

BAHRAIN

Issued by the "Bahrain Freedom Movement" for Promoting Human and Constitutional Rights

Dire Consequences feared if three innocent Bahrainis are executed

Pre-empting the "Autumn of fury"

Judging with the pace at which events are unfolding in Bahrain in recent weeks, the anticipation is that the next few months will be detrimental to the future of the country. The worst scenario envisages the Amir, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, stamping his seal on the death sentences passed on three Bahrainis falsely accused of starting a fire that killed seven Bangladeshis last March. The whole country believes the three are innocent and they are being held as hostages to blackmail the opposition into ending the 20-months constitutional uprising. If that happens the reaction of the people will be furious.

The people of Bahrain have experienced enormous hardships in the past twenty months as the Al Khalifa clan waged an all-out war against the campaigners for democracy. They will view the killings as pre-meditated political murders that warrant swift reaction. The opposition, in its endeavour to prevent violent reactions to State-terrorism has always called on the people to be restraint and has condemned violence by the government and by any other party. It has laid the foundation for a wider campaign of peaceful civil resistance in its bid to curtail the tendency to undertake violent acts in response to the Al Khalifa's killings and torture. Whether this peaceful approach will work remains to be seen.

The government is the main loser in a peaceful campaign of civil disobedience. In the past, it had pushed the people with full intention and preparation to take violent actions, but its success was limited. In the eyes of the world, the killing of 28 citizens by torture, beating, execution or shooting in the streets, is the ultimate form of violence.

So far, the prime minister of Bahrain, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, who has been in office for the past 25 years, is the main obstacle to any dialogue with the people, and is determined to continue his government's policy of terror. He is reported to be ready to commit unlimited violence in order to prove that his clan does not bend to pressure.

The over-aged tribal mentality is driving the country to a bleak future, and independent observers believe there is not a short cut to stability, and that the policy of terrorising people into submission cannot provide comfort for the country. It is absurd to believe that a government, however despotic it may be, can defeat a nation ready to sacrifice for its principles and rights, as is the case with Bahrain. The longer the crisis lingers on, the heavier will be the price for a return to normal relations between the ruling clan and the people of Bahrain. After

all, the people have only reluctantly accepted the rule of the Al Khalifa when they agreed to formalise the relations with the people in the 1973 Constitution. Prior to that it was the British who played a mediating role between the two sides for 150 years.

When they decided to withdraw from Bahrain, the UN sponsored a fact-finding mission led by Mr. Winspeare Guicciardi, the Italian special envoy of the UN's Secretary General, U Thant, to sound out the people of Bahrain regarding their future in a plebiscite that sealed the fate of the country. On 11 May 1970, the fifteen hundred and thirt-sixth meeting of the United Nations Security Council decided upon the status of Bahrain. Delegates from the fifteen nations represented at the Council studied the draft resolution relating to the question of Bahrain based on the report of Mr. Guicciardi who stated: "The Bahrainis I met were virtually unanimous in wanting a fully independent sovereign State. The great majority added that this should be an Arab State".

There was an overwhelming support for the idea of a constitutional monarchy that would open the way for freedom and democracy. The four years that followed were the only period in which the people of Bahrain enjoyed a relative peace and freedom since the Al Khalifa invaded the county in 1783. Their coup against the people in 1975 marked the beginning of a black era of terror and emergency laws.

The jubilee anniversary of the independence of Bahrain (due in mid-August) is not a happy one by any standard. The death sentences passed on three Bahrainis are a reminder of the bloody rule of the prime minister. The taking of hostages to blackmail relatives is unique in the region. The killing of children either by torture was as the case with Saeed Al Eskafi or by police beating as is the case of Ali Taher and Mahmood Abdul Latif, is a new phenomena in the region. The murdering of women by foreign mercenaries as is the case of Mrs. Zahra Ibrahim Kadhem, is a stark reminder of the violent nature of the Al Khalifa regime.

