

BAHIRAIN

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Campaign of terror unleashed in the country by the government

Dialogue is needed to establish stability

The dramatic events in Bahrain are set to take more serious dimensions following the recent crackdown against activists. Up to 2000 people are in detention centres in various parts of the country, and the tension is still rising. More serious is the fact that the government has shown no inclination to negotiate with the opposition on the basic demands. It has refused to acknowledge the existence of a political problem and sought to divert the attention of the outside world on the deteriorating security situation. Even more serious is the attempt by the government not only to create tension by the arbitrary arrests of people as young as eight years of age, but its persistent endeavour to create havoc and take part in acts of arson and even bombing. There is a unanimity amongst the people that the recent wave of unrest is accompanied by acts of violence widely believed to be of the government's own making.

For fifteen months, the Al Khalifa regime has tried to deal with the problem by force, and mobilised all its resources to combat the wave of protests and demonstrations that become daily occurrences. But finally, it realised that no one would buy its propaganda.

There is a credible feeling amongst Bahrainis that the government has finally realised it could not face the political consequences of the present movement. It thus sought to sponsor a wave of violence to undermine the peaceful nature of the constitutional movement and to smear the image of the peaceful opposition that has commanded world-wide respect and admiration.

The latest of the violent attacks came last month at the car park belonging to the Al Ayyam daily newspaper, being edited by Nabil Al Hamar. His car was burnt as a result of the ensuing fire. Another car was also burnt. That incident highlighted the governments' campaign to discredit the opposition, and has served as a catalyst to attract the attention of the outside world to the crisis in favour of the government. The spontaneous reactions from various political quarters including some of the Arab governments indicate the pre-planning of the whole thing, especially that it amounted to nothing than a fire that destroyed a car. In fact the support of some Arab governments to the Al Khalifa in this instant, was far greater than their half-hearted reaction to the coup attempt that took place in Qatar. Bahrain has been accused of an active role in the planning of the failed coup, and it is reported that the main figure behind it was a former minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani, who was paid US\$ 100 by the deposed Amir, Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani. It seems that Ian Henderson was the architect of the campaign of violence in Bah-

rain. He has undertaken this latest gamble after it became clear that the Al Khalifa were losing ground to the people who have been carrying their campaign for democracy throughout the world. It is bound to fail, according to a western diplomat in Manama. This is a gamble that could only end in catastrophe for the regime.

It is difficult to see any exit from this quagmire except through the gates of dialogue. Those countries which enjoy warm relations with Bahrain should act immediately to stop the slide to anarchy. The people of Bahrain, who are known for their peaceful way of life, love of human values and respect for democratic values, deserve the support of every freedom-lover in this globe. The claims of the government that the crisis in the country is that of insecurity, and that its main objective is to maintain security is intended to blur the vision of outsiders and

distort the facts.

The people of Bahrain have a great love for peace, security, human rights and democracy. They have adopted peaceful means to achieve that including petitions, speeches, debates and peaceful expression of opinion in public addresses. They have been met by an adamant government which has stopped at nothing in its suppression of its own people. It has unfolded this new campaign of terror after calculating that its long-term consequences of defeating the opposition outweigh its short-term negative outcomes. However, the opposition which has unreservedly condemned all forms of violence blaming them on the government believes there is no way out of the crisis except through dialogue. No amount of terror on the part of the government may hinder their march towards, democracy, human rights and constitution.

Arrest of Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan

On 7 February, members of the intelligence department arrested the leading opposition figure, lawyer and columnist, Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan. Mr. Al-Shamlan is known for his outspoken opposition and demands for political reforms within the constitutional framework.

