

BAHRAIN

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A cheap sell-out

Champions of terror against constitutionalists

When the foreign ministers of the European Union and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council met in the Qatari capital, Doha, the two sides had one thing in common; the worry about the situation in the region especially the rising insecurity and instability. There has been mounting unease at the stagnant situation in Bahrain with the Al Khalifa feeling the pinch of being rejected by the people they ruled by force for more than 200 years.

There were substantial differences among the participants notably on the issue of the tariff on exports between Europe and the Gulf, the relations with Iran and the policy towards the Arab - Israeli conflict. Little was achieved in terms of solid agreements as the two sides felt unable to rid themselves of their mutual suspicions and dwindling trust. Moreover, the two sides were unable to confront the real issues especially with regards the relations with the United States which is the main power challenging the Europeans in their quest for gains of lucrative arms contracts with Gulf rulers. The meeting, however, was a unique opportunity for the Westerners to gauge the sensitivities among the rulers of the Gulf countries as they attempt to start up a new era in economic and military cooperation. It was evident that the GCC states were reluctant to commit themselves to the political agenda brought by the Europeans and were more interested in being seen to be doing something in a region notorious for its lack of efficiency and creativity. Although some of the GCC states have managed to break away from the strictly conservative political and social regime, the majority remains bound by their "conservative" attitude towards change and development.

The European allies are worried about the volatile situation in the Gulf, more so because of the ongoing struggle in Bahrain that could herald a period of instability not just in this island but in other places as well. This year, for example, the western media and human rights organisations are concentrating their activities on Saudi Arabia, being the largest of all the GCC states and whose survival is vital to the western interests in the region. Last month, a documentary programme on the British Channel 4 Television station, raised the alarm on the situation in Saudi Arabia and caught many people unaware of the stakes in that land.

On the other hand, the western politicians who visited Qatar to attend the meeting had the opportunity to come face-to-face with the real political situation in the region. They must have known the extent of the inter-Gulf rivalry especially in the case of Bahrain and Qatar. The Al Khalifa

were forced to concede defeat at the hands of the Qataris who had insisted to keep the border dispute at the International Court of Justice, to the dismay of the rulers of Bahrain. The latter had earlier boycotted the Doha GCC summit in protest at the failure of the Gulf alliance in achieving a settlement of the dispute outside the Hague. Despite enormous efforts by the GCC Secretary-General, Jamil Al Hujailan to bridge the gap between Manama and Doha, the two sides remained as further apart as ever. The Saudis had given up their attempts to bring about a reconciliation and left the case to be dealt with outside its jurisdiction. The Saudis are reported to be very angry at the humiliation they had suffered at the hands of the Al Khalifa who eventually gave up their main demand, i.e., the withdrawal by Qatar of the border dispute from the Hague and accepted a settlement much less than they would have been offered by the Saudi mediation. The total defeat of the Al Khalifa was justified by some analysts on the basis that they felt threatened more by the internal uprising than the border dispute with Qatar, and had been advised to save their neck by freezing all other disputes and concentrating on the internal front. Whether this policy would enable the Al Al Khalifa to overcome the home-grown crisis is not clear, but they believe they could buy time to deal with it for the time being.

They have, however, antagonised the population by embarking on a major programme of resettlement aimed at effecting a fundamental change in the demography of the country. For this purpose they have imported thousands of bedouins from Syria, Jordan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia and offered them the Bahraini citizenship housing and jobs. Their main occupation will be in the newly-formed National Guard whose main function is to continue the onslaught on the people. Although this may seem plausible, the reality is more complicated and it is likely to have harsh repercussions against the Al Khalifa.

The opinion of the people is already well polarised in favour of the reinstatement of the Constitution, and there is a large section of the population who are now ready to face up to the threats to the social fabrics of Bahrain from the ruling wing of the Al Khalifa. Many people are gradually challenging the endless restrictions on the freedom of expression and speaking their minds. Last month, a poet, Ali Hassan Yousef, was summarily dismissed from his post at the Ministry of Information after the publication of the second part of his book "Isharat" or symbols. International organisations voiced their disapproval of this repressive acts and the writers expressed their dismay and called for the reinstatement of their colleague. Scores of students,

writers, university lecturers, civil servants and teachers were dismissed over the past months, adding to the grief of people. This extent of repression is an indication of the failure of the Al Khalifa in their attempts to contain the situation which is becoming ever more volatile. The opposition has an agenda for action and is pursuing its goals through its peaceful and civilised means.

