

# BAHIRATON

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

Friends of Bahrain must act now to curtail the excesses of the PM

## More dangerous times ahead

The stakes are probably "high" for any foreign investor in the Gulf state of Bahrain. This could be the advice being offered to those asking about the current situation in Bahrain. Despite the government's attempts to portray a degree of normality in the country, the repeated upheavals including the killing under torture of young men and women, have invalidated these claims and rendered the government incapable of maintaining peace and tranquillity.

The haphazard policies of the prime minister (the only one since independence 25 years ago) are creating a nervous situation. As a result, several companies are examining their strategies and searching for a better place where the governors and the governed coexist in peace. Insurance companies, for example, have decided to increase the premium cost for businesses, as from 1 September, in view of the escalation of violence instigated by the government's insistence on pursuing the language of suppression against the peaceful people of Bahrain. These unfortunate measures were caused by the unwise policies of deepening the political crisis by refusing to implement the provisions of the country's constitution relating to human rights and popular participation. Investors could not take unnecessary high risks in countries whose political environment is so explosive. It has now become clear to businessmen as well as politicians that the crisis in Bahrain is much deeper than the government would admit, and this is reflected by its repeated failure to sort out the mess over the past twenty two months. Observers believe the crisis would deepen further if the life-long prime minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, does not address the real issues behind the people's grievances, especially that of the democratic process. He enjoys little sympathy from the friends of his government, many of whom are embarrassed by the continued violation of human rights. For example, when the last victim fell after extensive torture last month, there were behind-the-scene criticisms that went beyond the normal expression of sorrow.

Friends such as the British and the Americans are even more embarrassed by the never-ending saga, and the regime is not assisting them by showing flexible behaviour in the face of popular discontent. They believe that regardless of the power of the prime minister, he will not be able to face up to the popular challenge being presented by the constitutional movement. The prime minister is seeking to divert the attention away from the crisis by introducing a "more cosmetic" consultative council, by adding ten more members to it, while still

ignoring the people's demand for the election of a National Assembly based on the country's 1973 Constitution. The opposition has already rejected this venture and castigated as a "stooge" to the prime minister who will hand-pick its members to suite private interests. The people are not in mood to compromise their stands and are unlikely to succumb to the pressure being mounted by the government in order to break their resolve. This powerless consultative council has no constitutional validity and is therefore rejected outright. The time has now passed when the ruler has absolute authority over everything, and the people's aspirations today are much higher than what this despotic regime is ready to offer.

Mr. J. Stork reflected the current divide in Bahrain following his visit to the country in a MERIP article (August 1996): "The most relevant political divide remains that between the ruling family and its many allies, on the one hand, and the growing number of Bahrainis calling for restoration of the 1973 Constitution and the "contract" that it represented between the traditional rulers and expanding modern political and social forces. Most Bahrainis want to see a continued major role for the Al Khalifa, but a negotiated one. Underlying the widespread demand to restore the constitution and the partially elected parliament is the issue of control of resources, and access to national income".

The crisis will continue as long as the constitution remains suspended, and the parliament dissolved. The people of Bahrain have rejected any attempt to compromise their constitutional rights and are in no mood to accept the total domination of one man, the prime minister, over the affairs of the whole nation. The past twenty years have proved that the people could not have a peaceful coexistence with the ruling family outside the political contract embodied in the constitution. The persistent killings, torture, arbitrary detentions, forcible exile and shoot-to-kill policy are strong motivation to reject any deal with the government outside the constitution. The affairs of the country cannot be left in the hands of one single person, regardless of who he is. At the moment, the whole country is hostage to a person who has created dissension even within his ruling tribe. He is a hated figure, who lives in seclusion and whose main power comes from the security apparatus which is being run by the notorious, Ian Henderson.

