

BAHIRATON

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

Henderson replaced after 31 years of active service

The end of a colonial era

Whether the notorious Ian Henderson has indeed left the scene or is still active as an advisor to the ministry of the interior, the scene has been set for an era in Bahrain without him. The Bahraini government announced in mid February that Sheikh Khaled bin Mohammad bin Salman Al Khalifa, a nephew of the Amir, has been appointed in the post of Director of the State Security Investigations, one the posts previously held by Henderson himself. By any account the fate of the most notorious torturer in the Middle East has been sealed. One of the central demands of the opposition has thus been fulfilled. This does not mean, however, an automatic end to the era of torture and repression. None of those responsible for carrying out Henderson's orders has been brought to account for their horrendous crimes.

The new appointee will not have the same powers as Henderson who was the top official in the Interior Ministry. Henderson assumed the position of "Director General of Public Security" as well as the Director of State Security Investigations (the intelligence department). On 11 December 1996, the Interior Ministry was re-organised and divided into four divisions, and each division has an intelligence department.

The position of "Director General of Public Security" has been eliminated. Hence, the interior ministry's capabilities are headed by several people with competing scopes and authorities, and all report to the Interior Minister. Over the past thirty-one years since Henderson took the post (in 1966) scores of young men, women and children have been killed under torture, by police bullets or execution. International human rights organisations have documented most of these cases and published detailed accounts of torture techniques and interrogation regimes.

The Al Khalifa ruling tribe has been incensed by the international condemnation of its policies, especially those by the UN Human Rights Sub-Commission and rapporteurs, the European Parliament, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others. The UN Human Rights Commission which is convening its annual meeting in Geneva this month is scheduled to consider the recommendations of the Sub-Commission that the case of Bahrain be given a priority. This has infuriated the Al-Khalifa and forced them to take unprecedented steps to forestall any possible condemnation in Geneva. In addition to the

replacement of Ian Henderson, they have announced their preparedness to ratify the (UN) Convention Against Torture, CAT, a move that has, hitherto, been unthinkable. However, the Al-Khalifa are expected to register their reservations against some articles which are intended to empower the committee responsible for monitoring compliance of the states with the tenets of the convention, to look into any allegations of violation of human rights. But any reservation will mean an admission by the Al Khalifa that they are involved in torture and maltreatment of prisoners.

So far no NGO has been allowed to enter Bahrain and to investigate torture cases. It is understood that the recent moves by the government were aimed at confusing the situation in Geneva and preventing any further condemnation.

The situation has thus been polarised between an obstinate regime employing all tools of repression and a moderate opposition seeking a marginal reform in the political situation. The opposition has managed to steer a moderate path and gain international respect. Its programme of civil resistance is a viable proposition and has proved its effectiveness over the past three years.

The people expressed their views openly and peacefully during the seminars that were held in Manama earlier in the year. In an attempt to divert attention from core issues, the government co-sponsored a seminar in February, in association with a Paris-based small centre and a London centre dedicated for supporting dictatorships (ie. Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies). This seminar was fully financed by the Government of Bahrain, with the aim of achieving a public relations exercise and to gain some supporters to Al Khalifa. To the dismay of the organisers, the seminar was a total failure. None of the prominent personalities, such as Kufi Annan, the UN Secretary General or Ismat Abdul Majid, the Secretary General of the Arab League attended. Out of more than 300 personalities invited only about 60 attended.

As regards the Iraqi crisis, the Al Khalifa proved to be ineffective. At the beginning, they expressed willingness to "allow" the Allies unimpeded use of the Sheikh Isa Air Base in the south of the country. They needed the political support of the USA in their war against the people of Bahrain. But they soon realised that their position was unpopular with many of their friends. The information minister, Mohammad Al Mutawwa, was ordered to state that the Al Khalifa were against the use of the Bahraini bases against Iraq. This immediately infuriated the Americans who rushed to demand an explanation from Manama. The ruler, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa hurried to assure the US administration of his willingness to give the Americans a freedom of use of all the facilities on the island. This multi-twisted policy has cost the Al

Khalifa dearly both domestically and regionally.

The opposition has, on the other hand, managed to maintain a systematic approach towards the politics of the region, and has been encouraged by these successes to sustain their campaign of civil resistance internally and political pressure on the international scene. The dismissal of Ian Henderson and the decision to ratify CAT ought to be steps for a new future and not attempts to avert condemnation in Geneva. The opposition has welcomed both steps and called on the Government to initiate a serious dialogue with the opposition.

