

BAHRAIN

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

A military man may not be suitable for political solutions Flamboyance from Sandhurst

The Crown Prince of Bahrain may qualify for being a graduate of the military academy at Sandhurst, but his discipline is far from the one taught at that British institution. Sultan Qaboos of Oman, King Hussain of Jordan and Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani of Qatar are all graduates of that school, but their behaviour as politicians is in stark contrast with that of Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. His flamboyance forced several influential embassies in Bahrain to undertake the task of urging him to withdraw his hitherto from the streets of Bahrain one day in late 1995 when they realised that he had ordered the army to deploy against citizens calling for the reinstatement of the Constitution. He certainly had landed his family in trouble and has, since then, undertaken not to repeat that near fatal mistake. He was told the army had been formed to repel outside aggression and not to be deployed against civilians calling for mild reforms. They reminded him of the conditions attached to the military hardware supplied by their countries to his tribe. He argued that the security of the country "could not be established unless the Al Khalifa tribe are safe and well". He went on to clarify his position by suggesting that calling for the reinstatement of the Constitution amounts to the death of the tribe. After all, the people of Bahrain were supposed to be servants of the ruling clique and had no right to claim things the master had not himself offered.

The story of the Al Khalifa ruling tribe in Bahrain is one that would certainly evoke bad memories to any Bahraini due to its bloody nature and aggressive dimensions. The Crown Prince who is now pushing himself forcefully to the top of the echelons of power is as unwelcome to the families of the martyrs as his uncle, whose future appears to be doomed. The Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, had, since the early sixties, institutionalised repression as a means to quell rebellion against his authoritarian rule. He followed his grandfather's style of dependence on British advisors and more dangerously "mercenaries" to run the government. In 1926, Sheikh Hamad, demanded a British to run the government for him. Charles Belgrave was ready to serve the Al Khalifa, and for 31 years he ensured the tribal regime would not agree to any political reform in the country. He masterminded all acts of repression in the thirties, forties and fifties, and it was him who exiled the three political leaders from Bahrain's prisons to St. Helena, an island in the Atlantic Ocean. The uprising of the mid-fifties was the climax of his anti-people's feelings, and culminated in the arrests of many of activists, and the exile of the three. His dismissal was sought by the people and the British government finally acqui-

esced to that demand and ordered him to leave the country in April 1997. The present prime minister also initiated his career by seeking a "British Gentleman" to ensure the security of his tribe. No one was better qualified to undertake this task than Ian Henderson whose history in repression, torture and extraction of confessions goes back to 1940s and 1950s when he forced General China of Kenya's Mau Mau to sign false confessions under duress.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman was ready, with the help of the British who were then responsible for Bahrain's protection, to recruit this person and ask him to establish the most savage security apparatus in the Gulf.

However, the prime minister had to endure long disputes with his flamboyance nephew over the years. The uprising came as surprise to both and was able to cut them down to size. With the intifada entering its third year of non-stop activities, old feuds among the members of the Al Khalifa surfaced again, and the prime minister had to go overseas in December 1996 and January 1997. His continued absence has left behind an atmosphere of unease within the ruling tribe, and the Crown prince stood up to the challenge of his uncle.

Today, the son of Sandhurst is trying to assert his authority on the affairs of the country, and his marital relationship with Abu Dhabi is proving to be useful. Arms and ammunition are being shipped to Bahrain on regular basis from Abu Dhabi. He has now decided to form the "National Guard" to bolster the defence of the Al Khalifa tribe in the face of mounting pressures from inside and outside the country. The decision, initially announced by the Crown Prince, and later decreed by his father, the Amir, has been taken in the absence of the prime minister and is likely to cause a furor within the tribal system. But it was taken to mean the failure of the security apparatus of Ian Henderson and the foreign-staffed riot police to contain the challenges of the uprising. He chose to interpret the crisis in a military context and failed to consider it politically. This is bad news not only for the people of Bahrain but for the Al Khalifa ruling tribe as well. He had earlier ignored the political implications of the dispute with Qatar and annoyed the Qatari people by declaring his readiness for "martyrdom" a phrase that may not come from a sound politician or a diplomat. That irresponsible reaction led his tribe to boycott the GCC summit in Doha, a decision that has been widely criticised and ridiculed by other Gulf states. Then came the drama of the Qatari "spies", their torture, trial and eventual release within a week of the sentence for three years of imprisonment. Qatar is now demanding an unequivocal apology from the Al

Khalifa for that cheap play.