The killing last month of a young man, Sayyed Ali Amin Mohammed, 19, under torture has shocked the country and made the people more adamant on achieving their rights. It raised

the spectre of more civil disorder as October approaches. The prime minister has been planning to announce the new consultative council, the division of Bahrain into four security zones, and the formation of a puppet council which aims at the confiscation of religious rights. The killing of Sayyed Ali has inflicted serious damage on the premier's plan and is unlikely to be forgotten easily. During this month, the people of Bahrain are planning more actions of civil disobedience defying all attempts to crush the movement. There is a determination to pursue the goals vigorously to force the prime minister either to agree to the reinstatement of the constitution or clear the way for a humane leader. Meanwhile, the region is now poised for the outcome of the International Court of Justice at the Hague, which is expected to announce its position on the case between Qatar and Bahrain on the border disputes. When it announces its verdict at the end of September, the Government may lose out in legally after decades of ignoring the case. Diplomats believe that the Bahraini authorities have chosen to ignore the border challenge for a long time, believing that the "Big Brother", Saudi Arabia, would always come to their rescue at their hour of crisis. With the spectre of internal troubles looming even at a larger scale, the dispute with Qatar will further weaken the rule of the Al Khalifa and is likely to lead even to internal divisions within the Al Khalifa. The fingers are already pointing to the intransigence of the prime minister who has always refused to take up the issues in a manner compatible with the political world of today.

As the foreign mercenaries adopt more lethal methods against the people of Bahrain, the popular feelings become even more angry, and the spiral of discontent continues at even higher pitch. The regional powers have become fed up with Bahrain's prime minister having come to the conclusion that he is the source of trouble in the country. The hope is that he will go sooner than later, since he proved himself incapable of governing by the rule of law. As the Autumn of Fury approaches, everyone seems to be preparing for an inevitable confrontation. The Government of Bahrain has invited many personalities to attend the opening of the new consultative council and the division of the country into four security zones. The people, on their part, have started a programme of peaceful civil resistance that is bound to escalate until the prime minister comes to understand that peace, security and tranquillity of Bahrain can never be achieved by insisting on the suppressing of the constitutional uprising.

# August 1996: A "Week of Peaceful Civil Resistance" ends..

## 1 August

The war of graffiti intensified following the deployment of a new police unit with special equipment for jet-painting the walls to cover-up the pro-democracy slogans. The people of Bahrain respond by writing more slogans confirming that the spirit and will of resistance is stronger than the foreign-staffed security forces. One of the walls in Karbabad (facing main highways) is now being called by locals "the Wall of Freedom" for the number of times it had been painted over.

## 5 August

The State Security Court, presided by members of the ruling family and staffed with Egyptian judges, passed arbitrary sentences against the following: Five people were jailed for three years and were each fined 500 dinars (\$1,326). A sixth person was acquitted. They were accused of causing a fire in a school in Sitra. Three others were jailed for terms ranging from two to three years and were each fined 500 dinars. The three were accused of setting a shoe-repair shop in Manama on fire. A fourth person was jailed for two years.

## 6 August

Fire columns were seen in Daih in what is believed to be a renewed wave of clashes. Six people were arrested in Magaba following skirmishes with security forces on 5 August.

## 7 August

A joint statement was issued by the Bahrain Freedom Movement, the Popular Front in Bahrain and the National Liberation Front of Bahrain. The statement said "The ruling establishment, alone, holds the keys to solving the current crisis. We call on the Amir to assume his constitutional responsibilities and to declare his support for directing the efforts for national reconciliation and for initiating a serious and meaningful dialogue with the Committee for Popular Petition with the aim of salvaging the country".

## 8 August

Mass gatherings were held in many parts of the country in mosques and assembly halls ignoring the provocative measures of the foreign-staffed security forces. The latter started establishing check points in Sitra and other uprising areas in a desperate attempt to intimidate the public. They also attacked and ransacked the contents of a mosque in Sefala village of Sitra after dawn prayers. In Bani Jamra, the security forces attacked and ransacked Matam al-Khudr (religious assembly hall). Later on the residents responded by exploding gas cylinders in protest against this savage attack. Columns of fire were also seen in Duraz. In Daih, protesters raised placards carrying photographs of the jailed leaders and declared the start of the peaceful civil resistance activities. Similarly in Sanabis the youth went out in cars declaring the start of the week for peaceful civil resistance.