The recent repressive measures committed by the ruling wing of the Al Khalifa tribe is an indication of the state of desperation of a regime which has been cornered by legitimate demands of the people, and the likelihood is that more such measures will be taken in the future. The people, however, have now established for themselves the futility of accepting a situation which is governed by the State Security Law which has led to the illegal detention and torture of thousands of Bahrainis. The defeat of the Al Khalifa in their policies towards the dispute with Qatar has meant one thing to the people of Bahrain; they are ready to sacrifice everything in their possession, even their pride and dignity, in the pursuit of the people of Bahrain. The people, on the other hand, have proved their resilience in the face of threats, intimidation and repression. They will prove to be more resolute and steadfast than their aggressors have ever thought.

Victimization of citizens will never solve the crisis

The Al-Khalifa family is expected to order the trial of some 80 citizens who were arrested on 3 June 1996. The al-Khalifa paranoia has led them to invent fictitious plots against themselves in an attempt to derail the peaceful constitution opposition and in order to create pretexts for victimizing Bahrainis. The ruling wing of Al-Khalifa, upon ill-advice from such people as Ian Henderson, imagined that by blaming an outside power (Iran) they would be able to win the support of the United States and other Western powers for the victimization of the Shia community. Additionally, the ruling wing wanted from its plot to frighten the Sunnis of Bahrain and keep them away from actively supporting the pro-democracy movement.

This attempt has back-fired and the Bahraini people never stopped their civil resistance despite the savage attacks by the mercenary foreign forces on their mosques, assembly halls (matams) and residential areas. Despite all the hardships, the dignity and resilience of the Bahraini people proved to be much higher than oppression and savagery. The opposition believes that the trial of 80 or a thousand other citizens will only add to the fuel of the uprising that aims to achieve human and civil rights.

It is time to end apartheid

The news that the ruling wing of the Al-Khalifa family decided to put more than 80 citizens on trial before the State Security Court (which is headed by one of their number) has not come as a surprise to the opposition. Since the abolition of parliamentary life in 1975, the ruling family has continuously searched for escape goats to victimize for camouflaging its atrocities against Bahrainis. In the 1950s, the Al-Khalifa blamed the Egyptians and Nasser and in the 1970s, the blame transferred to such countries as South Yemen. The golden age for the Al-Khalifa started from 1979 onwards. The appearance of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the political arena and the worsening of relations between Iran and the US provided Al-Khalifa with a dream ticket for several reasons.

On the one hand, the Al-Khalifa resorted to blaming all internal movements on Iran for gaining support (or the turning of a blind eye) from the influential Western powers for the oppression and repression of the citizens of Bahrain who have raised their demands for the restoration of the rule of constitutional law. On the other, the Al-Khalifa presented itself as the "guardian of the Sunnis" from the fictitious threat of the Shias. Senior members of the ruling family never stopped touring Muharraq areas (the centre of gravity of Bahraini Sunnis) raising false alarms of an "imminent Shia take-over" and have used extremist and fascist agenda to drive their theory. The Al-Khalifa used the media last June to explicitly spell-out its medieval mentality. Fearful of the repercussions from this approach, it decided to go covertly again in the months that followed their announcement of a "coup attempt".

Economy goes down as Al-Khalifa imports more troops

Caltex decided to pull-out of Bapco as a result of the on-going bad conditions of the economy. Bapco refinery is one of the oldest in the world needing greater investment to update its technology. A project aimed at renewing the refinery was shelved as the viability of the business could not be guaranteed.

The mismanagement of the oil industry continued to worsen under the oil and industry minister, Isa bin al-Khalifa, who is a member of the ruling family. An announcement on 19 February stated that Caltex Petroleum Corporation and the Government of Bahrain signed a Memorandum of Understanding whereby Caltex will sell its 40 percent equity in the Bahrain Petroleum Company BSC (Closed) to the Government, for an undisclosed amount, effective April 1, 1997. In 1936 Caltex was formed with the Bahrain Refinery as the core of its refining activity.

