces in the last three weeks is not expected to last long. The Bahraini people are determined to achieve the goals they had set when they decided to call for the restoration of the Constitution. No amount of terror may hinder them, neither may the ongoing sleaze campaign intended to reflect unrealistic image of the ongoing events. It will be a grave error of judgement to expect the constitutional movement that has swept the country over the last six months to give way to the policies of intimidation, violence and despotism. The Al Khalifa-dominated government has violated all norms and conventions of decent behaviour expected from a modern government, and has to be held accountable for its mischiefs. The international community has an immense responsibility to ensure that pro-democracy peaceful demonstrators are not arbitrary detained, tortured, killed or maimed. And unless human rights values are upheld, the achievements of the civilised world may be compromised, and, instability, will, again become the order of the day.

At a time when the world is on the path of pluralism, openness, democracy, tolerance and respect of human rights, any government that denies its people the right of political participation and employs means of torture and mass killings must be considered an outcast. The government of Bahrain has not, so far, relented on its systematic use of torture against its opponents. Young men have been ill-treated in detention centres, tortured to death or killed by live ammunition while expressing their natural rights in the streets. Last month alone witnessed the brutal killing of two young men in separate incidents.

On the other hand, the government has failed in its endeavour to confine the opposition to a sector of the society. It has refrained from detaining non-Shia Muslims in the country. This is not to say that Sunni Muslims have no role in the ongoing struggle to have the Constitution restored. In fact, the opposition is composed of all trends of the society, Sunni and Shia Islamists, Liberals, both Sunni and Shia, men and women of all trends and sectarian affiliation. Last month, for example, there were two important petitions demanding the restoration of the Constitution. The first was signed by about 250 people, men and women calling on the Amir to respect the Constitution in a firm language that did not leave any room for misinterpretation of the intentions of the signatories. The second was signed by 21 prominent women from the liberal tendency in the country. They included Dr. Muneera Fakhroo, a university professor, Fawziyya Al Sanadi, a poet and Dr.

Sabika Al Najjar. The women petition urged the Amir to restore the Constitution, release the political prisoners, end the arbitrary actions by the security forces and grant the women of Bahrain the right to take part in the political process according to the Constitution.

The two petitions came to put an end to the government's attempts to confine the pro-democracy movement to the Shia Muslims of Bahrain, who have, up to now, been singled out for repression. However, the Bahraini people who lived through similar circumstances in the thirties, the fifties and the sixties, could not allow the Al Khalifa to create internal dissension within Bahrain. In 1953, members of the Al Khalifa ruling tribe tried to create a sectarian strife by interrupting a traditional Shia procession in Manama. They hurled the participants with stones and sticks, and they almost succeeded in their unholy aim. But the awareness of the people succeeded in thwarting the Al Khalifa attempt, and created the High Executive Committee that would lead the struggle against the Al Khalifa rule for the following three years. Its members included Shia, Sunnis and liberals. The most influential personality in Bahrain then was Charles Belgrave, whose dismissal was sought by the people. Although there was a massive crackdown on the leadership and the people following the 1956 attack on Egypt by Britain, France and Israel. Mr. Belgrave was dismissed after the British Resident acted decisively to protect his country's interests, and thought the presence of Mr. Belgrave was against those interests.

Today, we are confident that the popular movement is one that has all the ingredients of modernity, logic and justice. It is true that the policy of repression being adopted by Mr. Ian Henderson, is delaying the fulfilment of the people's aspirations, but it is difficult to imagine the situation going back to what it was prior to the uprising. The longer it continues, this uprising has a better chance of gaining the upper hand in the struggle to achieve a degree of democracy in Bahrain. The leadership of the Constitutional Movement has shown extreme ability to out-manoeuvre the Al Khalifa, both in objectives and tactics. Despite the numerous deaths among the people and the continued detention of the main spiritual figure in the country, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, there is increasing tendency to take the struggle with the Al Khalifa further until they succumb to the wishes of the people.

