

BAHRAIN

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

International protests against Henderson's violation of human rights Combating State Terrorism

A question that is often asked is whether time is on the side of the Constitutional Movement in Bahrain especially as it became clear that the despotic tribal regime is adamant on pursuing its repressive policies towards the people. The past thirty months, however, have demonstrated the resilience of the people of Bahrain in the face of the onslaughts by the regime on the whole society. The Al Khalifa have pursued the policy of exterminating the opposition beyond the boundaries of the land. The authorities in Kuwait have been trapped by Ian Henderson, the notorious torturer who had misinformed them about the Bahrainis living in Kuwait. He sought to implicate these innocent people in grand plots against not only the Al Khalifa but the whole Gulf. No sooner had these Bahrainis been arrested than did the ministry of information of Bahrain pass its verdict incriminating them. The Kuwaitis having felt their dilemma, took every possible step to safeguard their image which was greatly tarnished by this foolish act. Observers have concluded that the arrest of the Bahrainis and their subsequent mistreatment and torture have compromised the case of the missing Kuwaitis in Iraq. Many international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) reacted angrily and charged the state security authorities in Kuwait of doing to the Bahrainis what they consistently accused Iraq of doing to their own compatriots. The Kuwaiti lawyer championing the cause of defending the innocent Bahrainis, Khalid Al Shatti, repeated his conviction that the Bahrainis were innocent, and the case was a no-win one for the authorities.

The feelings of the people of Bahrain have become very much against the actions of the Kuwaiti authorities, and have demanded the immediate release of the victims. There are many indications that the Kuwaiti authorities have succumbed to the pressure coming from the direction of Bahrain to clamp down on the exiles. The Al Khalifa have, in the past, gone as far as asking the Kuwaiti government not to pay Bahraini labourers higher wages than they have been paid in Bahrain. They have also conspired against Bahraini exiles elsewhere and the case of the Bahrainis who were arrested by the British authorities in 1990 confirmed beyond doubt Henderson's conspiracies against Bahraini citizens outside his reach.

The case of the Bahraini exiles in Kuwait gathered momentum last month when it was projected in Geneva where thousands of NGO's were attending the United Nations Commission for Human Rights. Amongst the most repressive regimes in the world, the Al Khalifa stood out clearly. Many NGO's included the case of human rights violations in Bahrain in their interven-

tions and demanded an immediate UN action against the Al Khalifa regime. Petitions were signed and handed over to Kuwait's representatives in Geneva, and letters were sent to the Amir of Kuwait expressing disgust at the bad treatment of Bahraini exiles. The Kuwaitis were in pain to realise how the image of their country has been tarnished by the unwise move against the people of Bahrain. Intellectuals and MPs expressed their dislike of the government actions against the Bahrainis, and human rights activists felt embarrassed by the episode.

The Bahraini opposition have, however, viewed a regional dimension, something that did not happen in the past. The situation in Bahrain has become the talk of the day especially as Kuwaiti members of parliament raised the issue with regards to the handling of the Bahraini case. In other Gulf states, the people became more aware of the oppression of Bahrainis at the hands of the Al Khalifa who did not enjoy public support whether inside the country or outside it. This came at a time when the movement entered a stage of stronger actions by the people, whilst the regime feels being upstaged by the opposition. Mr. Henderson has disastrously failed in his plan to squeeze the pro-democracy movement and the constitutionalists and he must be feeling the pinch as he prepares to pack and go leaving behind one of the worst chapters in the history of the region in regards to human rights and political openness. The people of Bahrain will be glad to see him go, whilst the Al Khalifa feel they are indebted to him. But every one has now realised that the old British colonial officer-turned torturer has lost touch with the reality and his way of thinking does not match the prevailing circumstances. The case of Bahraini prisoners has gone disastrously wrong for him and the Kuwaiti authorities are counting their losses in the domain of public image and their struggle to achieve the freedom of their citizens missing since the Gulf war.

On the other hand, the constitutional movement is gathering pace, with more sectors of the society, antagonised by the Al Khalifa take more positive stands vis-a-vis the movement. The sudden upsurge in the arrests of women and children is a pointer to the state of despair of the regime which is engulfed by a state of fear, confusion and disorientation. It has failed to present a policy that satisfied its friends, blundered the many opportunities for dialogue leading to a peaceful and face-saving exit from the quagmire. The policy of heavy-handedness in dealing with unarmed demonstrators has only led to further complications with sections of the society which have, hitherto, stood on the sidelines, feeling compelled to join the constitutionalists.