The British government has on 4 February called on the Bahraini government to start dialogue with the members of the Committee for Popular Petition (CPP), a move that is of great importance.

It is now the time for the government to heed these calls to protect the interests of both the people of Bahrain and the ruling family. Failure to listen to such advice from friendly countries such as Britain, could only lead to further complication and instability. The opposition is persevering in its civil resistance campaign and political activities worldwide, and is now more convinced than ever that political reforms will end the repressive era initiated by Ian Henderson 31 years ago. His successors will have to come to terms with legacy.

FT: Henderson replaced

The Financial Times (20 February 1998): "Bahrain spy chief replaced": "Ian Henderson, the reclusive 70-year-old British head of Bahrain's Intelligence Service blamed by Shia dissidents for the Sunni government's repressive policies, has been replaced. His successor is Sheikh Khalid Bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, a member of the ruling Al Khalifa family, whose members hold all the key cabinet posts. Mr. Henderson, a former colonial intelligence officer in Kenya who made his name during the 1950s Mau Mau rebellion, was appointed in 1966 by Sheikh Isa. Although nominally under the control of the interior ministry, Mr. Henderson became a power in his own right with direct access to the ruler.

According to western diplomats Mr. Henderson had "long wanted to retire, and had only stayed at the urging of the ruler himself." His departure is seen by many in both the minority Sunni and the Shia communities as the end of the colonial era; and according to Bahrain Freedom Movement in London, "the end of an era of torture and repression."

The New-York based Human Rights Watch recently castigated Bahrain for repeated violations of civil and political rights".

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February 1998: Henderson's era comes to an end;

1 February: A group of political prisoners started a hunger strike on 30 January. The strikers are prisoners of conscience who had completed their sentences. Prison officers are implementing an arbitrary policy aimed at prolonging the detention of even those who completed their terms. They are detained in Jaw Prisons No. 1 and No. 3. They include: Majid Milad, Nizar Al-Qarea, Hussain Al-Tattan, Abbas Al-Ardi, Raed Al-Khawajah. These and others have completed their terms. They were unfairly sentenced by the unconstitutional State Security Court for three years in early 1995. The strikers and their families had complained to the interior minister demanding their release since they had completed their terms in 1997. The Interior Minister never responded to the pleas and letters while prison officers threatened to prolong the detention as long as they wished.

1 February: The British newspaper, The Mail-on-Sunday (1 February) revealed that the 20-year-old Abdulla, son of the Housing Minister, Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al-Khalifa and the grandson of the Justice Minister, Sheikh Abdulla Al-Khalifa, is one of the students of Sandhust military school, who is implicated in a bribe scandal. Three British army instructors are to be court-martialed over claims of bribery and blackmail involving cash payments for passing exams. Abdulla claimed he "was forced to hand over money".

1 February, the so-called Governor of the Capital and ex-torturer, Abdul Aziz Atteyat-Allah Al-Khalifa summons the President of Bahrain Bar Society, Dr. Abbas Helal and interrogated him about the seminar organized by the Society on 14 January, during which the pro-democracy leader Dr. Monira Fakhro and the journalist Mr. Hafedh Al-Sheikh criticized dictatorship and corruption in the country. The Interior Minister also attended the interrogation session. Dr. Helal was asked to write a statement noting down all details of the meeting. This demand is intended for intimidating the heroic lawyers. On the next day, another lawyer, Mr. Yousif Khalaf was summoned by the ex-torturer. A similar demand was made that Mr. Khalaf must write a report explaining details of the seminar.

2 February: A teenager, Muhammed Abdula, 17, from Isa town, was arrested. Mr Abdula had been arrested seven months ago and then released on the condition that he leaves the country to Kuwait. He stayed in exile for a period then returned only to be arrested again.

4 February, peaceful protesters demonstrated in Bani Jamra, northwest of Bahrain, emphasizing their steadfastness. They called for the immediate release of Sheikh Al Jamri.