It is now clear that the Al Khalifa are becoming addicted to the military and security solutions. They often referred to the example of Algiers which abandoned its democratic experiment five years ago with all its disastrous consequences. The people of Bahrain have persistently refused to be drawn to retaliate against the provocations and crimes committed by the foreign forces against men, women and children. They have insisted on a political solution to the crisis based on the reinstatement of the Constitution and ending the state of emergency rules. The rising stardom of the Crown Prince in the political arena with his military background and in the light of his repeated military threats against the people of Bahrain could only be a recipe for more troubles.

It is time for the friends of the Al Khalifa to come to their aid by convincing them that the military and security alternatives are bound to fail with disastrous consequences. The example of Algiers is not the best one to follow and if the crisis is to be resolved a serious dialogue with the pro-democracy movement must be initiated soon. The people have not run out of steam and their resolve and determination in their struggle to attain their legitimate rights will ensure a long and effective pattern of civil resistance. Oppressors will have either to reform their regimes or leave the scene altogether.

A member of the Al-Khalifa family seeks asylum in Qatar

Two Bahrainis arrived in Qatar seeking political asylum. First Lieutenant Nasir Majid Al Khalifa, a pilot with the Bahrain Defence Force, landed with his helicopter in Doha and sought political asylum. Another Bahraini, Khalid Al-Busmait, traveled on a normal flight to Qatar on the preceding day (29 December) and sought asylum. Lieutenant Nasir stated that he "went to the aircraft at approximately 1415 (30 December), at the end of the official time for work. The aircraft was in a standby position to carry out search and rescue missions. I started the helicopter and carried out the full starter procedure and headed towards Askar village (of Bahrain) and then I turned 135 degrees, which takes me directly to Doha".

It is worth noting that the two Qataris who were freed from the prison of Bahrain arrived in Qatar on 29 December and had been received by the Qatari public as national heroes. Fahad Hamad Abdullah al-Baker and Salwa Jassim Mohammed Fakhri were sentenced to three years but were released after three days of their sentencing.

January 1997: PM stays out, the Crown Prince forms a

30 December 1996: The Qatari TV broadcast an interview with Lieutenant Naser Al-Khalifa who fled to Qatar with his helicopter on 30 December. In the interview, he warned the crown prince of corruption in the defence forces which has peaked. He also mentioned the gross injustices all over the country. It was also reported that Kurwait donated the amount 28.8 million dinars (JSS 76.3M). The opposition suspects that this donation will disappear, as usual, in the private funds of the ruling wing of the Al-Khalifa.

1 January 1997: More than twenty tyres were burnt around Duraz and the main Budaya Highway was blocked during the clashes. The foreign forces had deployed rubber bullets and tear gas against the citizens of the country. In Sitra, at around 4.00 pm a large column of fire was seen following similar skirmishes. At the evening in Sanabis, the youths clashed with the foreign forces and responded to the rubber bullets and tear gas with stone-throwing which blocked the main streets. In Daih, at 7.30 pm, the youths burnt dozens of tyres during the clashes. In Kawarah, a similar action was reported. In Nuaim (a district of the capital), the youth set fire to tyres and rubbish containers during the confrontation with the mercenary forces. "Commandos jeeps" were deployed around the capital in nervous show of forces.