In 1981, the 250,000 b/d refinery (refining crude oil from Saudi Arabia) became a joint venture operation owned 60 percent by the government and 40 percent by Caltex. Reuters reported that Caltex, a joint venture between Chevron Corp. and Texaco, will retain its interests in other Bahraini concerns, including Bahrain National Gas Co. and Bahrain Aviation Fueling Co.

On 18 February Reuters reported that non-oil foreign trade deficit has widened to 414.6 million dinars (\$1.1 billion) in 1996 from a 314.6

million dinar deficit reported in 1995. Bahrain exported goods worth 453.3 million dinars in 1996 and imported goods worth 867.9 million dinars. In 1995, Bahrain exported goods worth 582.4 million dinars and its imports were worth 897 million. Aluminum exports dropped to 273 million dinars in 1996 from 331 million dinars in 1995. Aluminum Bahrain, the Middle East's biggest aluminum plant, has a production capacity of more than 460,000 tonnes a year that is due to rise to around half a million tonnes by the middle of 1997 after a \$130 million expansion. Iron and steel exports fell to 57.6 million dinars in 1996 from 58.6 million a year earlier. Bahrain produces around 40,000 barrels per day from its own fields and receives the entire 140,000 bpd from an offshore field shared with Saudi Arabia.

The Al-Khalifa are squandering the wealth of the nation on projects such as the importation of thousands of Syrians, Jordanians and Yemenis. These are being given citizenship, free housing and other benefits, in return for joining armed groups being established by the Al-Khalifa for oppressing the people of Bahrain. This evil programme is a threat to social stability and all sections of the society (Shia and Sunni) are voicing their concerns at the way the Al-Khalifa are behaving.

Indeed, the ruling family is attempting to divert attention by announcing salary-increases for civil servants. The opposition believes the Al-Khalifa is feeling that it has alienated itself from the Bahraini society to the extent that it is desperately attempting to acquire loyalty from armed groups imported into Bahrain.

Turning to Iraq

An Iraqi newspaper (Qadeseya) said on 4 February that Iraq's Rafidain Bank has resumed its normal activities in Bahrain. This follows a high profile visit to Baghdad on 14 November 1996 by the brother of the foreign minister, Salman bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, who headed a group of businessmen. The Iraq News Agency stated that "Sheikh Salman stressed the Bahraini people's support for their brethren in Iraq". The move had angered Kuwait which was, at the time, preparing for donating \$76.3 million to Bahrain.

In a clearer message to the Kuwaitis, the prime minister sent two of his stooges to visit Iraq. The two are members of the powerless and unconstitutional Shura Council: Mohammed Hassan Kamal-ul-Din and Ali Jaber al-Moslem. Fearful of the Kuwaitis, the Al-Khalifa family sent one of its senior members, the housing minister, to Kuwait to dampen the situation. Following his return from South East Asia, the prime minister was quoted by the Kuwaiti daily, Al-Seyasa, that he favoured economic-based decisions for regional relations.

The issue with this selective approach is that the Al-Khalifa are playing games with the Kuwaitis who have propped the economy by donations. The Kuwaitis have expressed concerns that the money does not go for the development project, rather, they end up in the ever growing empire of the prime minister. The latter's visit to South East Asia involved the purchasing of hotels and an island. Within the ruling Al-Khalifa family, it was reported that some of them questioned the disappearance of money donated from other GCC countries, and this was one of the reasons why the prime minister left Bahrain for two months starting early December 1996.

Tribal delegation in London

On 9 February when the crown prince rushed out of the country hours before the arrival of the prime minister after disappearing for two months. In the these two months, Hamad consolidated his power base by appointing one of his brothers (Mohammed bin Isa) as head of a new "National Guard". On 12 February, Bahraini forcible exiles organized a picket in front of the Bahraini Embassy in London to protest against the evil intentions of the tribal delegation.

The crown prince returned to Bahrain on 14 February. During the visit, the Al-Khalifa delegation met with officials in the British ministry of defence as part of negotiations to purchase military equipment for arming the "National Guard" which is to be staffed by imported Bedouins.

The crown prince also met with Qatar's foreign minister on 13 February in an attempt to freeze the dispute over Hawar and free his family for a war against the citizens of the country.