If the three men sentenced to death are killed, the situation will change dramatically with dire consequences. Experts believe such executions will turn the people of Bahrain, widely known for their peaceful nature and good hearted attitudes into serious opponents, and the status quo which has prevailed for twenty years may be overturned. It may herald the abandonment of the conciliatory gestures contained in the constitutional demands and a call for more fundamental change will replace them. Coupled with the problems the Al Khalifa clan is encour-

tering with Qatar, the Bahraini regime will be fighting on two fronts, a prospect that is causing concern not only among the people but also within the ruling family. The opposition is warning against permitting the emergence of another Saddam Hussain in the region, embodied in the person of the prime minister, loathed by almost everyone from the person in the street to politicians in other Gulf capitals. His policies are blamed for the ills of the country and for the tense relations with the neighbours. The Qataris and Kuwaitis are not happy with him. When he toured three Gulf states last month, he did not call on Sultan Qaboos of Oman, an indication to the tense relations between him and the Omani leadership. His pro-Saddam statements and policies have antagonised both the Kuwaitis and the Saudis, while his greed for wealth made almost every businessman in the country turn against him.

The opposition is still calling for dialogue with the Al Khalifa to spare the country the evils of mutual violence. It is widely known that the policies of the government are the main catalyst for violence. The arbitrary arrests, the vicious attacks on homes, mosques and offices, the violent reaction of the foreign-staffed security forces and riot police, the uncompromising attitudes of the prime minister, the total refusal by the Al Khalifa clan to restore constitutional law, the indiscriminate killings and attacks on property, and the summary trials of innocent people are examples of the policies of the prime minister. It is time for change; this is the verdict of independent observers. It is in everybody's interest that change should be swift, constitutional and eminent.

Time is running short before the country reaches the point of no-return. There is a unanimous view that change will eventually come to this troubled island. The policies of blackmail being adopted by the prime minister, must not be allowed to prevail over wisdom and common sense. There are powers whose influence on this man is significant. It is these powers who can save Bahrain and the region from the evils of violence and State-sponsored terrorism. It is time for them to intervene, before the coming of the "Autumn of Fury".

The people have lost many things, from wealth to security, and the regime will not emerge unscathed if it chooses to go ahead with the execution of the three innocent people. Abandoning policies of violence and intimidation by the regime in addition to initiating dialogue with the people of Bahrain especially the jailed Sheikh Al Jamri and his colleagues will certainly lead to a better outcome.

Unconstitutional court passes death sentences against innocent citizens The ruling family gambles with blood

The State Security Court passed death sentences against three innocents people, sentenced four others to life imprisonment and one person received 15 years jail sentence. The eight defendants pleaded not guilty and lawyers involved in the case gathered evidences from more than fifty witnesses proving that the eight could not have committed the crime of burning a restaurant in Sitra four months ago in which 7 Bangladeshi workers died. One of the Bahraini judges, Sa'ad Al-Shamlan refused to pass the harsh sentences after reviewing the case, and hence an Egyptian judge was put in his place to confirm these sentences which are viewed by the opposition as political murders.

The three victims who received the death sentences on 1 July were: Ali Ahmed Abdullah al-Asfoor, Yousif Hassan Abdul-Baqi and Ahmed Khalil Ibrahim Hubail. The four victims sentenced for life are Khalil Ibrahim Abdullah Khamis, Qamber Khamis Ali Qamber, Abdullah Ibrahim Abdullah Khamis and Mohammed Reda Yaqoub Yousif al-Attar. The eighth victim, Abdul-Aziz Hussain Abdul-Baqi, was sentenced for 15 years prison.

It is worth nothing that the Bangladeshi Embassy protested against the burial of their citizens without their knowledge. The security forces concealed the truth by not allowing even a Bangladeshi official to inspect the bodies.

The powers of the State Security Court were extended on 19 and 20 March 1996 when the Amir issued two decrees transferring more

than 85 offences that used to be dealt with by civil courts to the security one. Sentences passed by the unconstitutional State Security Court can not be appealed. Moreover, the said court base its sentences on confessions extracted from defendants during custody without the presence of lawyers, thus paving the way for the use of torture to compile confessions. Since last March some 140 people have been sentenced after unfair trials with most of the victims receiving sentences ranging from 10 years to life, and in this latest case three innocent citizens have been sentenced to death as part of the policy of victimising the Shia community for the satisfaction of some political circles.