2 January: Protests re-surfaced and most residents joined in the demonstrations. A group of security officers clashed with the residents and then withdrew after setting fires and causing damage to properties. Reuters and local papers reported (2 January) that an Asian man was killed and two were injured in the Tobli area, eight km (five miles) south of the capital Manama, on Tuesday (1 January) evening. The victim, Abdul-Hameed Mohy Eldin, was found dead in a building in the area where clashes were reported.

On 2 January, afternoon, a women demonstration marched in Duraz and reached the main highway. The foreign forces regrouped themselves and attacked the women using rubber bullets and tear gas. Graffiti (wall-writings) war intensified between the citizens and the foreign forces, with the latter depicting their insults against the nation.

3 January: Thousands of people gathered for the Friday prayer in the grand mosque of Ras-Romman (Manama) that was attacked by the foreign security forces last week during the prayers. The mass gathering chanted slogans calling for the restoration of the dissolved parliament, the release of Sheikh Al-Jamri and an end to attacks on the mosques in Bahrain. Seyyed Jawad Al-Weda'i delivered a speech stating "We are demanding the release of Sheikh Al-Jamri. He continued to sacrifice for us. We will continue to work for his release. We reject and oppose any attempt to impose restrictions on our prayers or religious affairs".

4 January: The leading Bahraini personality and member of the dissolved parliament, Sheikh Isa Qassim, issued a statement warning the government of the grave consequences if they continue to insist on their policy of attacking the mosques and assembly halls. "It is not appropriate for the Bahraini government to adopt a role similar to the one that was followed by the ex-communist regimes in the world. The Bahraini people will not accept the policy of confiscating,

closing or marginalizing the mosques in the land of Muslims".

5 January: The French news agency (AFP) reported that the "Bahrain authorities have arrested more than 100 people after a fire at a bakery killed one person and injured two others during anti-government unrest last week, Bahrain residents said on Sunday. Police made most of the arrests in the village of Tobli, outside the capital Manama, where the fire occurred, and also ransacked several homes, said the residents..". At around 1.00 pm, fire fighters were seen extinguishing a column of fire near the Finance Ministry in the Diplomatic Area of the capital, Manama.

6 January: It has transpired that a coward security court presided by a member of the Al-Khalifa family has sentenced four citizens from Ras-Romman to long terms of imprisonment about a week ago. Three of the four are known to have received 10 years jails sentence. They were Nader Habib, 26, Taher Mobarak, 29 and Shafiq Ahmad Salman, 29.

7 January: Following the announcement last month by the crown prince, the Amir issued a decree on 7 January establishing the "National Guard". The decree was outlined as follows: "Article 1 of the decree stipulates the establishment of an independent regular military armed force, which shall be called the National Guard. Article 2 stipulates that the Amir is the supreme commander of the National Guard. Article 3 stipulates that the National Guard shall be considered a military backup for the Bahrain Defence Force and a security shield for the Public Security Forces to protect the homeland and safeguard its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity". Another decree was issued shortly afterwards naming one of the Amir's son (Mohammed bin Isa) as its commander with the rank of a minister.

A young Bahraini who arrived from Abo Dhabi (where he works) only to disappear upon his arrival back home. Ai Hussain Mohammed Ali Draboh, 22, was arrested while his family was waiting for him in the arrival hall.

8 January: A bus loaded with youths arrived in Kawara from the prisons of Al-Khalifa, all of whom spoke of their ordeal at the hands of people who have no link to Bahrain other than receiving salaries paid by the ruling family in return for the torture and oppression they continue to commit against the citizens. The people renewed their protest activities in the principal uprising areas defying the threats of the ruling family that has formed new forces for suppression. The main road between Sanabis and Jidhafs was the scene of scores of fires in the afternoon around 3:00 pm.

Fires were seen from far distances in Daih, Sahlia, Duraz and A'ali. In Bani Jamra, the security forces attacked several mosques and started beating attendants. In one of the mosques, the eldest person was picked-up, beaten in front of others as taken as a hostage. The arrested person is in his late forties and is well-known social figure, Mr. Hassan Habib Hassan. In the night, many areas witnessed more protests. In Karbabad, the residents defied the attacking foreign forces and set tyres ablaze on the main highway.