The British magazine "Private Eye" wrote on 21 February saying "A big delegation from the dictatorship in Bahrain came to Britain and shacked up at the Dorchester Hotel for a luxurious 10 days earlier this month. It was led by the son of the amir and his brother, the head of the newly-formed National Guard, Sheikh Mohammed bin Isa... Salivating at the prospect of some real juicy arms sales, ministers queued up to grovel to the crown prince and his cousins... Among those most anxious to impress the party was David Mellor, Tory MP for Putney, who also advises four major arms companies..."

February 1997: No Eid celebrations while the people suffer

1 February: It has been also reported that there are 420 teenagers and youths held in bad conditions in a prison in Hidd (near the dry dock). One the worst torturers in this prison is a person named Nader Al-Dowsari. Few days ago, this torturer attacked the detainees and arbitrarily ordered the stripping of youths before taking them out in the cold and tying them to poles, upright, until the morning. During this period, he and other torturers splashed cold water on their victims. Two political prisoners in Hidd Prison were transferred for treatment. Abdul Jabbar Ibrahim Al-Asfoor was left in a room with police dogs for biting the naked body. Hussain Al-Sahlawi was handcuffed up-right to a source of cold water that showered him for an over-night.

3 February: Leading opposition figures denounced the security forces and accused them of engaging in a campaign of arson aimed at creating hatred amongst the citizens. In the past month several houses and shops were burnt in mysterious circumstances. The latest fire was reported on 2 February which gutted the house of a respected personality Abdul Rahman Fakhro (in Barbar). The opposition has called on the people to be vigilant and to expose the criminals behind all these acts of arson.

4 February: Another lady who was detained two weeks ago, Sakina Salman, 24, a student in her final year at Bahrain University, was brought to her house on 4 February. Her family was shocked to see her exhaustion as the foreign security men shamelessly turned her bedroom upside down. Her husband and daughter were not allowed to speak to her and no one knows why she had been arrested and prevented from performing her final exams.

6 February: The latest victim of the security forces died today. Zahra Ali Hassan was in a car with three other women and a man, Ibrahim Salman, passing through the southern entrance of Sitra on 31 January at 11.30 pm, when a police jeep (with three policemen) was heading at a fast speed in the wrong direction with its lights switched off. The jeep crashed into the private car severely injuring Zahra and the other citizens. An ambulance belonging to the military hospital arrived a short time later to collect the security men and leave the injured citizens without assistance. Other citizens rushed to the scene, and arranged for the transfer of the injured to Salmanya hospital. Zahra died today suffering from her wounds. Two of the policemen are reported to have died as well.

7 February: Sheikh Isa Qassim, member of both the Constituent Assembly (1972-73) and the dissolved National Assembly (1973-75) issued a statement on 7 February calling for the release of Sheikh Al-Jamri and political prisoners. He reaffirmed that the movement of the people sought political reforms and will continue to resist oppression. Loud sounds of exploding gas cylinders were heard on the night of Friday 7 February, in many parts of the country. The Budaya Highway witnessed heavy presence of security forces who were preparing themselves for aggressions against the residential areas. The preceding night (6 February) witnessed similar activities. The security forces besieged the area of Ras-Romman for two days (Thursday and Friday) preventing people from attending for prayers with the senior religious scholar Seyyed

Jawad Al-Wedai.

8 February: The foreign security forces prevented the people from reaching Ras-Romman for the third consecutive day this week and hence the Eid prayers was effectively prevented. The residential areas witnessed some of the loudest nights on 7 and 8 February with gas cylinders exploding in most places. The people have converged on the houses of the families of the martyrs in a show of defiance and determination to continue the civil resistance until the oppression of the Al-Khalifa family is brought to an end. Wall-writing (graffiti) was intensified by the people with the main slogan "No Eid while our Leaders are in jail" is seen everywhere. In Salmaniya, Nuaim and Makharga (districts of the capital), security forces were at high alert. Some fires were reported in these areas. A round of live ammunition (fired by the foreign forces) was heard at 9.00 pm (8 February) in Manama.

The foreign forces committed further atrocities. They attacked Bani Jamra damaging private properties. The following citizens had their cars vandalized by the foreign forces: Badr Taqi Al-Badr, Ali Taqi Al-Badr, Abdul Amir Yousif Yaqub, Jaffer Abdul Redha, Abdul Hussain Taher Fasil, a car belonging to the daughter of Haji Jaffer Haji Mohammed Ali, Seyyed Abbas Mahfood, and Jaffer Mansoor Yousif. The collective punishment programme was implemented in various other areas simultaneously. In Duraz, a gang of the foreign forces started beating children and any person happen to be passing near by. One of the youths, Ibrahim Ali Ibrahim, 24, has suffered several injuries as a result of the arbitrary beating. Ten others were beaten on this occasion. In Bilad al-Qadim, the foreign forces burnt four private cars, one of them belonged to a citizen named Abdulla Al-Basri. When the family telephoned the fire brigade, the latter shut the phone down without responding to the call.