He was invited (together with two other pro-democracy activists) by Al-Oroobah Club to deliver a talk on democracy on Tuesday 6 February, but the intelligence department intervened and cancelled the meeting. Mr. Al-Shamlan is a member of the Committee for Popular Petition (CPP). On 3 February the CPP distributed a statement condemning the crackdown on the constitutional movement and the Arab media for falsifying the news and accusing the jailed pro-democracy activists of linkage with "foreign powers". Al-Shamlan and more than 60 opposition figures also sent a letter last month to the eight Kuwaiti MPs thanking them for supporting the people of Bahrain for achieving constitutional demands. This has angered the foreign-officered and staffed security forces, and led them to by-pass the red line they imposed on themselves. Up until 7th of February, not a single Sunni leader had been arrested by these security forces in a desperate attempt to convey a message to the West and other political circles that what happens in Bahrain is related to a "Shia fundamentalist plot linked to Iran". By arresting Al-Shamlan, this "fictitious" scenario all comes to an end, for Ahmad Al-Shamlan can neither be accused of being a "Shia" nor a "fundamentalist".

Three months ago, Mr. Al-Shamlan and another activist were interviewed by Radio Qatar and both were summoned, threatened and

released on bail for expressing their views about the GCC Summit.

The Kuwaiti MPs and pro-democracy activist have rallied in support of the people of Bahrain by issuing statements condemning the vicious attack and propaganda conducted by the Bahraini authorities. Mr. Adnan Abdul-Samad stated that "unfortunately the government of Bahrain does not seem to have grasped the latest regional and international changes and continued to deal with its people in a medieval way.

On 15 February, the Chairman of the Bar Human Rights Committee, Barrister Nicholas Stewart, QC, wrote to the Bahraini prime minister requesting permission to defend both Mr. Al-Shamlan and Sheikh Al-Jamri (detained on 21 January). Mr. Stewart stated: "Recent events in Bahrain seem to indicate that the Rule of Law is being undermined by the government. We have been particularly upset by the news that the government has reneged on its promises to conduct peaceful and constructive negotiations concerning the restoration of the Bahraini Constitution. Also of considerable concern to the Committee is the renewed arrest of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, and the recent arrest of Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan.

In the light of the above, the Committee respectfully requests for a Committee member to be allowed to attend all court hearings relating to the detentions and trials of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan as an impartial international observer".

Other leading human rights organizations have urged the government to respect human rights and release political prisoners.

"Committee for Popular Petition" issues a historic statement Attempts to divert attention fail

{Events in our country (Bahrain) have recently been escalated as a result of the political crisis reaching a dead end. The escalation came as an inevitable result of foreign pressure imposed by some countries on the government of Bahrain. Such pressure comes whenever there looms in the horizon a rational understanding between the government and the opposition seeking political reforms. The latter's objectives do not go beyond the return to 1973 constitution, the reinstatement of suspended articles and restoration of the legislature (National Assembly) through election as was specified by the constitution of the country.

We have evidence that severe foreign pressure has been brought about on our country's government which resulted in sacrificing public freedoms, preventing the raising of any voice calling for the return to democracy and neglecting the sacrifices of the people of Bahrain which prove their loyalty and honesty for the constitutional legitimacy as represented by the present governing system. On the basis of this constitutional legitimacy, broadly-based groups took the initiative to address the problem with the political leadership, by submitting two petitions. The first was submitted on 15 November 1992 and the second one is still waiting for the appropriate time for submission which the events have made difficult. These events inflicted grave damages to the homeland and to the democratic reform process which has no other aim but to restore the 1973 constitution.

The delegation (responsible for submitting the petition) was not given the opportunity or channel of communication to establish dialogue with the political leadership. Our country and people have suffered immensely for more than a year as a result of the closure of channels of dialogue and the spread of violence waves (from whichever source) that have no justification and which have been rejected and condemned.

Several outsiders have meddled and complicated the crisis by holding the patronizing view that it is too much for Bahrainis to have an elected parliament and to enjoy political freedom based on civil society concepts and bound by constitutional legitimacy. Every misery and pain the country suffered for more than a year had never been expected. Also no one expected the "invention" of a dramatic end full of frustrations and ridicules.