Mercenaries in the local press could not match the abilities and sophistication of the opposition which comprises of almost every political and ideological conviction in Bahrain. There is widespread popular conviction that the people would not submit to the foreign forces which act as occupiers employing every possible means of repression against the citizens. Last month witnessed an increase in the attacks on the people, and children as young as six years were arrested and tortured. Women were among the detainees, including school and university students. There has been a public outcry following these crimes, and the coming weeks are likely to witness an increase in people's protests. The resolve of the people is as strong as ever, and the only way to create peace, stability and prosperity of the country is through the ballot box, rather than bullets, in accordance with the constitution.

Is there a "wise" person?

The situation in the country is continuing to stagnate with the local media attempting to inject baseless optimism by continuing to speak about "bonanzas for business". The foreign minister stated to Ashraf Al-Awsat on 10 April that "the situation is very normal, as you can see". Realities of the situation speak differently.

Mr. Abdul Rahman Al-Nuaimi, the Secretary-General of the Popular Front in Bahrain wrote an article in Al-Quds newspaper (19 April edition), stating "Friends and officials in the GCC countries were urged to intervene with the ruling Al-Khalifa family to convince them that it is better to adapt to a changing environment.... The wise persons amongst the ruling family ought to take charge and not let matters reach the worst. The citizens have not aimed at harming the ruling family, while at the same time, scores of citizens have martyred and thousands had been detained. It must be clear that the popular movement can not be crushed by sheer force and the only solution must be dialogue".

Another leading opposition figure, Sheikh Isa Ahmad Qassim, member of both the Constituent and National Assemblies issued a statement on 18 April saying "The old and the young, the men and women, the intellectuals and others, who remain in jail have not staged an armed struggle. They have shouldered their responsibilities for raising legitimate demands calling for basic rights that exist in all human societies. Had the government positively responded, Bahrain would have been saved the troubles it continues to go through. The people are stronger than all the State's violence, and their demands are basic and necessary, neither optional nor extravagant. To think that the people would retreat is unwise and unfruitful".

April 1997: Four "Assembly Halls" closed down; Children ...

1 April: Following the ending of the uprising in the Dry Dock concentration camp, the interior minister ordered the transfer of 35 prisoners to solitary confinement. Some 450-600 youths are detained in the camp.

2 April: Amnesty International issued an urgent appeal on 2 April expressing concern about the arrest of 11 Bahraini nationals and requesting urgent clarification of the exact reasons for their arrest and the legal basis of their continued detention. The Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights also issued a direct appeal on 2 April calling for the release of Bahrainis. The Kuwaiti Al-Talea newspaper stated on 3 April that the arrest of Bahrainis is unconstitutional, since the security agreement [with other Gulf countries] was rejected by the Kuwaiti parliament. The newspaper said that the possession of pamphlets is natural bearing in mind the boiling situation in Bahrain.

4 April: Members of the Kuwaiti intelligence department raided a flat of some Bahraini citizens in the Khaitan area (Kuwait) on 4 April at around 1.00 am and ransacked its contents. The Bahraini community in Kuwait is being subjected to intimidation and threats via telephone calls made by the Kuwaiti interior ministry. This unacceptable behaviour comes following the various visits made by senior members of the Al-Khalifa family to Iraq in the past months.

The Paris-based Committee for the Defence of Human Rights and Democracy in the Arabian Peninsula sent a letter to the Kuwaiti Ambassador in France expressing concerns in view of the fact that Bahrainis were in the past handed over to the torturers in Bahrain. The Committee asked the Kuwaiti Ambassador to assure that the 11 Bahraini citizens would be safe and that they would be freed without delay. The Committee went on to say "the Al-Khalifa government has once again put [Bahrain] on the world list of shame."

6 April: The opposition blamed the undisciplined foreign mercenaries for a fire that gutted a two-story pet shop known as the "Kingdom of Birds" on Sunday, killing 4,000 sparrows, parrots, rare cockatoos and other birds. Hundreds of cages with the birds' remains were stacked in the shop, which was closed when the fire started. Other cages had been dragged outside, where a stench hung over the site. Most of those killed were sparrows, parrots and hens, and losses could run into the thousands of dollars, said a person who worked at the shop to AP. The fire erupted at 4:30 a.m. at the shop in Budaiya. The security forces are conducting campaigns of arson to divert attention from the peaceful nature of the constitutional movement.