9 February: Mass demonstrations and gatherings took place on 9 February defying the atrocities of the foreign forces commissioned by the Al-Khalifa family for the oppression of the citizens of Bahrain. In Sanabis, a mass demonstration marched through the streets and reached the main Budaya Highway. The foreign forces attacked the citizens with rubber bullets and tear gas. Loud explosions of gas cylinders continued to be heard in most places. Columns of fire can be seen from a long distance. This was the case in all major towns and villages, in Jedhafs, Daih, Sitra, Kazzakkan, Dair, Bori, Aali, Hamad Town, Bani Jamra, Duraz, Schla, Bilad al-Qadim, Marwazzan and Demestan. In Nuaim (Manama) people gathered around the grave of the martyr Saeed Al-Eskafi to read Quran, when the foreign forces attacked, deploying rubber bullets and tear gas. One citizen was injured and as a result his shoulder fractured. Several citizens were arbitrarily arrested. In Hooraa Cemetery (Manama), people gathered around the graves of several martyrs and vowed to continue the civil resistance as long as it takes until the oppression of Al-Khalifa and their mercenary forces is halted.

The foreign force encircled principal mosques to prevent people from gathering for Eid prayers. Despite this, the surge of people had forced the foreign forces to retreat from several places. In Momin and Sadiq mosques (Manama), the gatherings raised the slogans of the opposition and

marched in front of the foreign forces with preparedness to die rather than succumb. Similarly, in Isa Town, Karbabad, and Duraz, mass gatherings defied the foreign forces and raised the pro-constitution demands. In Bani Jamra, people surged towards the house of Sheikh Al-Jamri, demanding his immediate release.

10 February, protests continued with loud sounds of exploding gas cylinders and columns of fire reported in many places.

17 February: Sheikh Ali Al-Nachas, a blind elderly person, was jailed by Al-Khalifa for more than a year and is now in hospital suffering from the degrading prison treatment.

18 February: At least 18 persons were arrested upon their return from visiting the holy places in Mekka and Medina and scores others were summoned for interrogation.

19 February: The mercenary forces raided many residential areas and arrested more than 60 children. Some of the children from Duraz are Seyyed Jalal Hadi, 12 years old, Hussain Ali Salman, 12, Mohammed Thabet Abdulla, 13, Mohammed Hussain Eid, 14, Hussain Al-Molla, 16. From Jannossan, the following children were arrested: Hussain Hassan Jawad, 15, Fadhil Ali Abdul-Aziz, 16, Ahmad Abdul Nabi, 16, Sadiq Ali Abdul Aziz, 15, Ali Hassan Jawad, 16, Khalaf Ahmad, 16. From Karannah: Hussain Saeed, 16, Hussain Alawi I-Khabbaz, 15, Mohammed Hassan Habib, 16, and his brother Taha, 15. From Adhari: Seyyed Hadi Jaffer, 15, Abdul-Ghani Seyed Ali, 9, Mohammed Ali Salman, 11, Hassan Ali Salman, 15. From Kazzakkan: Jaffer Abd Ali Hatem, 16. From Jed Hafs: Mohammed Abdul Fattah Khamis, 15, and his brother Ammar, 13. Habib Mirza Juma, 15 and his brother Qassim, Mahmood Abdulla Al-Qaffas, 16, Mohammed Sakher, 16.

20 February: The foreign forces headed by the British Ian Henderson, attacked the assembly hall in Daih (Matam al-Noor), ransacked its content and arrested a person who was around the place. They also attacked Al-Zahra mosque in Hamad Town at 12.30 mid-day and smashed the door, windows and contents. The foreign forces had earlier arrested the religious scholar, Sheikh Hussain Al-Saem, who led the prayers in the mosque.