The mass Arab media intervened without mentioning for once that there is a problem caused by the suspension of constitution. The parliament was suspended twenty years ago and no one is allowed to call for its return. Instead of mentioning this fact, the untruthful Arab media spoke about a "conspiracy" staged by preachers in mosques instigating violence. The conversion of truth by Arab media resulted in the false accusation of respected religious scholars who have been calling for calm and have requested the public to abide by law and to stick to legitimate means for restoring the parliament. The question is now raised about the rationale behind this media attack. Those with a conscience are asking who benefits from falsifying events by Arab media. Why did they falsify the legitimate and peaceful demands of

our people? Who benefits from the competition of Arab governments to support the suppression and confiscation of freedoms (in Bahrain)? Why do not these ever give an advice (to the government of Bahrain) to put an end to the policy of punishing those who demand their rights? On the contrary, we see them attacking our dear friends in Kuwait who supported our legitimate demands through a letter they submitted to HH the Amir of the State of Bahrain calling on him to listen to the just demands of people. What do these media attacks and supports of Arab media and governments mean?

The Committee of the Popular Petition denounces falsifying charges against respected religious scholars and our colleagues in the Committee who were detained administratively and the Committee denounces those who imply that there is a link between these jailed opposition figures and some foreign countries. These attempts have one aim: to divert attention of the world public opinion from the reality of the political crisis.

The reality is that there exists in Bahrain a broadly-based national opposition and all these maneuvers are aimed at obstructing the path for achieving its legitimate demands. This is the same crisis which the government attempted to solve by speaking to what was known as the Group of the Initiative (Sheikh Al-Jamri and his colleagues) and this is why some of this group were freed (last August and September) and allowed to travel abroad to calm the opposition outside the country. This confirms that there is a political crisis more than being a security problem or acts of violence.

The CPP, while denouncing violence and security abuses, urges all people of conscience in the world to intervene for putting an end to the escalating cycle of terror which primarily aims at extinguishing calls for restoring the Bahraini constitution and National Assembly. We also urge all honest people in the world to do their best to convince the political leadership in Bahrain to initiate dialogue, to release the political prisoners and to save the country from possible disasters. Let's go forward with our national unity which characterize our experienced people. Let's declare our total rejection of violence from whatever source and under any pretext. Let's call for the abolition of all measure that prevent citizens from returning to their home and lets call for the release of all political prisoners. We hope that normal peaceful life would return to our country and amongst our people after this critical and testing period so that our great people continue with their civilized and distinguished contributory role. The Committee of the Popular Petition (CPP). Issued in Bahrain on 3 February 1996.

(Note the CPP was formed in October 1994 comprising all tendencies and sections of Bahrain society. They included Shia Islamists such as Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and Mr. Abdul Wahab Hussain, Sunni Islamists such as Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood and Sheikh Isa Al-Joder, and patriotic activists such as Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan and Mr. Saeed Al-Asbool. The CPP and its supporters gathered 25,000 signatures in support of the petition calling for restoration of the constitution and parliament).

Crown prince and prime- Ransacking ..

1 February: Mr. Abdul Jalil Hassan Al-Mutawwa (45 years old) who replaced Sheikh Hassan Sultan (one of the eight leaders in detention) in leading prayers in Dar Kualaib was arrested to prevent prayers in the mosque. All mosques must be closed by 9.30 pm and anybody found after 10.00 pm is liable for detention. An informal curfew has been implemented in most uprising-areas. A lady, Foziya Ahmed Al Mukhouthar from Sanabis was arrested for unknown reasons.

2 February: The Bahraini security forces dragged the internal situation to violence through attacking mosques, detaining and torturing opponents, inciting violence and committing arson in residential uprising-areas as a form of collective punishment. An old-fashioned cover-up was needed and what's more ready than blaming Iran. Thus, the third secretary of the Iranian embassy in Manama, Mr. Abdul-Rasool Dokooohki was "given one week to pack his bags and go". The Iranians retaliated in a similar way.

3 February: The Committee for Popular Petition (CPP) issues an historic statement (see page 2).

4 February: The eight Kuwaiti MPs who were banned from entering Bahrain after sending a letter to the ruler of Bahrain urging him to listen to Bahraini people just demands, condemned the attitude of the government. "If we, members of a legislative authority in a sisterly state, are being treated like this for merely submitting a plea, how about the people there on the ground?" said deputy Adnan Abdul-Samad to Reuters. "This illustrates the way the (Bahraini) authority deals with matters".

The information minister declares that a decree is being studied to speed-up the passing of administrative sentences against political suspects detained during the crackdown.