Amnesty International issued a press release on 23 July (Ref: MDE 11/24/96) stating:

((Ali Ahmad al-Asfoor, aged 31, employee in the, agriculture ministry. Yusef Hassan 'Abdul-Baqi, aged 31, teacher. Ahmad Khalil Ibrahim Hubail al-Kattab, aged 30, employee in aluminium company (ALBA).

Attempts to bring the three men named above to the Court of Cassation have failed and Amnesty International fears that their execution is imminent. The organization has also received further information confirming that their trial by the State Security Court fell far short of international standards for fair trial.

Although the State Security Court does not allow for appeal, under Bahraini law death sentences by ordinary courts are automatically referred to the Court of Cassation for appeal.

However, when the defence lawyers invoked that law in an attempt to go to the Court of Cassation, the government of Bahrain denied them that right and strongly indicated that the death sentences could be implemented soon.

Amnesty International has also learned that the defendants' confessions, read out in court, apparently strongly contradicted one another. The State Security Court did not take into account these discrepancies, and neither did it require a cross-examination of the defendants, relying solely on written confessions they had made during the interrogation. The organization fears that the defendants may have been convicted on the basis of confessions extracted under torture. The court has also denied the team of defence lawyers their right to read the reasons for the judgement. Amnesty International is also concerned that the trial in camera by the State Security Court proceeds to a decision at a fast pace which does not allow lawyers sufficient time to prepare a defence.

Amnesty International opposes the death penalty in all cases as a violation of the right to life, and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On 26 March 1996, the authorities carried out the first execution in Bahrain for nearly 20 years when Issa Ahmad Hassan Qambar was executed by firing squad. He had been convicted of murdering a police sergeant).

Al: Women and children are abused in Bahrain

On 16 July 1996, Amnesty International issued an historic 13-page document (ref: MDE 11/21/96) describing the arbitrary arrest and indecent assault on women and children in Bahrain. Al said:

((For the first time in the recent history of Bahrain women and children as young as seven have been arrested, beaten and threatened in custody, a disturbing pattern that looks set to continue. Since the outbreak of pro-democracy activities in 1994 many Bahraini women have joined in public protests, a shift from their traditional role away from the public arena. They wrote petitions to the Amir, Sheikh Issa bin Salman Al Khalifa, urging the restoration of parliament, and led demonstrations calling for the release of their male relatives and of all political prisoners. Scores of women were beaten for having joined in demonstrations or for trying to prevent the arrest of a male relative. Some were held as "hostages" in order to coerce male relatives to hand themselves over to the authorities while others were detained, apparently as punishment for the opposition activities of their male relatives.

Some women were also arrested in order to deter other women from joining public protests. Most were held incommunicado, some in solitary confinement, for up to two months before being released, usually without charge or trial. The arrest and beatings of these women were a cynical attempt by the government to stifle criticism and pressure the women to turn over their husbands, fathers and brothers to the authority. In April 1995, 20 professional women

sponsored a petition addressed to the Amir asking for an end to the cycle of violence, a national dialogue and the restoration of democratic rights. Aziza al-Bassam, Hassa al-Khumairi and Munira Ahmad Fakhro were dismissed from their jobs because they refused to withdraw their names from the petition. The following month, Afaf Abd al-Amir al-Jamri was arrested, apparently simply because she was a daughter of Sheikh Abd al-Amir al-Jamri, a leading Muslim Shia cleric who was detained in 1995. She was reportedly beaten by women police and held incommunicado for almost one month before being released without charge or trial. At least 10 women were arrested in February 1996 and held for about two months without access to relatives or lawyers. Some of them had husbands or fathers in jail and others had already been briefly held in detention in 1995. All were released without charge or trial.

In March 1996, around 20 female high school students from 16 to 18-years old were arrested in connection with school and street demonstrations. They were held in prison for more than a month without seeing their families or lawyers and were harassed during interrogation. One of them stated that a male prison officer threatened her and the other young women with rape and insulted and sexually taunted them. All women and female high school students arrested in 1996 were released. Nevertheless, since some of them had been detained previously in the 1994-95 unrest, Amnesty International fears that these women could

face arrest and further abuse.