## 9 August

The opposition has called for a week of peaceful civil resistance starting on 9th August and lasting until the 16th of August to protest against the vicious policies of the ruling family. The 40th day anniversary of the martyr Ali Taher, 17 years, will be commemorated on 11th August. On the other hand, the 15th of August

will mark the 25th anniversary of the British decision to withdraw from Bahrain. Twenty five years of independence have been dominated by one prime minister adopting the same out-dated mentality that resulted in the dissolution of the National Assembly in August 1975 and created instability and loss of national pride. The opposition has called on the people of Bahrain to withhold from paying utilities and services bills in the period between 9 and 16 August and to reduce shopping activities to necessities. Furthermore, the opposition has called for the switching-off of utilities (electricity, water and telephone) for fifteen minutes on Friday 16 August, starting at 12.00 pm (midday). The latter is in solidarity with the prisoners of conscience being tortured and held as hostages.

Dow Jones news agency reported (9 August) the events in Bahrain and quoted a leading BFM member saying "there will be an autumn of fury if the government goes ahead with three executions .... the whole country believes the three are innocent and they are being held as hostages to blackmail the opposition into ending the 20 month constitutional uprising".

## 12 August

Security forces besieged the residential areas in Sitra and other main regions to prevent the commemoration of the 40th day anniversary of Ali Taher, 17, who was shot dead by one of the foreign-staffed death squads on 2 July. The siege of towns and villages by the foreign forces started early on 10 August resulting in arbitrary arrests amongst the citizens of the country. On the evening of 11 August, burnt tyres were used in Sanabis to defend the area from the atrocities of the attackers.

In Duraz, 50 security officers surrounded a house where women gathered for commemorating the martyrdom of Ali Taher. Loud explosions were heard in the area following the siege. In Sehla, the security forces attacked a gathering in an assembly hall (Matam) and closed it down. Similarly in Sanad and Sar, security forces clashed with residents who were commemorating the occasion. Daih witnessed intense activities and security forces were deployed to attack the area.

The counters and Customer Service desks at the Ministry of Electricity were the first to be affected by the opposition's call to avoid paying utilities' bills between 9-16 August. The participation in the activities of the "Week for Peaceful Civil Resistance" surged to 90% in uprising areas. Wall-writings intensified and the new police unit equipped with jet-painting failed to cover-up the slogans confirming the aims and demands of the popular uprising which is entering its 21st month.

## 13 August

Sitra, the island which the ruling family hates most, witnessed heavy clashes with security cars chasing masked youth and children. Columns of fire spread in Sanabis and Daih where the foreign security forces had established check points to block entries and exists. A restaurant in Daih (Al-Ghader) was damaged during the clashes. In Sar, one person, Sayed Adnan Saeed, was injured by the bullets of the attacker. No one know his whereabouts.

In Bilad al-Qadim, burnt tyres were placed on the road until late evening (12 August) in response to an attack by the foreign forces. Karzakk and Duraz also witnessed similar clashes and activities.

Southern Sehla which came under attack had scores of its people taken away. They included: Mostafa al Roffai, Ali al Roffai, Maytham al Roffai, Majeed al Mobasher, Ali Ahmed al Molla, Abdull al Hadi, Abass, Jaffer Abdul-Rasool (head of the local Matam - assembly hall), Ali Habib al Molla, Hani Jaffer Abdul-Karim, Molla Taqi Al-Qarea, Sadiq, Mohammed Ali, Jaffer Ahmed al Molla.

The military officer in-charge of the University of Bahrain dismissed twenty citizens on sectarian basis. Furthermore, a new policy of accepting students on sectarian basis has been imposed strictly this year. This was evident in the way students with high scores have been pushed aside because of their background.

## 15 August

Mass gathering of men, women, youth and children was organised in Hoora Cemetery in the capital Manama, where several of the martyrs were forcibly and secretly buried by the foreign-staffed security forces. The gathering people commemorated their martyrs and called on the government to stop killing the sons and daughters of Bahrain.