There are now two important developments. Firstly, the British government, whose critical stands vis-a-vis the Bahraini opposition has often caused irritation among the people of Bahrain, has now realised that the Al Khalifa's policies could not salvage the situation. Baron-

ess Chalker has promised the House of Lords, on 15th May, to bring to the attention of the Government of Bahrain, the wishes of Her Majesty's Government to establish serious dialogue with the opposition and allow a visit to Bahrain by Amnesty International. Both are important steps in the search for a solution of the crisis. Secondly, the determination of the Bahraini people to continue their struggle to have the Constitution restored is causing embarrassment among the friends of the Al Khalifa. The problem will become more acute in the next few weeks as the people of Bahrain begin their annual rituals to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, who had been killed by a tyrant 1300 years ago. That tragic event has always inspired people to rise and sacrifice themselves for their causes. This year, both the government and the people are awaiting the occasion which coincides with the first ten days of June with concern and anxiety. The opposition may encourage peaceful demonstrations to demand the release of the thousands of prisoners especially Sheikh Al Jamri and the reinstatement of the Constitution. But there is a genuine fear that the Al Khalifa may continue their campaign of terror and kill demonstrators in the streets, as they have done over the last six months.

It is therefore our duty to highlight the seriousness of the situation so that proper measures are taken to prevent a blood bath. Whilst the Bahraini opposition insists on its peaceful struggle to achieve the restoration of the Constitution, it has refrained from the use of violence in any form. The government has resorted to the use of force extensively killing scores of people and maiming hundreds more. The opposition has called for dialogue, whilst the government has blatantly refused to discuss the main issue; the restoration of the Constitution. It has arrested the leaders of the movement without any justification and adopted a policy of terror to silence the masses.

The opposition has addressed the main problems in the country through debates, seminars, and literature, but the government has consistently denied the existence of any serious problem in the country. It is the duty of those who are concerned about the situation in Bahrain to make it clear to the Al Khalifa that it is neither in the interest of the country nor of their own to continue the employment of policies of terror. Especially at this sensitive period, they should refrain from the use of torture, mass arrests, or means of death.

They should start a process of dialogue with the opposition with a view to restore the Constitution. The alternative to this is their ultimate defeat, because no tyrant has ever survived the retribution of his victims.

## Sheikh Al-Jamri: A Lion in Chains Afaf Al-Jamri: A Hostage Under Torture

When the security forces imposed the house arrest on Sheikh Al-Jamri and his family on 1 April 1995 (after killing two of his neighbors and forcibly evicting entire families to cordoned-off the surrounding area) they announced that he was only under house arrest.

Then on 15 April, the security officer Adel Flaifel, detained Sheikh Al-Jamri and took him to an unknown location. To dampen the situation he stated to his family and to others that Sheikh Al-Jamri would be taken to a Villa for conducting dialogue with the leaders of the country. This was an excellent maneuver and also a big lie. Adel Flaifel took Sheikh Al-Jamri to solitary confinement and badly treated him. This resulted in the deterioration of his health condition. He has been admitted to the emergency unit of the military hospital three times, twice having had his heart stopped beating.

On 7 May, Sheikh Al-Jamri's daughter, Afaf Al-Jamri, was badly treated during a summons and interrogation by the notorious Adel Flaifel. He threatened her that unless she meets with her father and pass to him sentences stating that "No body cares about him outside...that because of him the whole family is suffering...that he must succumb to the security forces and agree to sign on papers or Adel Flaifel will torture all the family....and similar other sentences".

Afaf refused to do so. Hence, she was summoned on 8 and 9 May, only to be ill-treated and threatened by Adel Flaifel. Then on 9 May, Adel Flaifel forced her to sit with her father. Afaf started speaking to her father informing him that every body was concerned about him and that no one has forgotten him.

This has enraged Adel Flaifel, who ordered her beating in front of her father. She was then taken away to solitary confinement and no one has been able to see her anymore. Afaf went on hunger strike since her arrest.

Many direct relatives of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri are now in jail, exile or have been expelled from university for political reason.

The case of Sheikh Al-Jamri is becoming a symbol for the struggle of the people of Bahrian.