10 January: A reported "Hundreds of Shiite

Muslims clashed outside a central Manama mosque Friday—the first day of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan — and witnesses said riot police fired tear gas at worshippers after noon prayers. "We didn't know what was going on. As we walked out (of the mosque), riot police started firing tear gas at us," Abdullah Mohammed, 50, said wiping his eyes. The surrounding area was littered with tear gas canisters and broken rocks and bottles that had apparently been thrown in the melee. Police blocked streets leading to the mosque after the incident. Police rounded up men and loaded them into at least 10 jeeps. One man had bruises on his face, and a riot policeman was seen kicking and slapping another man.

Dr. Ahmad Al-Mahmood, a lecturer at Bahrain University, in a speech delivered in a mosque in Hidd last Friday (10 January) condemned the deployment of the army under the name of the National Guard and stated that the money spent on this scheme is a waste of national resources and would worsen the crisis rather than solve it.

14 January: Twelve youths from Kawarah and Tobli were dragged by the foreign security forces to the scene where an Asian guest worker had died in a bakery in Tobli area. The exhausted youths had signs of torture evident all over their appearances. These youths were arrested during mass demonstrations in the area early in the month. The residents of Tobli and Kawarah believe that the security forces had caused the death of the guest worker and used it as a pretext for arresting hundreds of youths. The ten victims were brought for video-tapping near the burnt bakery.

Sheikh Abdul Mohsin Atteya of Bani Jamra was released on 14 January after one year in detention without charges. Sheikh Abdul Mohsin was amongst the many thousands of people detained arbitrarily last January when the ruling family betrayed a deal struck with opposition leaders to calm down the situation in return for initiating a process of political dialogue.

14 January, the Amir issued a decree reorganizing the education ministry which is run by a military officer since June 1995. This is part of the policy of the ruling family to further militarize the country and transform Bahrain into a country led by military and security officers.

A respected elderly man was released after spending one year in detention. Haji Abdulla Fakhro explained how he and other detainees were badly treated by the foreign jailers recruited by the ruling family to oppress the citizens. Before his release, Haji Abdulla met with ICRC for 45 minutes and explained to them the miserable situation of the political prisoners in Bahrain.

15 January: many places witnessed protest activities and jeeps of foreign forces were deployed heavily along the Budaya Highway. In Bori, the foreign forces stormed the houses and arbitrarily arrested twenty youths. This day marks the second anniversary of the exiling of three pro-democracy campaigners.

17 January: The ruling Al-Khalifa family ordered the siege of the grand mosque of Ras-Romman. During the week, Seyyed Jawad Al-Weda'i had received the usual messages from the interior ministry not to hold the prayers. The senior cleric replied that he would pray in the open if the mosque was to be closed. On Thurs-

"National Guard" and attacks mosques

day night (16 January), large number of foreign forces were seen inspecting all roads and avenues leading to the grand mosque in Rass-Romman. Hence, on Friday 17 January, the entire area of Rass-Romman was blocked preventing any person not resident in the area from approaching the grand mosque. Seyyed Jawad led the Friday prayers with 200-300 people, mainly the residents of Rass-Romman.

18 January: Members of the Al-Khalifa family were back in action passing arbitrary sentences against the citizens of Bahrain. There were two trial one involving four citizens and another one involved eight citizens. The four citizens from Nuweidrat were Abdulla Yousuf Al-Sameekh, Hussain Mohammed Hussain Nasser, Adel Hussain Ali Hussain and an underage young person by the name Khalil Ibrahim Habib. The first two were arbitrarily sentenced to 15 years imprisonment, the third one received ten years, while the child was transferred to another member of the ruling family who specializes in sentencing the children of Bahrain. The child is in the hands of the torturers awaiting an arbitrary sentence.