The organization was especially concerned to learn that Bahrain's Information Minister Mohammed Ibrahim al-Motaweh recently told an Arabic-language daily that women have helped to "transport arms" used in the unrest because they can avoid being searched. He provided no further details, and in the absence of any charges against a single woman in that connection, Amnesty International fears these statements may be a pretext for further arbitrary arrests. Some of the detainees following mass arrests in both last year's unrest and the recent disturbances were children as young as seven years-old. It is believed that, at any one time, about 60 children may have been held without access to legal assistance or family. In some cases, security forces targeted children to hold them "hostage" until relatives sought by police turned themselves in. A number of children were tried and handed the maximum sentence of 10 years, to be served in a corrective institution (islahiyya).

Children are the most vulnerable of all victims, and the appalling absence of even the most basic legal safeguards left them open to ill-treatment and to unfair trials. Amnesty International said. The Bahraini government has also continued its policy of forcible exile of suspected political activists and/or their families, and banning from return after several years of voluntary exile the suspected opponents and their wives and children. All these practices contravene international human rights standards and international convention).

July 1996: Security forces kill a woman while people act peacefully

1 July: The unconstitutional state security court sentenced three people to death, 4 to life jail and one to 15 years prison (see separate details)

2 July: The foreign-staffed security forces besieged Sitra (from which the latest victims came from) and fired live ammunition killing 17-year-old Ali Taher and injuring four others. The dead body was taken away by the foreign forces to an unknown location. Later on, these forces stormed the house of the martyr's parent for the routine ransacking and confiscation of passports.

2 July: An Omani businessman, Mr. Abdul Jalil Al-Asfour was sentenced to 3 months jail, fined 700 dinars (\$1,890) and expulsion after end of prison term on charges of "communicating false news".

4 July: The unconstitutional State Security Court passed more arbitrary sentences on 4 July, against three innocent people. Mahmoud Abbas Habib Ahmed was jailed for five years and fined \$1,325. Mohammed Ali Ma'touk received a three-year jail term and was fined 300 dinars (\$810). A dentist, Dr. Sultan Ali Abdullah Sultan, was jailed for six months on charges of distributing "false news".

6 July: The State Security Court jailed three citizens for six years each. They were: Abbas Ahmed Yousif Fahd, Ali Ibrahim al-Shoufa and Salman Mirza Salman Mohamad.

6 July: Mass processions took to the streets in Manama and other parts of the country on the occasion of the 40th martyrdom day of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammed. The intensity of attendance and the raising of slogans, such as "Parliament is the solution" and "Release Sheikh Al-Jamri", confirmed the presence and steadfastness of the people of Bahrain. It is also a year since the young 16-year Saeed Al-Eskafi was tortured to death by Khalid Al-Wazan and the people called for the implementation of justice against such killers. The road between Qafout and Budaya Highway was besieged last night.

7 July: 3 July: The ruling family intensified its campaign against the women of Bahrain. In the last few days several women have been arrested, the latest being: Aminah Hassan Ali, Zahra Ali Isa (a nurse from Dair), Fatima Al-Kangoni and Nahad Ahmad Al-Halwachi (now released), Jalila (from Karbabad).

8 July: The State Security Court against six people. It sentenced two of them to five-year jail sentences: Hasan Abd al-Nabi Sarhan Ahmad Sarhan and Husayn Ali Salman Isa Mazala. It sentenced three of them to three-year jail terms: Salah Abd al-Muhsin Muhammad Abdullah, Sayyid Shakir Amin Salman Hashim al-Sakin and Sayyid Zuhayr Amin Salman al-Sakin. The court decided not to look into the case of defendant Abdullah Nasir Al Tuq because of its connection to a previous case for which he had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

The unconstitutional court also sentenced several people for distributing pro-democracy literature. Four defendants were sentenced to three-year jail sentences. The defendants were: Isam Abbas Hubayl, Ja'far Ali Hasan Kazim, Yasin Muhammad Mansur Al Siwar and Ali Hasan Abdullah al-Jadd.

8 July: In Sharakkan, one person by the name Ali Abdul Amir, was shot, wounded and

arrested by the foreign-staffed security forces. The young man had his right arm cut in hospital later on.