Amnesty International Urgent Action  
Amnesty International issued the following urgent action dated 10 May 1995 (Ref: AI Index: MDE 11/08/95):

Sheikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri, aged 58; 'Afaf 'Abd al-Amir al-Jamri (f), aged 31, daughter of Sheikh Al-Jamri

Amnesty International is deeply concerned about the health and safety of Sheikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri, whose condition in detention is reported to have deteriorated significantly. He suffers from a heart disease and has reportedly been transferred to Bahrain's Military Hospital on three occasions since his arrest on 15 April 1995. He is also said to have suffered significant weight loss.

Sheikh al-Jamri and his family were placed under house arrest on 1 April 1995. Two weeks later, the house arrest order was lifted and he was transferred to an undisclosed location. He was deprived of all contact with the outside world until 9 May when one of his daughters, 'Afaf, was brought to al-Qal'a Prison in the

capital, al-Manama, to see him. Sheikh al-Jamri, however, is believed to be held in solitary confinement at a detention facility in the town of Safira, the location of a police college and housing for military personnel. To date, he has not been charged or brought before a court.

During her meeting with her father, 'Afaf 'Abd al-Amir al-Jamri was reportedly beaten by women police officers. She was then taken into custody herself on the same day, and her current whereabouts are unknown.

### Background Information

'Afaf 'Abd al-Amir al-Jamri is a mother of two children, aged seven and nine, her husband, 'Abd al-Jalil Khalil Ibrahim, and her brother, Mohammed Jamil al-Jamri, are currently serving custodial sentences of seven and ten years respectively. Both were among a group of Bahrainis arrested in 1988 on charges including incitement against the government and alleged membership of a prohibited organization. Five were convicted by the State Security Court following unfair trials and their cases were taken up by Amnesty International.

Further recommended action: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters: expressing concern about Sheikh al-Jamri's condition and urging that he be granted immediate medical attention; expressing concern about his continued detention without trial and about the arrest of his daughter 'Afaf; urging that the exact whereabouts of both detainees be made known and that they be granted immediate regular access to their families, lawyers and independent doctors; urging their prompt release unless they are to be charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

Note: Amnesty International has no new information regarding the other individuals named in the original action and in the follow-up; please continue appeals on their behalf for the time being, as recommended in the follow-up action.

## A DEPRESSED ECONOMY!

A Bahrain government two-page advertisement in a recent issue (22-28 April 1995) of the London publication, *The Economist*, gave an upbeat account of profitability and prospects in three leading local enterprises - Batelco (telecommunications), Gulf Air and Information Technology. Among other things, it indicated the grip the ruling Khalifa family has on industry and commerce, including the Crown Prince's eldest son and his cousin, the prime minister's eldest son, who is both Minister of Transportation and chairman of Batelco.

These industries are a vital part of the spectacular growth of the Gulf economies and the rising standards of living, health and education which began half a century ago. In 1951, the oil states negotiated for half the foreign oil companies' profits, then two decades later forced up oil prices astronomically. Untold wealth poured into the coffers of shaikhs and kings.

The oil which transformed the lives of poor pearl fishers and peasants is still available in abundance (except in Bahrain). It led Bahrain's

## Two Heros Murdered By Henderson's Men

Mohammed Shehab Al-Fardan, 10 years old, from Karzakan village, is the latest victim to die under the hands of the British-officered Bahraini security forces. On 24 May, the security forces attacked the people of Karzakan who were protesting against the repressive regime. The throat of Mr. Al-Fardan was slashed by a strange type of bullet fired by the undisciplined security forces.

The village of Karzakan has been put under siege to prevent the family of the victim from conducting the usual funeral. The father of the young victim (Mr. Shehab Al-Fardan) is one of those detained by Henderson's men sometimes ago.

The latest victim is the fifteenth since the start of attack on the peaceful pro-democracy movement on 5 December 1994. The security forces have embarked on a collective punishment policy that resulted in the ransacking of houses, mosques and public buildings as well as the arrest of relatives, including women and children, to force the opposition to stop demanding political reforms.