The eight other victims were: Hani Abdulla Khalaf (10 years jail), Hussain Ali Ibrahim Hussain (10 years jail), Abbas Abdulla Khalaf (5 years jail), Abdulla Isa Abdulla Ahmad Kadem (5 years jail), Abdulla Ali Abdulla Ali (3 years), Seyyed Hani Jabir Alawi (3 years), Seyyed Haider Isa ali (3 years), and Seyyed Dhiya Faisal Helal Abdulla (3 years). The defendants, who were together fined 37,100 dinars (\$100,000), were also wrongly accused for an attack on a house in the village of Karana, six km (four miles) west of Manama. Reuters reported that the court, whose verdicts cannot be appealed, has jailed more than 180 people since the government, seeking to speed up judgments, last March ordered it to try hundreds of detainees.

The foreign security forces announced that they have selected four people from Tobli and accused them of causing the death of an Asian on 31 December. The four are Mahmood Ali Salman Ahmad Nasif, Hussain Ali Mirza Yousuf, Ali Mosa Hasan Al-Oreibi and Taher Abbas Hassan Mahfood. The residents believe that the security forces had committed the murder of innocent guest worker.

20 January: Sounds of gas-cylinders explosions and tyres were set ablaze near Duraz and Bani Jamra. Some 200 people were arbitrarily arrested in Sitra.

The military man installed as president of the University of Bahrain summoned one of the lecturers, Dr. Zahra Isa Al-Zeera, last week and ordered her to submit her resignation. He accused the female lecturer of expressing views in front of the students that harm the state security. Dr. Al-Zeera (PhD in Education from the US and a Masters from the UK) refused to sign the papers, but the military man gave her the choice of forcible resignation or transfer of the case to the intelligence department.

21 January: People gathered in assembly halls and mosques in large numbers and called for the release of Sheikh Al-Jamri and his colleagues who are held hostages by the foreign security forces. In Arad, the residents went out in a mass demonstration after 9.00 pm and clashed with security forces that launched an attack around

10.00 pm (local time).

22 January: The crown prince and Mohammed received the chief of staff of the UAE armed forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nayhan. Since the announcement of the National Guard, the two sides have exchanged several visits. It seems the moody crown prince has dropped plans to call in the Jordanians (as he had threatened last year) and opted for an alliance with Mohammed bin Zayed. Qatar had accused this alliance of attempting to topple the Qatari government last year. The prime minister left the country in early December following his failure to check the spread of Hamad power.

23 January: The foreign forces attacked a gathering in Nua'im Cemetery where people congregated around the grave of Saeed Al-Eskafi, 16, who was tortured to death by Henderson's men in 1995.

24 January: The foreign security forces besieged Ras-Romman again and prevented people from entering the area. The senior scholar, Seyyed Jawad Al-Wedai led the Friday prayers with few people from Ras-Romman itself. In other areas of Manama, the foreign forces surrounded the gates of the main mosques of Khawaja, Momin and Qafool. Three jeeps full of riot police were positioned near Momin mosque's gates, one near the north gate and two near the south one. Members of intelligence department (mukhabarat) established check points for interrogating people on the spot. The sounds of exploding gas cylinders were heard in Sanabis area, the scene of protests and clashes with the foreign forces.

25 January: Security helicopters flew over Sar area on 25 January around 20:30 local time following the occurrence of a loud explosion. Columns of fire were also seen along the residential areas stretching from Sar to Duraz and Bani Jamra. In the past few days gas cylinder explosions were reported in several places following attacks by the foreign security forces on mosques and residential areas.

Mr. Hassan Ali Yousif, 40, from Dair, was arrested in a dawn raid on his house on 25 January. Hassan works with the ministry of information (monitoring section) and had authored a book on poetry entitled (Isharat) containing implicit comments about the situation in Bahrain. The book - in two parts - has been in circulation for some time, but it took the intelligence department a long time to understand the writings. During the one-day arrest, the security officers ordered him to withdraw the book from the market or face further harassment. Mr. Yousif was reportedly ordered to resign his position in the ministry of information.