Clashes and arrests took place in Sitra, Markh, Sar, Karzakk, Karranah and other places. Slogans demanding the restoration of parliament were written inside the fort of Al-Khamis prison and police station. Several employees have been reprimanded after failing to find out who and how could someone write slogans inside a police station.

## International pressure on...

The ruling Al-Khalifa family came under intense international pressure regarding the way the security courts are passing haphazard death sentences. The security courts, which are presided by members of the ruling family, passed death sentences on 1 July against three people without allowing proper defense and without granting the defendants the right of appeal.

According to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1984.50, any person facing a death sentence must be given the right of appeal to a higher court. Such an appeal is separate from any plea for clemency to the head of state. Accordingly, the ruling family was forced to refer the case of the three innocent citizens to the Cassation Court. The opposition believes that the Cassation Court, which is presided by another member of the ruling family, would most probably confirm the political sentences to murder the three innocent people.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Justice suspended Mr. Abdulla Al-Tamimi, Legal Officer, on 7 August for processing the request of lawyers to refer the case of the three innocent persons sentenced to death. Mr. Al-Tamimi was reprimanded and ordered not to deal with political cases because political prisoners are denied the right of appeal. The latter contravenes the constitution of the country.

The State Security Court passed arbitrary sentences against at least 150 Bahrainis since

## ..with another death under torture

16 August

Both the ruling Al-Khalifa family and the foreign security forces were angered by the popular response to the call of the opposition for a peaceful civil resistance week between 9 and 16 August. The central market in Manama witnessed a visible 50-60% drop in activities. Payment of bills dropped by 60% and the electricity, water and telephone were switched-off for 15 minutes on 16 August at 12.00 noon. Many people had been arrested and several were injured during the attacks of the security forces against residential areas. Bilal al-Qadim and Nuaim (Manama) witnessed clashes with the security forces.

17 August

Another person dies under torture. Seyed Ali Amin Mohammed, 19, (from Karbabad) was arrested on 13 August at 3.00 pm local time while heading to his place of work in Manama. He was amongst other people who had been picked up arbitrarily by the foreign-staffed security forces. Another person known to have been arrested with him was Mohammed Hassan Al-Sari, 24. On 17 August, the relatives of Seyed Ali were ordered to collect the dead body of their son and to speedily bury him at the same time. Seyed Ali was interrogated by the notorious torturer Khalid al-Wazzan. About a thousand person instantaneously gathered in the Cemetery and those who managed to see the naked body described the signs of torture. Electric shocks were applied on his body, his top part was blackened with cluster of blood.

19 August

At 2.00 am, the foreign forces raided a house in Jedhafs and arrested a respected lady, Hanan Abd Ali, 24 years old. She was released

a week later. Sheikh Nasser Al-Qadami was summoned and threatened that he will be detained if he delivers any sermon in the grand al-Sadek mosque in Qafool. In Sihla, senior members of the community were taken prisoners along side many youths. A 14-year old boy, Abdulla Ahmad Matrook was taken hostage to force the older 23-year brother, Ahmad, to hand himself for detention. A person by the name Hussain Abdul-Aziz was arrested in the airport upon his return from Kuwait where he works.

20 August

Mass gathering was organised in Karbabad with more than 3500 people for the 3rd day commemoration of the latest martyr Seyyed Ali Amin Mohammed. The foreign forces attacked the gathering, arresting more than 80 people, smashing private cars and damaging private properties. A siege was imposed on Karbabad and this was continuing till the writing of these lines (30 August). Clashes spread to principal uprising areas and continued for more than a week..

28 August

The interior ministry issued a statement claiming to have arrested two people following an attack on the Russian Consulate in Zenj, Manama, on the dawn of 26 August. The Russian charge-d'affaires in Bahrain Sergei Peskov told Itar-Tass that "the policeman on duty at the building of the Russian consular office, where several members of the Embassy staff reside, was badly wounded - the attackers fired a handgun at him several times. None of the Russians was hurt". Nothing is yet known about the shooting, the first of its kind, and it is not yet known whether or not there is a political motive connected to events outside Bahrain.