Amnesty International: Nidal Habib Ahmad Al-Nashaba, an 18-year-old youth has been shot dead by Bahraini security forces during continuing protests in the country, bringing to 12 the number of civilians killed in separate incidents since December 1994. (Note: three other died by other than shooting)

Amnesty International remains deeply concerned about the continued use of forces to disperse demonstrators, and is calling on the government to take immediate measures to prevent further killing. According to reports, Nidal Habib Ahmad Al-Nashaba, originally from al-Na'im, died after receiving a bullet in the head during protests in al-Duraz on 4 May 1995. The protests were staged to commemorate the 40th day after the killing of another youth 'Abd al-Hamid 'Abdullah Yousif Qassem, aged 17, in al-Duraz on 25 March 1995.

industry minister Shirawi (described in the *Economist* article as "charismatic") to predict after the Gulf War in 1991 that the Gulf states would double their aggregate oil incomes by the year 2000, and another expert forecast "an unprecedented boom" before 1996.

Clearly, neither of these ambitions will be realised. The momentum of earlier decades cannot be sustained. Indeed, there is evidence of decline. It is too soon to visualise the Gulf reverting to a pre-oil condition, the gleaming modern cities of glass and concrete turned to ghost towns, and the ruling families living like Bedouin in tents (air conditioned, of course), tending their flocks, reciting poetry and fingering their worry beads. An unlikely scenario, yes. But impossible, no.

The British commander in Desert Storm, General Sir Peter de la Billiere, told a London audience last year that India or Pakistan could conceivably seize populations. Perhaps it is no as improbable as it sounded. It appears that the Gulf economies have already passed their peak.

The Arab states that had to ransack their Swiss

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# Bahraini Women: Stop Killing Our Sons

## The Restoration of the Parliament is the Only Way to Stability

Your Highness Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa Amir of the State of Bahrain  
Salutations from Bahrain's women,

Motivated by our well-founded confidence in Your Highness' kindness and by our strong belief in the importance of communicating our views to You through the democratic dialogue that You have on several occasions emphasized Your adherence to, we have the honour in presenting to Your Highness this statement to express our heightened concerns over the circumstances which our beloved country Bahrain is going through.

We were alarmed as Bahraini citizens by the recent escalation of incidents and the use of the language of violence instead of the language of dialogue to confront the incidents and resolve the conflict so that we were no longer able to ignore what was occurring around us daily especially with our awareness that the continuation of violence would not lead to solving the problem but to exacerbating it. The continuation and spread of violence will touch everyone sooner or later. Experiences of other nations have proved that violence is a vicious circle that generates resentment, deepens hatred and entrenches violence and in the end we will all be losers and our beloved country will be inflicted with wounds that will not heal for a long time.

While we confirm our total belief that sabotage and destruction of public installations is completely unacceptable, we also understand that this could be an expression of the absence of dialogue channels and a reflection of the depth and magnitude of the build-up of suffering and the deterioration in economic and social conditions for a wide segment of the people of Bahrain especially the unemployed amongst them; conditions which need urgent solutions to confront the current developments.

We were also alarmed as citizens and mothers by the practices of the security and

anti-riot force towards the citizens who dwell in the villages; practices which ranged from insults and severe beatings of young men, women and children to killing defenceless demonstrators including pupils and university students with bullets.

While we categorically and emphatically reject acts of sabotage, we do not consider them sufficient justification for the use of bullets by the security forces, especially against children and defenceless citizens. We are confident that the esteemed Bahraini Government will not rule out means of dialogue and dealing with demonstrators in order to resort to reasoning with them with bullets especially since the bulk of the acts of sabotage that the demonstrators are accused of committing is not legally punishable by death.

Your Highness, we believe that with your wisdom you are not unaware that progress in dealing with the developments requires breaking the circle of violence and only the stronger party with its wisdom and rationality and not with its weapon is capable of it.

We are completely confident in Your abilities in getting our country out of this testing predicament to maintain national unity.