6 April: Lord Avebury, the Chairman of the UK Parliamentary Human Rights Group sent a letter to the Kuwaiti Ambassador in London, Mr. Khalid Al-Duwaisan. The letter, dated 6 April, stated: "We learned of the arrest of 11 Bahrainis in Kuwait on 28 March, and we have noted the statement by the Interior Ministry which was broadcast on Kuwait Satellite Channel TV at 1800 gmt 30 March 1997, in which the director of public relations at the Ministry, Col Badr Salih Mohammed, said that the security forces arrest a group of people in an apartment, the previous Wednesday evening [26 March

1997], for carrying out acts against the laws which might harm the security of the country. The statement did not mention any specific acts said to have been committed by these men, but the newspaper Al-Watan of March 31 reported that they had distributed illegal literature and gathered donations without permission. The literature was said to be hostile to Bahrain and detrimental to Kuwait-Bahrain relations.... Could you please let me know whether the men have actually been charged, and if so under what provisions of the Kuwaiti penal code? Have they been allowed to see lawyers of their choice?"

8 April: In Manama, thousands of citizens took to the streets in traditional processions amid tight security measures and check points around the capital. The citizens raised placards of pro-democracy demands and martyrs' photographs. The mercenary forces were seen removing the photographs from the main streets at the end of the procession. Arrests continued in many places.

10 April: The Kuwaiti authorities is still holding six Bahrainis despite all the protests from human rights activists an parliamentarians. The remaining six persons are Ali Al-Haiki, Adel Al-Haiki, Hussain Al-Haiki, Mohammed Al-Haiki, Mohammed Mirza and Sayed Hussain Al-Saaf. The security forces attacked another flat on the night of 10 April in the Salmiya area of Kuwait but arrested no one. Those released are living in fear and have suffered immensely as a result of the ill-treatment in the Kuwaiti jails. The Bahraini community are treated as enemies by the Bahraini government and this is the reason why the Kuwaiti security officers continue to attack members of the oppressed community. Seyed Hussain Al-Qallaf, Kuwaiti MP, resigned from the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, whose president refused a request for a meeting to discuss the arrest of the oppressed Bahrainis. Another Kuwaiti MP, Adnan Abdul-Samad said to Reuters "if they were charged with real charges they should face Kuwaiti law on Kuwaiti soil". He said extraditing them to Bahrain or a third country would violate Kuwaiti laws. Samad criticized the Interior Ministry for failing to give a detailed statement on the charges and the detainees. The BBC Arabic Service quoted a well-known Bahraini lawyer (Mr. Abdulla Hashim) on 23 April regarding the case of the remaining seven Bahrainis in Kuwaiti jails. "The seven Bahraini met with Mr. Abdulla Hashim who confirmed that the accused denied any connection with an organization by the name Hizbollah-Gulf and that the one accusation against them is the distribution of pamphlets. Mr. Hashim clarified that he is coordinating with Kuwaiti lawyers defending the Bahraini citizens."

13 April: The four young women arrested by the foreign forces on 26 March were released on 13 April after payment of BD 500 (\$1,335) fines. Another lady, Zainab Mohammed Habib from Iskan-Aali was arrested and released. She was summoned for further ill-treatment.

14 April: At night, processions took to the streets of Manama and other principal places. In both Manama and Bilad al-Qadim, the security forces established check points and many citizens were taken out of their cars, beaten in public, and let go. Never the less, the citizens

marched and denounced the terror and arson campaigns conducted by the foreign mercenaries.

15 April: The mercenary forces employed by the ruling wing of the Al-Khalifa family attacked a traditional procession in Sanabis, west of Manama, injuring scores of citizens. The cowardly attack was mounted against men, women and children congregating near a community centre (Matam Bin Khamis) on Tuesday (15 April) at 5.30 pm. The procession had peacefully marched through the streets and raised the pro-democracy demands, such as calling for the reinstatement of the dissolved parliament and the release of the detained opposition leaders. The foreign forces deployed rubber bullets, pellet-bullets and tear gas. Later on, they turned to private cars and properties and fired at random damaging many cars. Sanabis was put under siege following the attack.