9 July: The state security court sentenced more people as follows: Sadiq Ali Hasan Ahmad and Zuhayr Hasan Ibrahim al-Sabba (Both ten years jail sentence. Abbas Ali Hasan al-Butaki and Sadiq Ahmad Abd al-Wahhab Rabi' (Both one year jail sentence).

10 July at 6:00 am: clashes resumed in Sitra, the home island of the three persons sentenced to death on 1 July. Sanabis witnessed clashes on 9 July at 10.30 pm and Daih was attacked by the security forces following similar clashes. Some 45 people from Daih had been arrested.

10 July: The towns of Karzakkam, Malkiyya and Demestan, ten miles to the southwest of Manama, remained cordoned off following massive demonstrations in the last three days. Security forces stormed virtually all houses in Karzakkam and Demestan arresting male members, ransacking and stealing valuables. Many people were forced to stay outside their homes as a result of the atrocities of these forces. Last year several towns were ransacked by the foreign-staffed riot police, who stole television sets, video recorders, jewellery and money from hundreds of homes. The Amir has refused to put an end to these acts of barbarism.

On another level, the Republic of Yemen has appointed Mustafa Na'man as an Ambassador to Bahrain following the departure of his predecessor, Mohammed Shukry. It was reported that the wife of the former Ambassador had expressed support for the people's constitutional demands, prompting the Al Khalifa to demand the withdrawal of her husband as an Ambassador.

12 July: More than twenty thousand people poured into the village of Kharjeya in the oil-rich island of Sitra to mourn the 27th martyr of the uprising. Ali Taher, 17 years old, was shot dead on 2 July by one of the death squads recently deployed by the Bahrain Defence Force. When the ruling family sentenced three innocent people to death on 1 July, the island of Sitra witnessed heavy clashes.

13 July: Helicopters were used against unarmed civilians demonstrating in Sitra following a week-long clashes between the foreign-staffed security forces and the people of Bahrain. Karranah was also the scene of clashes while several towns and villages remaining under virtual siege. Demonstrations resurfaced across the country following the decision of the ruling family to pass death sentences against three innocent people after a flawed trial that was concluded on 1 July.

15 July: People went out in mass procession all over the country and raised slogans demanding the release of jailed leaders, the halting of arbitrary sentencing and the restoration of parliament. Large placards and banners were raised in the capital Manama. A religious place (Matam Ansar Al-Adala) in Duraz was forcibly closed down by riot police and skirmishes were reported in several places.

18 July: Security forces raided Malkeya village, west Bahrain, damaged 25 private cars and ransacked scores of house. During this savage attack, they stopped people randomly,

intimidating them and carrying out haphazard arrests.

19 July: Columns of fire were seen in many parts of the country. Clashes with security forces were reported in Sitra, Karranah, Mugshaa and Bani Jamra. These clashes have intensified every night since the arbitrary sentencing of three innocent people to death on 1 July. In Bani Jamra, security forces stormed houses and arrested many people.

21 July: Security forces conducted dawn raid on houses in a district of Sitra (Iskan-Sitra) which resulted in the arrest of scores of people. The Awqaf (religious trust) department summoned several persons responsible for mosques and matams (religious assembly halls) and intimidated them. This follows the arrest by security forces of elderly people such the 65-year old Isa Al-Ajami of Duraz on 9 July following the forced closure of "Matam Ansar Al-Adalah". Other elderly persons from Sanabis were arrested and taken hostages to Al-Khamis police stations. While in the custody, some Balouchi policemen were ordered by their chief to urinate on the old men as a form of intimidation.

23 July: At 2:00 am, the foreign-staffed security forces stormed the house of Mr. Mohammed Fardan, in Bani Jamra, to arrest one of his sons. The mother, Zahra Kadhem Ali, 54 years old, attempted to save her child. Reuters reported from Bani Jamra that the "woman has died from heart failure after trying to prevent Bahraini police from arresting her son, witnesses. They said the incident occurred after security forces entered the Shi'ite village of Bani Jamra, 10 km (six miles) west of the capital Manama, on Tuesday night after reports of anti-government unrest by young Shi'ite men who started fires. Three men were arrested, including Zahra Ibrahim's 16-year-old son Ahmed, the witnesses said. When she saw the police forces bundling her son into their car, she ran after them shouting and pleading "leave my son, leave my son," the witnesses told Reuters. The security forces replied with tears gas and rubber bullets and pushed her away with their rifle butts, they added". Reuters added that Zahra "collapsed and died shortly after the incident, the witnesses said. Police released the son the next morning at the family's request to allow him to attend his mother's funeral".