On this basis, we present to Your Highness this statement requesting your Highness' personal intervention to break the circle of violence and open the door to dialogue to consider with Your established wisdom ways of dealing with the situation which may be achieved through the following means:

1. Ceasing the use of bullets to disperse demonstrators, illegal forced entries and mass arrests;
2. Dealing with detainees according to the rule of law with all that entails of guarantees to the detainees during periods of investigation and trial while expediting the presentation of the defendants to trial, releasing immediately the remaining detainees and repatriat-

ing the exiles;

3. Creating employment opportunities for all citizens, securing the minimum requirements for their livelihood and finding an effective solution for the increase in the foreign labour force;

4. Opening the door to a national dialogue with the aim of reaching the appropriate solution;

5. Reactivating the Constitution of the State of Bahrain and calling for elections to the National Assembly and allowing public liberties and freedom of speech;

6. Including Bahraini women in political decision making and utilizing their creative energies in all spheres to serve our country Bahrain.

We are hopeful that Your Highness with Your established paternal spirit and great wisdom are aware of the sensitivity of the situation and capable of taking the right decision which will ensure putting an end to the spilling of blood and rescuing our nation from this dangerous bend in the history of our dear country. Please accept our highest appreciation and respect to Your Kind Highness, Bahrain's Citizens and Mothers

Signed by:

Aziza Hamad Al-Bassam, Programme Producer, Bahrain Broadcasting; Dr. Khawlah Mohammed Matar, Journalist; Dr. Muneera Ahmed Fakhroo, University Professor; Ayisha Khalifa Matar, Director, Modern, Handicraft Industries; Dr. Fadheela Taher Al-Mahroos, Pediatrician; Jaleela Sayed Ahmed, Lawyer; Wedad Mohammed Al-Masqati, Lawyer; Fawziya Al-Sitri, Employee; Dr. Sabeka Mohammed Al-Najjar, Employee; Sawseen Ibrahim Al-Khayat, Employee; Hussah Al-Khumairi, Director of Continuous Education; Mariyam Abdullah Fakhroo, Employee; Khadijah Ali Masoud, Employee; Sheikhha Mubarrak Hamad, Employee; Nadia Al-Masqati, Accountant; Farida Ghoulam Ismael, Employee; Koukab Abdullah Abu-Idris, Employee; Radhia Khalil Ibrahim, Teacher; Muna Abbas Mansoor, Employee; Leila Ali, Employee.

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bank accounts to pay the United States for winning the Gulf War in 1991 now find their oil income falling, in line with prices. Governments are running budget deficits and where they reduced the price to consumers of public utility services a year or two back, they are now having to increase prices and even talk of the unspeakable - making workers pay income tax!

The vast oil reserves are not necessarily the guarantee of rising prosperity generally assumed. It might be worth remembering that the industrial revolution that made Britain "the workshop of the world" had origins in plentiful coal. Over the past 40 years, some 700,000 UK miners have lost their jobs, the hundreds of pits reduced to a handful. Underground lie hundreds of years' reserves of coal which nobody wants.

Oil is cleaner, more adaptable, than coal. But now pollution is threatening life, and much blame is attached to oil. Why not let the oil, like coal, remain untapped and use a more efficient source of energy? If alternatives are

found, the demand for oil is likely to fall. already new oil reservoirs are being tapped world-wide, and the supreme position that Gulf producers have occupied is diminishing.

The outstanding peculiarity of the Gulf is its dependence on foreign expertise and labour. Before they were expelled during the Gulf War period, Palestinians numerically overwhelmed nationals in Kuwait. At that time, Saudi Arabia expelled hundreds of thousands of Yemeni migrant workers. Today, there are three times as many foreigners (including 20,000 British) as Arabs in Dubai.

While expatriates account for a large part of the population (in Bahrain, according to the 1991 census, 323,000 nationals and 185,000 non citizens) the high native birth-rates produce an expanding young labour force for whom work is not available (a problem which, decades on, will be transferred to the elderly).

The separate territories of the Gulf are less like nation states than international workplaces, where expensive western labour and cheap eastern labour and untaxed profits and wages form part of a system lubricated by oil and

where the savings of expatriate workers (and profits) leave the country.