15 April: It was revealed that the poet Ali Hassan Yousif had been released on 15 April after payment of an arbitrary fine of BD300 (\$800). Another poet has been in jail for the past 6 weeks, Abdul Karim Yousif Mardi, 35, together with his brother Abdul-Elah, from Tobli were accused of disseminating poetry critical of the government.

15 & 16 April: The foreign mercenaries employed by the Al-Khalifa family attacked three main assembly halls (matams) and closed them down. On 15 April, "Matam Bin-Salloom" of Manama was closed down and its gates were sealed with red-wax. When the administrators of the assembly hall contacted the interior ministry, they were told that the closure was ordered by "higher authorities". Similarly, the foreign forces closed down "Matam Bin-Khamis" and the "Women Matam" of Sanabis on 16 April, utilizing the same red-wax method. The closure of these places is in line with the hate-based policies adopted by the Al-Khalifa family against the natives of Bahrain. Many had been arrested in Sanabis at the time of closing the assembly halls. One of the persons who was in Al-Khamis Police Station described a horrific scene stating "a large group of youths were handcuffed and lined-up. Then, some officers started urinating on the youths. Other officers were emptying cans of "bear" on the youths. Another group of riot police were hurling insults in a "broken" Arabic language".

16 April: A girl who was hit by rubber bullets in her arm on 16 April was forced out of Salmiya Hospital on 19 April by the security forces. Kefayah Seyed Jaffer, 22, from Bilad al-Qadim, has been denied proper treatment by the interior ministry which is run by foreign mercenaries.

16 April: In the neighbouring Gulf State of Qatar, Reuters reported on 16 April that "All Qataris - including women - above age 18 will be allowed to vote in the country's first-ever municipal elections expected early next year according to a new draft law". In the mean time, Bahrainis who enjoyed local election in 1920s and parliamentary elections in 1970s are promised by the Al-Khalifa with importation of more foreign mercenaries for the repression of the citizens.

17 April: Eid prayers were performed in principal mosques followed by the chanting of pro-democracy slogans and the denunciation of the arson campaign conducted by the mercenary forces on behalf of the Al-Khalifa ruling family. The security forces attacked many places and

..as young as "SIX" are detained!

continued their atrocities against the nation. In Ain-Adari play-ground, the foreign mercenaries arrested three children on 17 April: Hasan Seyed Nasser, 10 years old, Ammar Al-Qassab, 12, and Seyed Hussain Redha, SIX years old. Witnesses saw the riot police beating the children as they drove them away in a jeep.

In a highly revealing statement an official stated to Reuters on 22 April that "If [the arrested] are young, their parents are summoned to pledge that they will not repeat their acts of sabotage. Police then free them. This under no circumstances could be considered arrest". This twisted definition of arrest is aimed at hiding the names of those detained and tortured, so that the ICRC does not investigate their cases.

18 April: Residents of Sanabis marched through the streets denouncing the attacks of foreign forces against the two main assembly halls. Both Matam Bin Khamis and the Women Matam were closed down by the mercenary forces and sealed with red-wax. Columns of fire from burnt tyres and loud gas-cylinder explosions continued to be seen and heard throughout the past few days. Several fires were seen along side King Faisal Highway, Sehla and Budaya Highways.

20 April: Two sisters from Zenj were also arrested: Sawzan Hasan Abu-Alaish, 19, and Jannat Hassan Abu-Alaish, 18.

21 April: Fifty-three European personalities and members of human rights organizations submitted a petition to the Kuwaiti authorities on 21 April denouncing the arrest and intimidation of Bahraini citizens working in Kuwait. The petition stated that "these Bahrainis, like hundreds others, are either forcible exiles, or ordinary people driven out of their country for economic or political reasons". The petitioners urged the Kuwaiti authorities to release these prisoners in the same as the Kuwaitis are asking for their prisoners to be released from Iraqi prisons. The Kuwaiti government ought not to repeat the same mistake of supporting dictators only to pay heavy prices later on, in the same as happened when it financed a dictator who then invaded its country.

21 April: Three students were brought to Al-Sehla School by riot police. The three [Yasin Salman Yousif (from Qadam), 16, Ali Mansoor Ali (from Hajar), 16, and Ahmad Ali Mushaima (from Northern Sehla), 15] were ordered by police to write political slogans on the school walls while being filmed. They were then taken away for more ill-treatment in the torture chambers.

22 April: The foreign forces raided the house of Ali Makki in Salamabad, ransacked the contents of the house and arrested his daughters, Manal, 20, Fatima, and his son Hussain Ali Makki, 19. Manal was released on 23 April but summoned on 24 April.