Two women are reported to have been arrested in Muharraq: Sakina Salman, 24, a student in Bahrain University and Om Afnan (the wife of a person by the name Ayyob). No reason is known for their arrest. Two brothers from Arad were also arrested: Maitham Ali Abbas, 22, and Mofid Ali Abbas, 17.

One of the latest victims of the Al-Khalifa is Jaffer Yousif Ahmed (from Ras-Romman) who was sentenced in 1980 for fifteen years. The victim was not released in 1995 when he completed his term, but recently his family was informed that he had been transferred to hospital suffering from a sickness affecting his brain.

Understanding Bahrain

The relationship between the ruling Al-Khalifa family and the people of Bahrain is a complex one. Up until 1923, the Al-Khalifa has enslaved the indigenous population. The present uprising can in part be understood by referring to history and identifying some of the issue.

The indigenous population of Bahrain are called Bahranah. Before the Al Khalifa's invasion of Bahrain islands, the population was the most prosperous and advanced nation in the Gulf. As a trading pearl centre and as a centre of knowledge, Bahrain was always held in high esteem. It was always known for its sweet spring waters, pearls, palm trees and scholars. For example, Captain Ahmad bin Majid described Bahrain in 1489 saying "Awal (an old name of Bahrain) the island of 360 villages, sweet water, pearls and one thousand trading boats".

A postgraduate (MA) dissertation submitted in 1952 by M. G. Guriawala to the University of London described one of the great philosophers of Bahrain, Sheikh Maitham Al-Bahrani (1201-1274), saying "When Bahrani discusses the views of the opponents, he generally reproduces them with definite fairness. This is shown by comparing his account of these views with the original versions of such views as set forth by the authors in these classical works on Muslim theology and philosophy, such as Al-Asha'ari, Al-Baghdadi, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, etc. He sets these views in order numbering in an exact way. Then he replies to them one by one in accordance with their numerical order. In his replies to the objections and doubts raised by his opponents, he may seldom write with passion, but rather proceeds to prove the falsity of these views with logical coolness".

It is for this reason that the ruling Al-Khalifa family has always felt insecure ever since they invaded Bahrain in 1783 and again in 1811 (they were forced out of Bahrain between 1799 and 1811). They treated the people of Bahrain as subjects; and in the case of the indigenous Bahamah community, the Al-Khalifa treated them as slaves.

In his PhD thesis (University of London), M. Al-Tajir states: For centuries, the Shia Arabs (Bahranah) had been involved in traditional trades and crafts, such as date-cultivation, fishing, weaving, sail and mat-making, boat-building, pottery and some other cottage industries of lesser economic significance. Their conditions before 1923 were described by the (British) Resident "The mass of the people of Bahrain who are Shi'ahs, were the sufferers and their condition resembled that of helots, who could call no lands nor produce of any lands their own".

The bondage of the Bahamah was ended in 1923 following the historic uprising of February 1922. In his PhD thesis (University of London, 1979) entitled "Protection and Politics in Bahrain 1869-1915", T. Farah, states "very much at the bottom of the social strata under Al-Khalifa rule were the Bahamah, the indigenous Shi'ite inhabitants who ... were of mixed Arab origin and constituted the largest distinguishable group within the total population. Virtually serfs, they supplied the agricultural work-force for the Al-Khalifa ruler and his retinue, held the land they worked usually in return for unpaid labour (sukhra) and were also assessed for services based on their possessions."

The first ever Interview with Ian Henderson Scots security boss branded "master torturer" of Bahrain.

("No blood on my hands" ..The Big Issue in Scotland magazine dated 28 December - 8 January 1997, by Neil Mackay)

A SCOT who heads a Middle East "torture squad" could face arrest if he retires to Britain, The Big Issue in Scotland can reveal. Colonel Ian Henderson spoke of his hopes to give up his role as Bahrain's Director of Intelligence and spend his final days in Scotland. But retirement plans could be his downfall, as Henderson could be arrested and tried for a catalogue of alleged crimes if he sets foot in Britain.