## Civil society attacked

The ruling family is finding it hard to comprehend the modern concept of civil society and is attempting to divert attention from core issues that concern the citizens of Bahrain. Rather than starting a serious dialogue, it goes on to consolidate its total dependence on foreign-staffed security service and judiciary that are solely used for implementing collective punishment programmes against the people of Bahrain. The responsible opposition is peacefully campaigning for the human and civil rights that are prescribed by the 1973 Constitution, which was suspended by the Amir in 1975.

The Al-Khalifa family has for sometime been preparing for the launch of another attack on civil society. It declared that unconstitutional political structure will be imposed on the nation next October. This would be the latest attempt to institutionalize dictatorship and consolidate "apartheid" on tribal, ethnic and sectarian lines. A system of provinces that link all public functions to the ministry of the interior and an enlargement of the powerless Shura (Consultative) Council will be imposed regardless of the wishes of the people of Bahrain. These measures are aimed at decelerating the drive for democratization and to disrupt the mission of the opposition which is to restore constitutional law and legitimacy to the country political system. Without the 1973 constitution, both the ruling family and the structures that it creates are unconstitutional. Opposition forces are not prepared to negotiate citizens' natural rights and the ruling family will need to upgrade itself to the high standard of the Bahraini public.

Senior members of the ruling family have been saying that they do not want to wear different cloths from their neighbours. However, the ruling family already wears different cloths practicing many things that are not found in neighboring countries. Furthermore, the Bahraini people can't accept any changes to the constitution of the country that was approved by both representatives of the people and by the Amir himself in 1973.

The government is trying hard nowadays to recruit stooges for the unconstitutional and powerless talk-shop. It has planned to announce the names of those forced or enticed to play a losing game against the wishes of the citizens of Bahrain by end of September. By doing this, the ruling tribe is attempting to take Bahrain back to the dark years preceding 1923 when the Al-Khalifa blatantly ruled on the basis of "the right of conquest". The Al-Khalifa considered Bahrain as a property won after an invasion that took place in 1783. This ill concept is totally rejected by the citizens of Bahrain who consider the 1973 Constitution as the only source of political legitimacy.

Many personalities (including some British MPs) from outside Bahrain have been invited to attend conferences (such as a banking conference on 27 October) as well as celebrations during the weeks of October. The government is intending misinformation the outside world that matters are settling down in Bahrain. In fact, all these unconstitutional set-ups are rejected by the opposition and will be resisted by the people of Bahrain. Next October may be the start of an autumn of fury to defend civil society rather than a season of celebrations for dictators.

## ..the Al-Khalifa family: Human rights must be respected

the issuance of two decrees Last March. The decrees reduced the judiciary process to a clerical one whereby defendants are taken from their cells to court rooms inside the jails. Members of the ruling family await the citizens of Bahrain and read the pre-determined sentences that cannot be appealed. Senior members of the ruling family were passing the message that they intended to continue their tribal revenge against the citizens of Bahrain who are calling for the restoration of constitutional law to the country.

The UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group issued an important report in August "The State Security Court of Bahrain". The report is based on a corroborated survey of the court system and concludes "there appears to be overwhelming agreement by impartial international observers on the lack of due process within the Bahraini State Security Court (SSC). This sentiment has been expressed by human rights organisations, foreign governments and politicians, and legal experts, both internal and external.

Because the SSC has the authority to hand down life sentences and the death penalty, it has the power to implement the most serious of human rights abuses... Such severe sentencing should not be decided upon solely by confessions which are given in incommunicado detention. Defendants have no opportunity to prepare a defence and they may be publicly pronounced

guilty by the state before the trial begins. Individuals may go to prison even if found innocent by the courts, or remain in prison after a sentence has been completed. Any decision by the court can not be challenged, and the majority of judges are members of the ruling family, which is at odd with the principles of independence of judiciary".