6 February: A seminar organized by the leading Al-Orooba Club in Manama was canceled by the intelligence department. The seminar entitled "Democracy and Shura" was planned to be addressed by distinguished speakers Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan, Dr. Abdul Latif Al-Mahmood and Dr. Ali Al-Oreibi.

7 February: Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan is arrested (see page 1).

8 February: The Bahraini security forces continued their attacks on the peaceful residential areas of Bahrain destroying private cars and properties as a form of collective punishment. Residents witnessed these forces transporting burnt furniture items and placing them in several public places for photographing. Similarly, these forces bring with them many other items, believed to be explosive devices, for photographing inside mosques. Most mosques are now without prayers after the arrest of virtually all clerics leading the prayers. The latest to be arrested is Sheikh Ahmed Al Faraj from Samahej (Muharraq).

11 February: Cycle of violence hits the Diplomat Hotel. The Associated Press reported that "the explosion occurred in the street outside the hotel in downtown Manama".

12 February: The crown prince, Sheikh Hamad, pays a visit to the US military HQ in Jufair and for the first time since 1948 the official papers publicize the existence of Jufair military

minister compete against each other by sacrificing the stability of Bahrain residential areas and sponsoring violence

headquarters. The crown prince visited the administrative command centre of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet which moved ashore three years ago from the USS La Salle, to beg for support from the US for the aggressive policies against the peaceful people of Bahrain. He also asked to visit the US but his visit was turned down. Instead he decided to head a military committee which was scheduled to visit Washington around 7 March.

A military officer stated in a private discussion that the crown prince met recently with senior personnel in the defence forces and ordered them to be on alert. He also stated that the crown prince mentioned he was prepared to permit the killing of "villagers" to settle matters militarily. Responding to all these developments, both the British and American embassies issued fresh security alerts for their nationals in Bahrain to avoid all villages.

At 2.30 am three lorries packed with riot police armed with live ammunition raided the village of Jannossan, located on the Budaya Highway. This was the beginning of a series of attacks led by Khalid Al-Wazzan resulting in more than 50 people arrested, mostly children and teenagers. The opposition calls on the people of Bahrain to boycott Eid celebrations and to wear black.

13 February: Robert Fisk of the UK Independent newspaper starts a series of articles on Bahrain. The first article surveyed the nature of the pro-democracy opposition and the brutal response of the government.

Sheikh Aziz mosque (Sehla) was encircled and those attempting to attend for prayers were subjected to inhumane treatment. On the same day, people praying in Nuwaidrat mosque were attacked by riot police while performing their prayers. Many were arrested. Similarly, Seyed Hashim mosque in Tobli was encircled by riot police to prevent people from attending. Balloons were seen in the air in several places carrying slogans denouncing the oppressive campaign.

Eighteen Swedish MPs and representatives of political parties wrote to the Amir of Bahrain urging him to restore democracy in Bahrain. This plea comes at a time when many international human rights organizations expressed their concern at the atrocities committed by the Bahraini security forces. The anti-torture Geneva-based SOS organization issued a statement condemning the detention and ill-treatment of members of the opposition.

14 February: The interior ministry announces that a car exploded in Isa Town (south of Manama) at a distance from the commercial market.

15 February: At 7.00 pm, security forces encircled Makharga district of Manama and attacked the people in Momin mosque, Khawaja mosque and Mattam Al-Qassab. Haji Ahmed Salloom, the person in-charge of Mattam Bin-Salloom (religious gathering place) was summoned by the intelligence department and questioned about the popularity of the gathering place. The security officer also demanded that he hands over Jaffer Al-Durazi and Saleh Al-Durazi, both of whom had already been arrested two months ago. This is yet another proof of the

arbitrary nature of the crackdown.

17 February: At around 1.30 am units belonging to riot police raided Jannossan. Nine teenagers were arrested. Clashes erupted in Sitra and security forces used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse demonstrators. Similarly, Karranah was the scene of intense clashes that continued until early hours of 18th February. Sheikh Khalid Ferdos who escaped to Saudi Arabia four months ago returned few days ago to Bahrain after his mother was taken hostage by the security forces. Upon his return via the causeway linking the two countries, he was arrested and beating started from the first minute. Sayed Shaker from Jid-Ali was also arrested to prevent him from leading prayers in any mosque.