23 April: In another form of repression, the security forces raided small business units and closed some of them down. A printing and stationery shop located near Al-Mehza'a Road in Manama and owned by a person named Saeed, was attacked on 23 April. The security forces stole all equipment (recently installed) and closed down the business. On the same day, in Duraz, the foreign mercenaries attacked a book-shop owned by Hussain Ali Salman, 40 year old.

Similarly, all equipment were stole, the book-shop ruined, and the owner arrested. The Oriental Press in Manama was also raided and many toolings, templates were compensated. Several other small business offices were reportedly raided and their owners intimidated last week, as part of the hate-based policies.

Sheikh Ali Al-Nachas, was re-arrested on 23 April. He had recently spent one year in detention.

24 April: The mercenary forces repressing the nation on behalf of the ruling wing of the Al-Khalifa family besieged several principal towns and villages on Thursday (24 April) and Friday (25 April) and established check points at entrance of Sanabis, Daih, Duraz, Bani Jamra, A'ali, Karzakk, Sitra and other areas. Protests continued in response to the aggression of the mercenaries on mosques and assembly halls.

25 April: In Sitra, the foreign riot police initiated a programme for intimidating the citizens of the country. They started emptying rubbish bins on the streets. Then, they stop people passing by and order them to clean the debris.

On Friday 25 April, several principal mosques (Khawajah, Momin, Sadiq of Qafool, Sadiq of Duraz, and Karbabad) were surrounded by riot police who began inspecting the identity (CPR) cards in a new form of intimidation. The citizens defied the mercenaries and chanted the pro-democracy slogans calling for an end to the campaign of terror and violence mounted by these foreigners against the nation.

26 April: The State Security Court, presided by Khalifa bin Rashid Al-Khalifa, a member of the ruling family, resumed its illegal operations on 26 April with the trial of the following six teenagers: Nader Ibrahim Ahmad, 17, his brother Faisal, 16; Hassan Ahmad Mansoor, 17, and his brother Basim, 16; Mohsin Ahmad Ali, 16 and Seyed Mohammed Abbas, 16. These teenagers have spent one-year in administrative detention and had suffered from ill-treatment and torture. The six teenagers are all from Jabalat-Habshi, 5 km west of the capital Manama. The brothers Hassan and Basim are sons of Ahmad Mansoor, an opposition figure, who himself was arrested a year ago. He is one of the known campaigners for the Popular Petition of 1994.

The distinguished lawyer, Mr. Ahmad Al-Shamlan, defended the case of the six teenagers before the court saying that bringing persons under the age of 18 contravenes Article 1 of the UN "Conventions on the Rights of the Child". Since the signing the Convention in 1992, the government of Bahrain has refused to comply with the UN requirements for the submission of periodic reports on the rights of the child in Bahrain. The "Committee on the Rights of the Child" of the Geneva-based UN Centre for Human Rights starts monitoring the implementation after the submission of such reports. The opposition has called on the UN specialist committees to intervene and put an end to the irresponsible behaviour of a member State.

26 April: Manal Ali Ahmad and her sister Fatima were arrested last week together with their brother Hussain. Manal and Fatima have been released on 26 April. Manal was suspended (chicken-type suspension) and was beaten by the torturer Adel Flaifel.

Press Conference in Paris

On 29 April, a delegation of Bahraini opposition comprising of Abdul-Nabi Al-Ekri and Mansoor Al-Jamri, met with journalists specialising in Middle Eastern affairs and presented the case of the struggle for human rights and democracy in Bahrain. The discussion started with a briefing covering the important issues of the Bahraini struggle and was then followed by an in-depth questions and answers session.

The delegation highlighted the roots of the pro-democracy movement and the complexities pertaining to the particular aspects of the Bahraini society. Modern forces of the Bahraini civil society initiated a peaceful process in the 1930s demanding a fair and representative political structure. Bahrain, then under the control of British Advisor Charles Belegrove (1926-1956), witnessed cross-sectional and broadly based movements. Each time, the movement was crushed under a fictitious pretext. The struggle culminated in the formation of the Constituent and National Assemblies in the early seventies, only to be thwarted by the ruling Al-Khalifa family in 1975. The ruling family discovered that it could not face-up to the modern challenges for administering the state. It is worth noting that in the 1950s, Egypt (Under Nasser) was blamed for backing the home-grown internal movements, in 1970s, it was the turn of South Yemen for the blame, and since the early 1980s, the Al-Khalifa found a prize-winner for receiving the blame: Iran. Whatever external influences might be claimed, the vast majority of Bahrainis have demonstrated their independent nature. The Al-Khalifa, on the other hand, never stopped importing foreign mercenaries to repress citizens.