A senior member of the British parliament, Mr. Jeremy Corbin, requested that a group of British MPs be allowed to visit Bahrain and investigate the allegation of human rights abuses in the country. He wrote to the Bahraini authorities saying: "I also raised the subject of arbitrary arrest, abusive treatment and torture of women and children in a letter written to the Amir of Bahrain on 22nd May of this year. I have still not received any reply to that letter...

I am concerned to know the exact number of detainees currently being held in Bahrain and of the number of these that have been sentenced... In addition I would greatly appreciate it if you could supply me with some information on Bahrain's State Security Law..

I was also wondering whether you could inform me what role Mr. Ian Henderson plays in the implementation and enforcement of Bahrain's State Security laws. Finally I would be grateful if you could tell me whether Amnesty International and the ICRC are allowed to attend the hearings of the State Security Court?"

## 25th Anniversary of Independence celebrated in Westminster

The opposition held a conference in the British House of Parliament on 15 August to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Bahrain independence. The conference was chaired by Lord Avebury, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group and was addressed by Dr. Abdul Hadi Khalaf, Dr. Ala'a Al-Yousuf, Dr. Mansoor Al-Jamri and Mr. Hussain Mossa.

Lord Avebury commented on the British legacy and the role being played by Mr. Ian Henderson which is "giving Britain a bad name". Lord Avebury expressed his unhappiness with the way the British Minister at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been responding to the issues of human rights violation in Bahrain which is in contrast to the way the Foreign Office would handle similar abuses in a country other than Bahrain. Moreover, the procedures of the Bahraini State Security Courts are considered to be shameful and in contravention of all international conventions as well as the country's constitution.

Dr. Khalaf, the Bahraini ex-MP and lecturer of Sociology at Lund University in Sweden, described his personal encounters with the British legacy, when in 1963, he was interrogated by the then chief of security, Bob. He was also one of the first five people to be interned under the powers of the State Security Law in 1975. The British were instrumental in the suppressing of the popular uprising between 1953-56 and it was the British who jailed three opposition leaders in 1957 in St. Helena. When in 1968, the UK Labour Government decided to pull out of the east of the Suez, the local Gulf sheikhs offered to pay for the cost of British troops in the Gulf. But the British decision was irreversible. The ruling family was under pressure from the opposition to yield to the demands of popular participation as part of the unwritten social contract under which Bahrain gained independence. The ruling family was reluctant to give in.

However, the need for legitimacy forced members of the ruling family to go to the public. For the first time, they spoke to people about their aspirations. Also, the ruler Sheikh Isa, took the unprecedented step of visiting the grand ayatollah Seyed Mohsin Al-Hakim in Najaf (Iraq) to gain his support for urging the Shia community to express their wishes in favour of an independent state. The Shah of Iran accepted the results of the UN mission which confirmed the status and independent sovereignty of Bahrain. The ruling family turned its back directly afterwards. But the opposition organised major industrial strikes and some 10,000 people gathered in front of the government offices demanding popular participation, labour rights and freedom of expression.

Hence, we had a parliament and a constitution. Soon after the 1973 war, oil revenues started to flow and the ruling family had another option for buying loyalty. A year later, the State Security Law was enacted and following from that the parliament was dissolved in 1975. On the other hand the ruling family has consistently raised the defence and security budget. For example the budget rose from \$22M in 1974 to \$236M in 1983, more than ten folds in less than ten years. When the wealth of oil dwindled in the 1990s, the government was unable to buy-off

loyalty and hence the call for constitutional rule re-surfaced. Without the latter, the ruling family has no legitimacy.

Dr. Ala'a Al-Yousuf, an economist and member of the BFM stated: "The government has belatedly acknowledged the existence of unemployment and its relevance to the current political crisis. Last month the minister of labour and social affairs announced the opening of a job and training centre and expressed his hope that this would contribute to social stability. Until then the government had insisted that the protests were acts of sabotage by people who were receiving instructions from abroad to destabilise the country.