The family has another son, Hussain, 20 years old, who has been in jail since the start of the uprising. The death of Zahra Kadhem Ali brings the number of those killed by security forces to 28 since the start of the uprising in December 1994. Prior to the martyrdom of Zahra Kadhem Ali, Bani Jamra witnessed mass demonstrations demanding the release of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, the civil rights campaigner who is in jail since last January.

26 July: People gathered in mosques at mid-day and participated in the peaceful actions called on by the opposition. The peaceful actions included boycotting petrol stations (all the day) and withholding from the use of electricity, water and telephone for five minutes in solidarity with the opposition leaders who are in jail since last January. In Bani Jamra, a mass gathering was organized around the grave of the latest martyr of the uprising

1.4% Unemployment!!

The government released one of its hot-air balloons on 26 July by claiming it has decided to solve unemployment through establishing an "Employment Services Bureau to assist, guide and train jobless Bahrainis". It is good that the government has at last started to recognize some of the issues that concern the citizens of Bahrain. However, the labour minister seems unwilling to even tell the truth about the number of the unemployed and still insists that the rate of unemployment is 1.4%. If this had been the case, then such a rate is much better than advanced countries. Moreover, the job market in Bahrain suffers from a deep-rooted policy of apartheid that segregates Bahrainis on the basis of their race, religious sect and tribal origin. For example Shia are banned from senior posts and are virtually absent in several ministries. Half of the cabinet (nine out of eighteen) are members of the ruling family.

On the question of whether the government's move will resolve the political crisis, the BFM spokesperson stated: "Virtually all of those sentenced in the events were employees and many senior activists lost their professional jobs following their demands for political reforms. Unemployment in itself is not the primary cause. The demands for political reforms remain at the top of the agenda for the broadly-based opposition. This legitimacy of the regime is absent until the restoration of 1973 constitution and parliament. The political crisis is now being exacerbated by the ruling family which declared its intention to execute innocent people, to continue holding many thousands in detention and to install illegal political structures linked to the interior ministry for confiscating all public functions".

"Genuine Bahrainis!"

On the question of forcible exile, the brother of the foreign minister (Abdul-Aziz Al-Khalifa) who was installed last month as an ambassador in London replied to British MPs last month saying that "The Government of Bahrain does not deport genuine Bahrainis". This is a dangerous statement from a member of the ruling family and falls in line with his role as an ambassador for his tribe. A spokesperson for the BFM said "the ruling family ought not to talk about who is a genuine Bahraini and who is not. It is not advisable to throw stones at others if their house is made of glass".

"Time is running out!"

The Time magazine (22 July) published an important article from Bahrain stating: "A sensible dialogue could still forestall more violence, but both sides must retreat from the escalating intolerance depicted in a colorful graffiti war being waged across the country".

Le Monde Diplomatique

The Le Monde Diplomatique wrote last month saying: "For the last several years, public petitions and mass demonstrations have been alternately requesting and demanding that the ruling Al Khalifa family restore the partially elected National Assembly that it had closed by decree in 1975, and hold new elections. The government has responded by cracking down hard on all demonstrations, peaceful and otherwise, by indiscriminate arrests and arbitrary

detention of several thousand persons, by abuse and torture of prisoners, by deporting alleged ringleaders, and by tightening long-standing restrictions on all forms of meetings and public expression. No international human rights observers have been permitted in the country".

EIU: Failure to contain protests

The Economist Intelligence Unit stated in its latest quarterly report on Bahrain that "The security situation is likely to worsen over the next six months. The likelihood of serious clashes with the security forces has increased.... It is possible that the security forces, which are largely staffed by Pakistanis and are overstretched, will fail to contain clashes.... Despite the clashes, protesters have not called for the overthrow of the Khalifas but continue to demand political rights enshrined in a constitution the royal family suspended over 20 years ago. This could easily change if Sheikh Isa continues to use repression as the sole method of political control or to order more executions". pro-constitution movement"

A martyr for Hawar!