18 February: The "Independent on Sunday" publishes a unique photograph of the British chief of intelligence and security in Bahrain, Mr. Ian Henderson, together with an investigation into the torture chambers he manages in Bahrain in a bid to curb the drive for democratising the political system.

20 February: The first day of Eid. People boycotted celebration and gathered in cemeteries to remember the martyrs (see page 4).

21 February: Venting their hatred, the security forces attacked residential areas in several places. Residents in Sanabis were attacked and any youth found wearing black shirt or cloth was arrested on the spot. Abu-Saiba village was encircled by units of riot police which later attacked the youths beating them with batons and injuring many of them. A mass demonstration took to the streets of Dair in Muharraq. Security forces used rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse the march.

22 February: Riot police attacked Sanad village, south of the capital Manama at around 2.30 pm and arrested six people.

23 February: Riot police attacked the grand mosque in Qafool and arrested two religious scholars as well as many people who were participating in the Friday prayer. The two clerics are Sheikh Fadel Hammad and Sheikh Abbas. The siege ended with riot police chasing people into residential areas. Reuters reported from Bahrain that "anti-government protesters in Bahrain set a local bank on fire on Thursday night, blocked a main highway and exploded gas cylinders. ... Residents said the National Bank of Bahrain's branch in Karzakkam .. was attacked on Thursday night and set on fire, causing damage but no injuries... Residents said they heard several loud blasts caused by gas cylinders exploding in open spaces, which cause commotion but little damage and have become a nightly feature of village protests. ... A main road was barricaded briefly with burning dead palm trees near Adhari park, close to the capital, which is popular with visitors chiefly from Saudi Arabia". A person was chased in Karzakkam and hit by a live shot. The injured person Mohammed Reda Eid now lies in the military hospital.

24 February: Local papers published the names of four people who the interior ministry claimed are responsible for planting explosive devices. The four were Abdulla Nasr Al-Toug, 24 years old, Ali Hassan Abdulla Al-Ghannam,

35, Hamza Abdulhassan Ibrahim, 25, and Ahmad Haider Abbas Haider, 20. The interior ministry is attempting to calm down fears ahead of a major conference in Bahrain between 10 and 13 March bringing together businessmen from the West and Gulf countries. These four were selected as scapegoats in an attempt to convince businessmen not to cancel the conference. It is worth noting that last January the interior ministry announced the names of three people with the same initials of "Redha" and blamed them for planting an explosive device in a shopping centre on new year eve. The three "Redhas" were a sample from the many people who had been arrested having the same initial name in Manama district of Makharga!

Security forces created a "security zone" around Sanabis, Jammah, Burhama, Jedhafs and Daih. They also closed Budaya Highway from Qafool to Bahrain International Hospital. Residents were banned from entering or leaving the area. The siege lasted until 2.00 am on 25 February.

On Saturday evening the interior ministry claimed that a bomb ripped the car of the editor-in-chief of Al-Ayyam. This explosion was believed to have been made by the security forces near Al-Ayyam and the Jufair US military HQ to justify the crackdown.

25 February: The Scottish "Sunday Mail" publishes large coloured photographs of the British officer Ian Stewart MacWalter Henderson and calls him "Barbarian of Bahrain".

26 February: Security forces raided Sanabis at mid-night and arrested many people. Many cars have been damaged by police as a form of collective punishment. Some of the damaged cars belong to Abdali Al Sharah (Benz 40206), Abdul Jaleel Abdullah (Mitsubishi 18347), Fadhil Abdulla (Honda 1187076), Ali Al Sharah (Datson 44102).