A serious attempt at addressing the problem of unemployment would be based on an honest diagnosis of the extent and nature of the problem. The government still insists that the rate of unemployment is 1.4% without explaining how they derived this figure or why it is a problem when it would easily represent the lowest rate of unemployment in the world (Japan's is 3.5%). The government is also not admitting to the real nature of unemployment whatever its size. It has consistently claimed that there are three reasons: Bahrainis have high wage expectations, Bahrainis are not prepared to undertake certain lowly jobs, and Bahrainis lack the necessary skills. We believe that the education system has failed the Bahraini youth and that there are disparities between different regions on sectarian lines.

There are now administrative barriers to employing Bahrainis in certain sectors, e.g. defence and security as a result of which large numbers of foreigners are employed. The labour market is segmented by nationality between Bahrainis and non-Bahrainis, by sect between Shia and Sunnis, by tribal affiliation between Al-Khalifa and others and hence Bahrainis are restricted as to which jobs they are allowed to take and as to how much they can be paid".

Dr. Mansoor Al-Jamri of the BFM noted "the 25th anniversary ought to have been celebrated by both the government and the people. The government decided to ignore the jubilee occasion. This can be explained by referring to the response of the present foreign minister more than 25 years ago when he expressed his astonishment at the decision of the British to withdraw. In fact, independence does not mean much to a tribal rule.

We are being told that this type of governance is a product of local Arab culture. It is not. It is the product of Anglo-Bedouin alliance that was founded in 1820 through agreements between tribal sheikhs and the (British) East India Company. More than 20 months of struggle proved to the world that the people of Bahrain are for modernity and civil society, and not for a despotic tribal system. The people of Bahrain are facing an extremely dangerous situation. All margins of liberty are being eliminated. Next October, the government plans to announce the establishment of provinces system that links all public functions to the interior ministry. This is being coupled with the enlargement of the unconstitutional and all-appointed Shura Council. The Bahraini authorities are inviting British MPs to attend for a

celebration in October. We call on the MPs to question the government on its abuses of human rights, its violation of the country's constitution and to enquire why it insists to march backward".

Husain Mossa, of the Co-ordinating Committee between the Popular Front and National Front of Bahrain stated that "We are suffering from a system that was created by Britain and that continues to rely on Britons. This system is dictatorial, outdated and bears no relation to the claims of the West that they promote democracy. The responsibility for the misery and deterioration of human rights conditions do not lie with the ruling family only but also with the powers that prop-up the current situation".

### A plan to fool ICRC

Several developments took place in August heralding the start of another phase in the struggle for human and constitutional rights. For example, the intelligence department released several elderly people who were arbitrarily imprisoned last January. These senior citizens spoke of the degrading treatment they underwent under the hands of their jailers. Some of them were asked to pass vague messages to senior opposition figures. Such vague messages were dismissed as a ploy to deflect attention from core issues.

The UN Human Rights Sub-Commission met in Geneva between 5 and 30 August. It is believed that the government was attempting to soften the international outrage over the gross violations of human rights in Bahrain by claiming that it started to release some of the 2000 people being arbitrarily detained.

Preparations for a possible visit by the International Committee of the Red Cross next October continue. For the first time some cells in the notorious prison of Manama are being equipped with air-conditioning facilities. These empty cells will be used as a show case for the ICRC representatives who might visit the jails next October. It is expected that a tiny number of prisoners will be placed in these cells at the time of such visit.

The interior minister stated to local press that he intends to enlarge the capabilities of his foreign-staffed departments. Sources close to the ruling family revealed that a third prison in Jaw will be constructed alongside Jaw-1 and Jaw-2 prisons, with a capacity of jailing 1000 people. Many thousands Bahraini citizens have been taken prisoners and hostages in the past two years. Prison cells are packed and makeshift camps were created all over the country. One of makeshift camps is termed "Green Jail" and is located in the south of the country. Prisoners are suffering from the harsh conditions and the various forms of torture used to force the citizens to sign pre-prepared confession alleging they plotted to overthrow the ruling family.

This kind of policy is a reflection of an inferiority complex in the mind of those taking decisions. They seem to lack confidence in themselves to the extent that they torture the children of Bahrain who call for their constitutional rights and accuse them of attempting to topple the ruling family.