How long can this continue? Much of the non-oil work can be done better and cheaper in the Pacific Rim and Asia.

Bahrain has never commanded its own destiny, but been controlled by foreign powers. Britain kept the tightest grip when it needed to rule the Gulf passage to India, and still today British and US military forces maintain bases in Bahrain. Commercially, the biggest influence has been Caltex, the US oil giant.

Whatever their future, Bahrainis need greater skills and vast improvement in training. I have heard it said that Bahrainis are afraid to accept responsibility. I don't know if that is true. But responsibilities go with rights and rights are what the people lack.

If Bahrain and the other Gulf states are to grow and prosper in the next half century, they will need to have and to exercise those basic democratic rights and institutions guaranteed in progressive nations.

Bert Mapp (Author of a book on Bahrain  
ISBN: 0-9521814-0-1)

## Diplomacy of Despair

The Al Khalifa regime is desperately trying to depict a brave face on its violent reaction to peaceful rallies in the country. To this end, a series of steps have been undertaken. They include sending emissaries to numerous capitals in addition to carrying out an aggressive media campaign to depict an adverse image of the popular uprising.

Sending of envoys was best manifested by the trips made by the regime's foreign minister Mohamed bin Mubarak to both Paris and London. The minister chose Paris as his first stop in order to register his government's displeasure with the French media. Bahrain authorities have mounted an international outcry against AFP for reporting news stories of the wide spread protests of December and January.

Headed by Tariq Al Moayyid, the information minister, Bahrain officials are sparing no time censuring the AFP and implicitly warning of taking a pan-GCC decision against the French news organization. While in Paris, Mubarak Al-Khalifa stressed French role in the Middle East while begging his French counterpart that the AFP should cease reporting accounts of the unrest; more importantly, Mubarak wanted an assurance from the French foreign minister that the AFP would not carry stories viewed as hostile by the Bahrain government in future incidents. Later, the minister flew to London but with a different ambition. The January talks with British officials focused on the Bahraini opposition based in the U.K and the arrival of the three forcibly deported leaders to London.

The information minister (Tariq Al-Moayad) also visited Washington in the last week of May to protest against the activities of the opposition in Washington DC. During April and May, a delegation for the Bahrain Freedom Movement met with many people in media, human rights, think tanks and politicians and presented the case of struggle for democracy in Bahrain. Washington, through its massive embassy in Manama, was following the details of the pro-democracy movement and for this it was criticized by Ashraq Al-Awsat on 3 May.

Lack of freedom in Bahrain cannot be further illustrated by the fact that Mr. Mubarak Al-Khalifa and Tariq al-Moayad continue to be the country's only foreign and information ministers ever since the independence in 1971. The other aggressive effort undertaken by the authorities was that of media campaign. Aside from the local media, the Bahrain government employed services of several Saudi run or financed newspapers in particular to denounce the movement.

The relief for the opposition is that very few people believe publications such as Ashraq Al Awast. Ashraq Al Awast with its many publications (based in London!) speaks for Salman, mayor of the capital city of Riyadh. Another Saudi paper, Al Hayat, likewise published in London, belongs to Sultan, the defence minister. At the stake is the power struggle between Salman and Sultan. The publications undertook a campaign to de-grade the opposition, describing the popular upris-

ing as mobs and more importantly religious Shia fanatics, if only to win sympathy in some western capitals.

It was also claimed that the government has commissioned the ex-UK Heritage Secretary, David Miller, to whitewash the image of Al-Khalifa. Dr. Omar Al-Hassan, who runs the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies organised a half day seminar in the Sheraton Hotel of Manama on 27 May. The chairman of the meeting was Mr. William Powell, a Conservative MP, who agreed to take charge of defending the Al-Khalifa after his earlier visit to Bahrain last March. During his March visit, he was given all sorts of "gifts" from the ruling family to encourage him in his campaign.

All this did not help the government and international political circles continued to monitor the situation in Bahrain. On 15 May, Lord Archer of Sandwell asked Her Majesty's Government in the House of Lords: Whether they are initiating international action to secure compliance by Bahrain with internationally recognised standards of human rights in respect of torture, detention, without trial and the use of firearms against peaceful demonstrations.