27 February: Mr. Abdulla Fakhroo, 70 years old (who comes from the Sunni and wealthy Fakhroo family) is arrested.

29 February: Security forces conducted a serious of outrageous attacks on several villages simultaneously. Dair, Abo-Gowa, Jannossan Duraz and Bani Jamra were amongst the worst hit areas. Bani Jamra was surrounded at 1.30 am February and door-to-door breaking-in started immediately. Two mosques were ransacked, including Zein al-Abdin mosque. The daughter-in-law of Sheikh Al-Jamri, Mona Habib (33 years old) was also arrested. Mona is a mother of three children and her husband Mohammed Jamil is in jail since 1988. Nine other women were also arrested from other parts of the country. Zahra Helal Salman (33 years old) and her sister Iman, 24, were arrested during a dawn raid on 29 February. Their father went on hunger strike in protest. Zahra's husband is in jail since January 1995. Other women include Naema Khamis, Hoda Saleh Al-Jallawi, Mariam Ahmad Al-Mo'min, Zahr Abdali, 19.

At 2.45 am (29 February), other security forces units headed by the notorious Khalid Al Wazzan attacked Jannossan again. They attacked the house of Mr. Ali Khamis and arrested his son Saeed, 20 years old. Saeed was snatched from his bed.

Backward mentality of the ruling family ought to change Will they have the courage to modernise?

The authority of the conqueror or superior. is an outdated and hated principle that should have no place in our modern world. It is a principle adopted by back-ward political systems which consider government an extension of the master's authority in public life. The master in this case is a conqueror or a "body", that managed to get to the top of the society one way or the other. What difference does it really make if the general public agrees or disagrees with decisions or actions of the organs of such an authority? Law is a command issued by the superior to the subjects for implementation, not for deliberation. Preservation of law and order translates into ensuring that the master's will is executed and implemented by subjects without interruption or delay.

Although such mentality existed for a long time in the past it did not manage to secure legitimacy in any corner of the world. Yet, in Bahrain, the ruling family considers itself the master of the land by virtue of the fact that the grand father of the ruling tribe, Ahmad Al-Khalifa, managed to get to the top by invading the islands at a difficult time in the history of the nation. Those who happen to be in Bahrain were forced to submit to the conqueror and became "subjects", enslaved to the will and commands of the "superior" hence, the text books in schools teach children of Bahrain that the grand father of the ruling family is Ahmad Al-Fateh, meaning "Ahmad the Conqueror", for he in 1783 conquered Bahrain and established the rule of his dynasty. The official line goes on further and stamps the title on mosques and streets to remind that the source of legitimacy emanates from this concept. However, one won-

ders: Did any advisor, consultant, decent person, etc, ever mentioned to the ruling family how unfit this title as it bears no humanist value or meaning?

In an interview with the Saudi paper, Asharq Al-Awsat, the crown prince Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, declared that Bahrain is part of the "region", and his family is not going to wear a "different" cloth, meaning an elected parliament. He went on to say that the region has chosen "Shura" and declared that the political system in Bahrain is "100% democratic", although it is not accountable and is not linked to the aspirations of the people of Bahrain. Accountability, responsible government, representative politics, etc, are but "different" cloths, the ruling family could do without. Moreover, the definition of democracy and it being 100% in Bahrain, bears no relation to the concepts as understood by the rest of the world. It is defined in a haphazard way. "If you have a problem... go to the majlis of the Amir, his son or his brother and submit a plea... it could be solved... you never know!..." This picture is unashamedly being portrayed as 100% democracy and unfortunately some Western politicians, motivated by selfish interests, including precious gifts and cash payment, have tried to convince the outside world, with no luck yet, that this is democracy in action, be it in a different bandwagon, or in a different cloth!

Basing authority on an historic event resulting in a tribe managing to succumb a nation doesn't provide legitimacy especially in today's world of politics. Modern and democratic authorities believe in the concept that citizens and relationships amongst these citizens represent

the "state", and that government is not but their servant.

The claim that the "region", has chosen shura is as vague as the claim that Bahrain is 100% democratic. By the "region", the crown prince meant Saudi Arabia, for Kuwait is also part of the region but depends on parliamentary legitimacy. The Saudis reluctantly convened an all-appointed and powerless council for purposes unrelated to policy formulation or public accountability. The problem is getting worse as members of the ruling family in Bahrain continue to express opinions in matters so strange to them. As a first response, they claim that "we, meaning the Al-Khalifa ruling family, are one family in Bahrain and any one can visit HH the Amir to get his problem solved". By saying this, they assert that matters of the state are private affairs belonging to the ruling family and the chief of the family may or may not wish to extend his gratitude and decides not to kill you or not to imprison you or not to deport you. For this you must thank him. This is benchmark. You, the subject, who may attempt to trespass beyond your limits as designated by gratitude of the chief of the conquering tribe, is liable for punishment by special forces imported from different corners of the world to serve no holy purpose other than receive a salary at the end of each month. In this context, you as a subject must be thankful if you are allowed to attend for schools, to drive a car on a street constructed by virtue of the gratitude of his highness, etc.