Human rights campaigners and Bahrainis fleeing persecution claim Henderson masterminded a reign of terror by the security forces - including torture, detention without trial and forced exile. Legal experts say the UN Convention Against Torture places an obligation on Britain to arrest or extradite him.

Henderson, known as "the master torturer", has never spoken before of his role as a hired gun for the oppressive regime - he was decorated for fighting the Mau-Mau in Kenya before signing up as a mercenary in Bahrain. The well-spoken 69-year-old poured scorn on calls for his arrest, saying: "That would be a big mistake. They wouldn't have a legal leg to stand on."

Henderson admits "vigorous interrogation" is common, but denies torturing or directing torture, adding: "I've never lifted a finger against anyone, or asked officers to do so." Lord Avebury, UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group Chairman, said Henderson was "awash with blood". <p>

One victim Zaki Khalifa, seeking British political asylum, told how Henderson's men trussed him, hung him by his arms, beat him for days and kept him standing for 72 hours.

Henderson allegedly threatened Khalifa, who is now almost crippled, that he would never leave the jail. The 25-year-old said: "Henderson is a monster."

Since pro-democracy demonstrations flared in 1994, Henderson has ordered interrogations leading to death through torture, according to the Bahrain Freedom Movement (BFM). Security forces also shot demonstrators dead. Many Bahrainis have been forcibly exiled, and detention without trial - even for children - is common. The BFM says 'rape squads' sexually assault prisoners.

The death of 16-year-old Saeed Al-Eskafi shocked campaigners who claim he had been repeatedly raped and burned with an iron. The Bahraini Embassy described Saeed's death as "natural". Henderson dismissed BFM accusations as pro-Iranian propaganda, a claim the BFM deny. However, Henderson admitted: "There has been violence on both sides."

Henderson denied torture allegations, including claims of electric shocks and drilling victims' bodies, saying: "I don't do nine-tenths of what I'm accused of. I'm an easy propaganda target because I'm British. BFM allegations of violence are nonsense. My job is to resist violence." The European Parliament condemned Bahrain for human rights abuses, calling on Britain to order Henderson to quit Bahrain.

A foreign Office spokesman said the Government was concerned about Human rights abuses. The issue has been raised at ministerial level with Bahrain. However, Britain does not accept responsibility for Henderson's actions despite his UK citizenship. The Bahrain Embassy refused to comment on Henderson's role claiming it could not "divulge information con-

cerning internal security". The BFM describes Henderson as "the power behind Bahrain's throne". It is claimed that he has a dozen British officers on staff, some of whom are alleged to have directed interrogations.

BFM believe Henderson has a security company working for him in London spying on Bahrain exiles. Exiled BFM leader Mansoor Al-Jamri, whose father has been jailed and sister detained and tortured, said Henderson was personally responsible for directing repression.

The Scots-educated protester said: "Henderson is ruthless. Even the king can't save you from him. "Torturers cannot act with impunity, Britain must arrest him when he next arrives." Campaigners demand Britain steps up pressure on Bahrain. There are also calls for economic sanctions. Exile Abdul Mohammed, Secretary-General of Copenhagen-based Bahrain Human Rights Organisation, said Henderson gave orders resulting in his torture. "People will continue to die, unless Britain compels Bahrain to reform," he added.

Amnesty International's Bahrain expert Hania Mufti said human rights in Bahrain, ruled by the autocratic Sheikh Isa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, are "in crisis", and torture is "routine and widespread".

Bahrain human rights are bottom of western government agendas, Mufti added. Lord Avebury, Parliamentary Human Rights Chairman, claims Britain and America are unwilling to get tough on Bahrain because it is militarily and economically strategic in the Gulf. He labeled Henderson "the arch torturer at the apex of repression", urging British-based victims to take civil action if he returns. But Avebury would prefer to see Henderson jailed.