The composition of the Bahraini society (Shia and Sunni) has been used with maximum irresponsibility by the Al-Khalifa government. For historical reason, the Al-Khalifa treated the Shia indigenous population as traditional enemies, thus barring them from virtually all sensitive positions in the State. They also forced the Shia out of their land in search of low-grade work in the Gulf, only to hunt them later on with extreme hatred. This happens while more than 100,000 foreigners enjoy staying and working in Bahrain. This is a complex psychological and historical issue that added a twist in the events. It is not surprising, therefore, to witness an uncompromising attitude from the ruling Al-Khalifa family. Bahrainis have long bypassed such medieval segregation that are based on tribal, ethnic and sectarian coloration, and have strove to maintain the national consensus that brought all types of today's cosmopolitan Bahrainis to harmoniously and peacefully co-exist and live together.

Last March, the Al-Khalifa blamed a group of 36 youngsters of membership of a "fancy-named" Hizbollah organisation and of master-minding a quop-attempt. This desperate attempt failed to re-direct attention from a single fact: Bahrainis are more civilised, aspiring to live in a pluralist, constitutional set-up, and are more responsible than those claiming to run the state. A point in case, is the way the Al-Khalifa exhibited happiness that Bahraini (Shia) workers in Kuwait are being persecuted by the Kuwaiti intelligence department. Yet, at the same time, Bahraini (Sunni) lawyers travelled to Kuwait and assumed their national responsibility for defending their fellow-citizens.

Bahrain in the Fifty-Third Session of the UN Human Rights Commission on Human Rights:

Torture, Arbitrary Detention, Repression and Unfair Trials Must Stop

On 26 March, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has informed the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva that "Bahrain was included on the list of world countries where torture is repeatedly exerted on citizens".

The 53rd sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva were presented with reports of the UN Working Groups. The Group on Torture presented seven cases of concern in Bahrain, the first concerning the death under torture of the 16-year old Saeed Al-Eskafi. The Special Rapporteur on Arbitrary Detention adopted six decisions concerning Bahrain, which means that the government will come under increasing monitoring by the international body. The Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers stated in his report to the UN Commission "the trials before the State Security Court violate article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights owing to the apparent lack of due process in the court. The Special Rapporteur will continue to monitor further developments concerning the use of the State Security Court by the State of Bahrain".

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) raised the case of Bahrain during the 53rd session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. The ICJ said "On 10 March 1996, the jurisdiction of the State Security Courts was reportedly extended in Bahrain to offences which were previously handled by the regular criminal courts, such as arson and assault on public servants. There is no presumption of innocence of those tried before these courts. They hold sessions in camera. They fail to investigate allegations of torture. The defendants are denied the right to counsel. Their decisions courts are not subject to any appeal. Hundreds of persons remain under preventative detention without court review".

The Al-Khalifa delegation to the sessions claimed that Bahrainis were aiming "to overthrow the regime by force". The shameless delegation attempted to confuse the issue by using the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) as an alibi. The visits of ICRC have never stopped the tribal government from arbitrary detention, torture or abuse of court system, which are the subjects of concern to the UN Working Groups in this case.

The African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters presented the following intervention on 9 April 1997 under Agenda Item 10 "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world".

(Mr. Chairman: Our organisation is concerned by the human rights situation in Bahrain. The government of Bahrain, although it has not signed the International Covenants on Political and Civil Rights and the International Covenant on Social and Economic Rights, yet remains under the provisions of the Vienna Declaration, which stipulates that countries which have not signed these covenants are, nevertheless, under obligation to respect international human rights norms.

Mr. Chairman, the international community has already demonstrated its preoccupation with the violation of human rights in Bahrain. This situation of violations has existed for some time,

and we believe the moment has come for the Commission on Human Rights to seriously concern itself with these violations.