There is one "one family" and others who wish to be considered as subjects for this family may be allowed to attend the open majlis of their highnesses to drink coffee and probably end up with personal problems solved, for every thing must remain personal. If not solved, the subject must thank the chief who did not punish him or her in the first place.

Over the past months the Bahrain media carried out statements such as "those misguided individuals who abused and misinterpreted the mercy of the government". The "mercy", the local papers refers to killing "only", fourteen people, detaining thousands and forcibly deporting scores of Bahrainis. Prisoners inside the jails are frequently told by the torturers: "you should thank God that we are not killing all of you." Others were asked: Who are you to demand an elected parliament?

This mentality has prevented the ruling family from adapting to the modern world and by doing so has selfishly turned the country into a battle ground for enforcing a barbaric system against the tide of history. In doing so they clinged to the past and sought the assistance of others in preserving a status quo for turning the clock backward. This is something that we believe will end in failure. The opposition has rationally and peacefully struggled for a better society that guarantees the dignity of human being in Bahrain. This we believe can only be achieved through the transformation of the ruling mentality to modern politics and by implementing the principles of citizenship. Will members of the ruling family have the brain to understand an will they have the courage to save the country from a crisis?

Eid celebrations cancelled

Normal celebrations to mark the end of Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr) have been cancelled in response to the call by the opposition to boycott all types of happy celebrations. On the morning of 20 February, people poured to cemeteries to visit the graves of martyrs who were killed by security forces during demonstrations or in police custody. In Dair (Muharra) a mass gathering of people wearing black-coloured cloths (symbol of protest) poured into the cemetery around the grave of one of the martyrs Hussain Al-Asheeri. Similarly in Sanabis, Duraz, Bani Jamra and Sitra, people gathered in cemeteries around graves of martyrs exchanging condolences with relatives and friends of the 14 martyrs. In Daih, riot police attacked Al-Anwari mosque and arrested Hassan Ebrahim Mattar, 26 years old, Saeed Ali Maki, 35, Ali Al-Jaziri, Abdulnabi Al-Sayad, 49, and his son Sameer, 25, Yousef Hashim, and several others. Riot police also fired tear gas and rubber bullets chasing people and imposing a curfew. Any young person wearing black cloth was chased and many were later arrested. Armoured vehicles were stationed in the area.

Clashes in Sitra intensified and special forces were deployed in addition to riot police. Random arrests were carried out in the process of breaking-in houses. In Jadhafs, an elderly Mr Ibrahim Helal, 63 years old, was arrested be-

cause he runs a business for selling used tools and components, including empty gas cylinders. Security forces attacked houses and premises and confiscated numerous gas cylinders. In Duraz, gas cylinders were exploded in the early hours of the day.

The Associated Press reported from Bahrain (20 February) that "At least 20 people were arrested in the villages of Karzakan and Malkhiyah, outside Manama. Armoured personnel carriers were seen at the villages' entrances. The arrests came on the first day of the three-day feast of Eid al-Fitr, which follows the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan... At a cemetery in Bani Jamrah, home to a jailed opposition leader, women wearing black chadors sobbed Tuesday as they mourned relatives by spreading flowers on graves. Four-wheel drive vehicles filled with riot police, some armed with semi-automatic rifles, patrolled villages".

A businessman entered the Holiday Inn hotel to meet a company representative on 19 February. He described the hotel as a cemetery. Rooms rate in the top hotels dropped to 15% of their values with Sheraton having 25 rooms occupied out of a total of 300. The room rate in the Gulf Hotel dropped to 10 dinars (around \$30). The telecommunication industry is losing around 13,000 dinars a day as a result of the banning of international calls from public boxes.