20 February: The information minister issued an order (published on 20 Feb) aimed at restricting the work of foreign journalists and reporters in the country. The order stipulated that all correspondents for foreign news organizations will be required to renew their permission on an annual basis, and that no correspondent to have diplomatic immunity (so that he or she can be punished at will). On 31 January, the minister returned from France after submitting a formal complaint against the French News Agency (AFP) for its coverage of Bahraini events.

21 February, the foreign forces attacked the house Hussain Mohammed Ali Draboh in Sitra and ransacked its contents as well as smashing the doors and windows. They also arrested his sons, Mohammed Amin and Hani, 10 years old.

25 February: Jaffer Yousif Ahmad has died. Jaffer (from Ras-Romman) was sentenced in 1980 for fifteen years. As a result of the torture in the Al-Khalifa jails, Jaffer suffered immensely. The doctors stated that he had developed a cancer in the brain at the hands of his torturers

Poet arrested; Lecturers and students dismissed

The writer, poet and journalist, Mr. Ali Hassan Yousif, 40, from Dair, was arrested in a dawn raid on his house on 25 January. He worked for the ministry of information and had authored a book on poetry entitled "Isharat" or symbols, containing implicit comments about the situation in Bahrain. The first book - in two parts - had been in circulation for some time, but it took the intelligence department a long time to understand the writings. During the first one-day arrest, the security officers ordered him to withdraw the 1000 copies in circulation, and was dismissed from his position in the ministry of information.

After withdrawing the copies from the market, Mr. Yousif was arrested for an indefinite period on 16 February. The intelligence department raided the home of Mr. Yousif in Jeddahs (he is originally from Dair) and arrested him in the early hours of Sunday. His family, including his 10-year old son Hamid and 4-year old daughter, Maram, were badly treated by the undisciplined security officers.

On the other hand, the military man installed as president of the University of Bahrain summoned one of the lecturers, Dr. Zahra Isa Al-Zeera, in mid January 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. The deteriorating situation of the university was one of the subjects discussed at the Lawyers Society on 20 January. During the seminar, some of the journalists approved by the ruling family voiced their support for the military man who dismissed several lecturers and imposed a military regime. One of the government-

approved journalists even supported sectarianism. They were rebuffed by the lawyers who bravely clarified that these views are misguided and will lead those adopting them nowhere. Two columnists in Al-Ayyam wrote about the event in their columns on 25 January. The government has sponsored some fascists in a desperate attempt to divide the Bahraini society, but these individuals failed to gain any respect amongst the public.

Pen International and Amnesty International protested at the dismissal of Dr. Zahra Al-Zira from the University of Bahrain (as part of the ethnic cleansing policy) and the imprisonment of the writer Ali Hassan Yousif. Amnesty International stated on 20 February "Ali Hassan Yusuf, a well known Shi' a Muslim writer and poet, was arrested on 16 February 1997 at his home in Jedd Hafs. He is being held incommunicado and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment. Numerous other people have been routinely summoned by government officials for questioning. Punitive measures have also been taken... A recent case is that of Zahra Issa Al-Zira who, on 20 January 1997, was reportedly asked to resign her job at the Faculty of Education, University of Bahrain".

The International PEN Women Writers Committee (IPWWC) sent a letter of protest to the military officer imposed on the University of Bahrain (Mohammed Jasim Al-Ghatam) stating that the IPWWC "wishes to protest the firing of our Bahrain Colleague Zahra Isa Al-Zira, who was dismissed from her post at the University on January 29 (technically she was asked to resign). She was accused merely of peacefully expressing her opinion".

Continuing the hate-based policies, the military officer installed as minister of education 9Abdul Aziz Al-Fadhil) ordered the dismissal of 24 teachers. One of the teachers is known to be Abbas Ahmad Abdulla. The minister authorized

Mohammed Jasim Al-Ghatam (the military dictator imposed on the University of Bahrain), to go further in implementing the Al-Khalifa policy of ethnic and sectarian cleansing. Al-Ghatam stated to some of his staff that he "will not feel happy as long as Shia students and lecturers are attending the university". Since his appointment he relegated all Shia lecturers, removed virtually all Shia senior officers and refused admission of Shia students with more than 90% success marks.