The Bahraini authorities persist in not facing the amplitude of the needs of their people, or to concern themselves with the Bahraini peoples' desires to have the democratic constitution, which was abolished in 1975, restored. Hence, any dialogue between the authorities and the people has died. In place of such dialogue, the Bahraini authorities have chosen the option of oppression.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, in order to solve its problem, Bahrain has simply adopted a slogan saying that the repression is justified because the regime is under threat from some quite fictitious foreign-backed organisation aiming to overthrow the political establishment by force. As is well-known, such an allegation has not been proven and remains a simple fantasy used to avoid facing the real problems resulting from a lack of democracy.

Our organisation presented the situation of Bahrain in last year's session, and we believe this year at the 53rd session of the Commission, a concrete step must be taken to call upon the government of Bahrain to:

- (1) Stop the repression and release the detainees and
- (2) enter into a dialogue with the people of Bahrain

Mr. Chairman, let us give a few examples of the present violation of human rights in Bahrain:

(1) Young children have been arrested and even tortured. A documented case in point is that of Zuhair Mahdi, 9 years old, who was tortured on 27 February this year and had to be treated in Salmaniya Hospital;

(2) Women of all ages are detained and threatened with indecent assault for alleged participation in peaceful gatherings;

(3) It is our belief that any independent inspector could verify thousands of cases of torture in Bahrain prisons;

(4) It is a known fact that Bahraini courts pass sentences without allowing any appeal process;

(5) Discrimination against the indigenous community includes forcible exiles, dismissal of Shi'a lecturers and students from the university and schools, attacks on Shi'a mosques and assembly halls, and the arrest of religious scholars;

(6) Moreover, there have been several extrajudicial killings in Bahrain, and several detainees have died under torture.

Mr. Chairman: We believe that the Commission, at the present session, must adopt a statement calling upon the government of Bahrain to respect human rights and the dignity of the Bahraini citizens, to stop all repression of the population, and to create a real discussion and dialogue with representatives of the Bahraini people. The government must restore the Constitution and all constitutional rights of citizens and reconstruct a democratic structure which respects the rights of the individual.

Mr. Chairman: It is our belief that only with such measures can the Bahrain government find a solution which will make of Bahrain a respected, stable and prosperous state. Thank you, Mr. Chairman)).

-The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT) presented its intervention on 14 April calling on the international community to intervene and put an end to human rights violations by the government of Bahrain. The OMCT had earlier urged the Bahraini authorities "to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of all detained children and all others detained, and order their immediate release; to guarantee an impartial and exhaustive enquiry into the facts concerning any human rights violations; to identify those responsible and bring them to trial; to ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with national [constitutional] laws and international standards".

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) said in its intervention "In Bahrain .. 1500 persons are now being arbitrarily detained; 300 of them were arrested in 1997. Torture and ill-treatments of detainees are systematic, including for women and children... The civil population is frequently targeted, when villages are sieged, houses searched, inhabitants beaten, and their belongings robbed. The Muslim Shia majority is increasingly submitted to a sectarian and discriminatory policy. Hundreds of Bahrainis live in exile. The verdicts of the State Security Court can not be appealed before a higher tribunal and the evidence on which these verdicts are pronounced are often based on confessions...".

The international organization "SOS Torture" presented its intervention saying:

"In Bahrain, in a new wave of arrests towards the end of Feb 97 at least 60 children were arrested by the authorities. Those arrested are being held incommunicado, a condition of detention conducive to torture. The arrest are part of the campaign on the part of the authorities to clamp down on political dissent.

The use of torture in such circumstance places these children at extreme risk. The Special Rapporteur Against Torture in his excellent report stated with reference to Bahrain "the practice of torture by these agencies was said to be undertaken with impunity, with no known cases of official having been prosecuted for acts of torture or other ill-treatment". He continues "in addition to its use as a means to extract a confession, torture was also reportedly administered to coerce victims into reporting on the activities of others, to inflict punishment and to instill fear in political opponents".

These children are still in detention. The many other cases that have been documented suggest that the risk to these children is extreme. Once again treatment they can expect is outlined by the Special Rapporteur "the method of torture reported include: falaqa (beating on the soles of the feet), severe beatings, sometimes with hose pipe, suspension of the limbs in contorted positions accompanied by blows to the body, immersion in water to the point of near drowning, burning with cigarettes, piercing the skins with a drill, sexual assaults, including the insertion of objects into the penis or anus, threat of execution or of harm to family members. These detained children are as young as ten". ((Note: Just after this intervention, the Al-Khalifa broke another record by arresting a 6-year old child)).