Following the re-surfacing of dispute with Qatar on Hawar islands and the resurgence of event in Bahrain. The crown prince was quoted in the local press as saying that the people of Bahrain made their decision in 1970 to the UN regarding the independence and integrity of all parts of Bahrain. This is the first time the ruling family mentions the historic mission of the UN personal representative in 1970. Then the people of Bahrain stated their wishes to establish an independent state based on modern principles. These principles were enshrined in the constitution. Since 1975, the ruling family has been trying to crush this achievement while the people continue their struggle to restore their dignity and rights as prescribed by the constitution. A more controversial quote implied that the crown prince is prepared to get himself killed as a martyr for the sake of Hawar!

Shuttling around...

The Kuwaiti Crown Prince visited Bahrain and met with the Amir and other members of the Al-Khalifa ruling family. The Kuwaitis have just released a loan for the government and are worried that the money might disappear in a similar way as previous funds disappeared. The Unitag Group which is owned by the prime minister usually takes the lion share by awarding itself lucrative contracts that benefit no one but the prime minister and his son. The Kuwaiti Crown Prince was attempting to convince the Al-Khalifa ruling family that it is time to change their attitude before it is too late. Then, the prime minister visited Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE. The shuttle visits were aimed at bolstering sympathy for the outdated policy and unacceptable behaviour of the ruling family towards local and regional issues.

Speaking out!

People who were forced to advertise their names against their own people are now speaking-out and explaining how the information and labour ministers published their names without their consents. Members of leading families are campaigning against those individuals who attempted to stain their names by going along with the government campaign to condemn the

popular uprising. Some individuals with self-interests have received 500 dinars each as gifts for condemning the opposition.

The President of the Bahraini Lawyers Society, Mohammed Seyyed Yousuf, was forced to resign following intense campaigning by the lawyers and their management committee. Mr. Yousuf made statements on 10 June in which he succumbed to the pressure from the government. The labour and information ministers had forced many people to declare their support following the decision of the ruling family to announce its discovery of a fictitious coup attempt.

Victimization of the Shia

The labeling of the opposition as an extremist Shia group is now losing its desired effect. This is not the first time that the government attempted to divide the nation and blame the outside. In 1975, the same security forces claimed that they were facing "a communist plot" that was "receiving arms from Aden". The security forces claimed that the State Security Law would only be used "against communists". It was clear for the opposition that the State Security Law was a tool of repression that will be used against all the people of Bahrain. Indeed, five years later, it was the turn of the Islamists to suffer from this hated law. Now, the government is saying to many people that the recently introduced "exceptional measures" will only be used against the Shia. The fact of the matter is that the government does not care about a person being a Shia or a Sunni as long as that person accepts dictatorship. The "exceptional measures" are being used now against the Shia community for political expediency in the same way as in 1975 the leftists groups were singled out for persecution.

The policy of victimizing the Shia community is not yielding its results and opposition activists from all sections of the society believe that it is time to put an end to these irresponsible practices. It is unlikely that the prime minister would be courageous enough to admit his mistakes and give way to new ways in governance based on the constitution of Bahrain. The contrary is expected as more is being talked about the bypassing of the constitution by establishing an autocratic system of provinces linked to the intelligence department. The opposition is aware that the present onslaught, the killing, the arbitrary sentencing, the creation of coup-fictions and the deployment of cheap media campaigns are nothing but a camouflage for installing an unconstitutional political structure and imposing a status-quo that has no legitimacy. These unconstitutional set-ups will fail miserably in a similar way as did the all-appointed "Shura Council" that had been born dead in the first place.

The exceptional measures and the illegal political structures are threats to the whole nation, their dignity and rights.

The people of Bahrain are more determined than ever to press ahead with all legitimate peaceful means of civil resistance, no matter how long it takes, to achieve their basic rights as enshrined in the constitution. If the prime minister or anyone else is not up to modern challenges, then they ought to give way to a newer generation to safe-guard the interests of the State of Bahrain.