Both military men have dismissed more than 170 citizens from university and high-schools all over the country. Amongst those dismissed from the university are: Ibrahim Yousif Al-Samahij, Elect Eng, From Samahij, Jaffer Makki Marhoon, Elect Eng, Nabih Saleh, Ali Ibrahim Mosa Ali, Elect Eng, Tobli, Hussain Ghanem Al-Arabi, Elect Eng, Arad, Mostafa Hasan Ali Salman, Elect Eng, Moharrag, Sadiq Matar, Chem Eng, Dair, Redha Abdulla Khalil Khazwan, Elect Eng, Manama, Bashar Isa Al-Shaer, Architecture, Sar, Ragheb Abdul Rahim Al-Shuwaiikh, Architecture, Barbar, Hassan Abdulla Ahmad, Physics, Barbar, Hussain Yousuf Ibrahim, Chem Eng, Bilad al-Qadim, Ali Hassan Al-Aali, Eng, Aali, Ali Hassan Jasim Ahmad, Literature, Bilad al-Qadim, Yasir Saeed Ali, Eng, Basil Abdul Karim, Mech Eng, Sanabis, Ali Al-Sheikh, Science, Karranah, Sakina Salman, 24 years old, mother of a 4-year old daughter, dismissed and in jail since early January 1997. A list of the rest names for the high-school students is available from the BFM. The pro-democracy opposition is determined not to be dragged into this evil trap, and will endeavor to resist and expose these medieval fascists. Mr. Ahmad I-Shamlan, the pro-democracy leader and lawyer, had warned that those who attempt to play with sectarianism will fail in the same way as those before them who failed to divide the Bahraini nation.

International support for the people of Bahrain

A group of British MPs submitted a motion in the House of Commons on 30 January stating "This House notes with concern the urgent action called by Amnesty International About the eight leaders and religious figures arrested by the authorities in Bahrain on 22nd January 1996 who have now spent more than one year in incarceration without trial and who are being held and believed tortured under the notorious State Security Law passed in 1974. ... The House notes mounting international concern about...role played by the British mercenary Ian Henderson in the torture and murder of demonstrators and detainees and calls upon Her Majesty's Government urgently to intercede with the Government of Bahrain...".

On the other hand the Geneva-based Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (CIJL) issued a press release on 29 January stating "The CIJL intervened today with His Highness Sheikh Issa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, expressing its deep concern over the continued detention of Judge Abdul Amir Al-Jamri. Judge Al-Jamri, a former member of the dissolved National Assembly and a judge of the Bahrain courts, was suspended from duty in July 1988. ... His detention seems to be related to the fact that he supported pro-democracy petitions calls mainly for the restoration of the National Assem-

bly and all constitutional provisions relation to parliamentary life. The CIJL considers that the arrest and detention of Judge Al-Jamri contravenes Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees the to freedom of opinion and expression as well as Article 9, which prohibits the arbitrary arrest or detention of a person".

Similarly, the (UK) Bar Human Rights Committee had expressed its concern last week stating that the Committee "is committed to ensuring that the rule of law is upheld and that lawyers and judges are protected from human abuses. The continued detention of Sheikh Al-Jamri is clearly contrary to the rule of law and to internationally recognized standards of justice".

On 10 February, Bahrain was brought up in the discussion of the House of Lords in the UK. Lord Avbury, Chairman of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group asked Her Majesty's Government: "Whether they will take any action in support of the appeal by the Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers for the release of Judge Abdul Amir Al-Jamri in Bahrain, and in particular, whether they will ask the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit Bahrain to ascertain, if possible, how long the government intend to keep the judge and other person in detention without charge or trial". The

Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, replied: "We have seen the statement issued by the Centre for the Independence of Judges and Lawyers. Our Embassy in Bahrain are already making enquiries about Sheikh al-Jamri. We welcome the recent visit to Bahrain by the International Committee of the Red Cross and understand from the UN Centre for Human Rights that the Working Group is considering a visit to Bahrain".

On 12 February, the British MP Mr. George Galloway asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his counterparts in Bahrain about the workings of the state security law there; and if he will make a statement. Mr. Jeremy Hanley replied for the UK Government "We have friendly relations with Bahrain and our frequent discussions cover a wide range of issues. The Government of Bahrain is aware of our view that legal proceedings, including under the Security law, should be in accordance with international standards".

The US State Department issued its annual report on the human rights condition in Bahrain. The report gave details of some cases of tortured and killed citizens. It added that "Bahrainis are not, in practice, free to express public opinion to the Government in speech or writing".