The Minister of State and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Chalker of Wallasey) replied that: the Bahrainis are well aware of the importance of observing human rights, including in the areas identified by the noble and learned Lord. Lord Archer and other noble Lords pressed the case very hard. Baroness Chalker stated that "I believe that a visit to Bahrain by Amnesty International would be of great benefit. It would be useful if that organisation could sit down with the Bahraini Government and agree the terms of visit, because that is the only way in which we can make progress". This is an honourable position to take bearing in mind the relations between the Al-Khalifa and HM Government.

In their despair, the Al-Khalifa continues to misinform the outside world. For example, when asked why don't you allow Amnesty to visit Bahrain, they reply we did not! Well Amnesty representatives continue to publicly state that they were denied access to Bahrain.

Similarly, when asked: Why don't you speak to opposition? The Al-Khalifa reply that they already do and give example of their talks with those businessmen who have everything to lose if democracy is established. This is a diplomacy of despair that can't be salvaged by a half day seminar even if that seminar is chaired by a Conservative MP.

### Teargas used on Bahrain students

The Times newspaper (of London) reported the following on 1 May 1995:

Police broke up a weekend student demonstration at Bahrain University, part of continuing protests for democratic reform that have rocked the affluent Gulf island (Michael binyon writes). Riot police entered the campus to halt a student march demanding a return of the country's suspended constitution. They fired teargas at chanting students, but there were no immediate reports of casualties or arrests. Police were also reported to have staged security sweeps and identity checks.

### Henderson: An Embarrassment for Democratic Britain

Bahrain is at a cross roads. Political reforms have been the theme of all national political movement since the early years of this century. The United Kingdom which controlled Bahrain for 150 years until 1971, implemented "administrative" reforms in the twenties. Just before independence, the UK also encouraged the creation of a constitutional monarchy. However, Britain has also contributed to the continued state of suppression. Ian Henderson, who has been heading Bahrain security forces since 1966 was installed by the British before independence. Also, it was the British army that quelled the pro-democracy and human rights movements of 1938, 1954-56 and 1965.

On 27 May, a group of British MPs and personalities, chaired by the conservative MP, William Powell, spent a half-day conference in Bahrain. The conference failed to deliver the Al-Khalifa favoured outcome. Those participating were fully aware of the situation and many of the dignified individuals refused to play into the hands of the Al-Khalifa.

The ruling family of Bahrain has called on its friends with certain interests to rally behind them and attempt to stop the clock of change. The ruling family and its friends are working hard to divert attention from the need for political reforms. Instead, the problem is being portrayed as if it is to do with economical hardships and unemployment only. While, the latter are contributing factors, they are not the root causes. The basic problem is that of political liberalization. In Bahrain, no one outside the ruling family has any say in the running of the country's affairs. Bahrain is considered by the ruling family as a private estate. Many individuals inside and outside the country do benefit from such an unaccountable system of governance. Hence the attempt to preserve the status quo.

The parliament was dissolved because the rule of law was not acceptable to the tribal mentality and the British de facto ruler, Mr. Ian Henderson. He has worked all his life in the secret service and finds the notion of people being able to express themselves alien to him and to those he protects.

It is astonishing to see a democratically elected British MP staunchly supporting a feudal regime and utter no word of disapproval of another Briton who has been responsible for shooting and killing innocent Bahrainis demanding basic rights that form the pillars of the British society.

Ian Henderson has violated all norms and standards of civilized societies. He interrogates all leading figures in Bahrain, threatens them, detains them, orders their torture, informs them how many years of imprisonment he decided to instruct the courts to sentence them, and he ridicules every Bahraini who demands democratic rights.

A winner of two George's Crosses from his days in Kenya, he believed himself to be invincible. To him, the Bahrainis must not dare to raise their voice against his paymaster. His continued presence is shame for Britain and shame for democracy.

Bahrain is at a cross roads and Henderson must give way to political (not administrative or other cosmetic) reforms.