The 75th Anniversary of February 1922 Uprising

On 6 February 1922, while a fidawi (member of an armed group used by Al-Khalifa to persecute the Bahranah) was escorting a Bahamah villager who was under arrest in Manamah, several Bahamah accosted the Fedawi, overpowered him and released their kinsman. According to the British Political Agent, the villager was wrongfully incriminated and unlawfully arrested and beaten up. In Manamah, the Bahamah closed the bazaar to a standstill. They were determined to press their case with Shaikh Isa bin Ali who, in the words of the Agent, was 'oblivious to the fact that he was sitting on a volcano'.

It was decided that a deputation of Bahamah, accompanied by a number of leading Sunni personalities, should seek an audience with the ruler. During the meeting, the Bahamah submitted their demands. They included: "No one to be dragged off to the ruler's court without notice, but to be served with a summons signed by Shaikh Hamad; Documents concerning gardens leased to subjects by the ruling family to be in duplicate, a copy in possession of each party, and to be witnessed by independent witnesses. No conditions other than those written in the document to be enforced; Steps to be taken to stop the Shaikh's camels being allowed to enter and graze in private gardens (of the Bahranah); 'Sukhrah' (i.e. forced labour, also commandeering of don-

keys where by Bahranah are forced to walk with the donkeys while members of the Al-Khalifa ride over) to cease; The practice of placing calves belonging to the ruling family with Bahraini bakers to fatten free of charge, to cease.

Since February 1922 the Bahamah had refused to pay discriminatory taxes, with Shaikh Hamad pursuing a conciliatory policy towards them. His efforts were thwarted, however, by his uncle Shaikh Khalid and his sons who continued to try to collect taxes. During April many Bahranah assembled, at the British Agency in protest and when they refused to leave, the Agent asked Shaikhs Hamad and Abdullah to talk to their representatives. They agreed to disperse only after they had received assurances from the Shaikhs that they would 'instruct Shaikh Khalid to cease interference with liberty of persons and to postpone collection of taxes'. In addition, they were told that the Rulers would consider their complaints regarding taxation and the administration of justice, and subsequent to these developments the Shaikh decided to abolish the 'obnoxious taxes' in preference to 'reasonable and just taxation'. In addition to Customs revenue, the Shaikh collected the following taxes: 1) Date-garden tax. Collected quite arbitrarily.... from Shi'ahs (Bahamah) only; 2) 'Raqaibieh', literally 'neck-tax' or 'poll-tax' levied on males at varying

rates in different localities. It has been collected from Shi'ahs only and is particularly obnoxious to them; 3) Fish-tax. levied form Shi'ahs only at varying rates; 4) A special tax on Shi'ahs during Muharram; A variety of taxes collected in kind from Shi'ahs only; 5) A pearling tax. This was originally collected from all pearling boats, which are mainly owned by Sunnis. Of late years a large number of the boat-owners have ceased paying.

In the first half of 1923, disturbances wrecked the island following clashes (April) between Najdi and Persian communities in Manama and following the attacks (May) by Dawasir tribe on the Bahamah in A'ali, Barbar and other villages to revenge the refusal of the Bahranah to continue living under bondage conditions. A leading Shia cleric, Sheikh Abdulla Al-Arab (of Bani Jamra) and his colleague, Molla Husain bin Ramadan were murdered as they campaigned for reforms. On 26 May, Britain intervened and removed the ruler Isa bin Ali and installed his son Hamad in his place. The latter sought the support of the Bahamah on the promise that he will not discriminate against them anymore.

Today's Bahrain is a modern, cosmopolitan and multi-cultural civil society. All Bahrainis, Shia and Sunni; Bahamah Arabs, Ajam, Howala; Tribal Arabs, and others, have an aspiration to live harmoniously in a constitutional state.