5 February: The London based Al "Quds" newspaper has published an article for Mr. Mohammed Jabir Sabah entitled "The dissolution of the constitution in Bahrain is an outrageous mistake, which led to the agitation of the social and political relationships". Mr Sabah, a pro-democracy leader, said in his article that "Democracy is not generated from vacuum or through wishes and proclamations in occasions. It is not generated through hollow phrases that have no place in the upshot of life, or through fictitious garished publicity". He went

to say that democracy is "linked dialectically in a give and take process and a daily pursuance through implementation of clauses of the constitution and execution of its articles and translating it on the ground of reality, to achievements that serve society, without any infringements". He went on "Therefore, constitutions are like incubators for democracy and its secure fortress. And it is considered as the highest and holiest pact in the advanced, civil and modern societies". It is worth mentioning that Mr. Sabah has been put under immense pressure by the Bahraini regime in disparate effort to silence him.

3 February: 3 February, scores of children were arbitrarily arrested from western Ekr. Amongst those arrested were: Ahmed Ali Al Wani, 17, Ali Abdula Al Wani, 14, Maruf Yousif Hassan Al Wani, 13, Abdula Ali Zuhair, 14, Fadhil Isa Sahlan, 15, Ahmed Jawad Sarhan, 13. These are being tortured in Isa Town detention centre.

4 February: In a written parliamentary answer to a question raised by the noble Lord Aveybury, a British Government's spokesperson, Baroness Symons of Verham Dean, revealed on 4 February that the British Foreign Secretary had asked his Bahraini counterpart to initiate dialogue with the Committee for Popular Petition. The text of the answer stated: "As I told the noble Lord in my answer of 28 January, we have discussed Sheikh Al Jamri's continuing detention without charge with the Bahraini authorities on a number of occasions. We have called on them to release or charge all those held in detention. We will continue to do so. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary raised the issue of a dialogue between the Bahraini authorities and the Committee for Popular Petition with the Crown Prince and Foreign Minister of Bahrain during their meeting on 28 January."

5 February: It is worth noting what was reported by the Gulf Daily News of 5 February. The newspaper said that the government has allocated "\$1 million" for an "international media campaign" due to be launched this month. It also reported that a "delegation of British exhibition and conference organisers is due in Bahrain on 6 February to explore possibilities of bringing such events to the island".

7 February, The guards of the dry-dock prison in Hidd have attacked and ripped-off the clothes of a detainee, Mohammed Hussain Ashur, during a visit by his family. The mercenaries tortured Mr. Ashur in front of his family and then savagely beaten his three sisters. The sisters of Mr. Ashur have later been called in for interrogation in Qala'a prison twice, on 8 and 9 February.

6 February, the security forces attacked Sitra and arrested several people, amongst them Isa Ali Mohammed and his brother Abdul Rasool (both in their twenties) and Mosa Al-Rahim, 23.

10 February: The security forces have arrested three children from Arad village, the children are: Yousif Ali Hassan Al Fulad, 12, Hassan Ali Al Fulad, 13, Ali Jaffar Khalil Al Bahrani, 13. They were all detained for allegedly writing pro-democracy slogans on walls.

11 February, the secret police arrested Mr.

Jaffar Abdul Ali, 24, from Markuban (Sitra), around 5: 30 at dawn while he was on his way to work

13 February: The house of the newly released teenager, Ahmed Jassim Muhammed, 17, has been ransacked by the security forces, in an attempt to intimidate the teenager and his family after a detention of more than a month. Ali Muhammed Sabet and his sister were detained few days ago during a visit to their brother in a detention centre. The security guards tortured the detained brother in front of the visiting brother and sister. The guards then charged the visiting persons with attempting "to stop" the guards from performing their duties.

14 February 1998, tyres burning were seen at the main and south entrances of Bilad Al Qadim town which led to the closure of Sheikh Salman Highway for a period of time. Later on, the security forces raided the town and arrested Haji Saeed Ahmed while he was walking down the street. Later at night another raid was conducted in which the security forces ransacked the house of Mr. Abdul Aziz Habib, 24. The latter was arrested after being subjected to savage beating on the spot. On the same day, Seyed Amin Seyed Hussain Seyed Shubar, from Sitra town, has been arrested at noon while he was returning home from work.

15 February: On the other hand, the Cabinet agreed to ratify the UN "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment" (CAT). The opposition welcomed this development but cautioned against over-optimism. The ratifying of CAT came after the issuing of an historic resolution by the UN Human Rights Sub-Commission on 21 August, which urged the government to ratify the two covenants on human rights as well as CAT. The historic resolution also requested the UN Human Rights Commission to consider the situation of human rights in the next session due next March/April.

It is believed that the government's representative in Geneva will attempt to divert attention of the UN Commission on Human Rights by saying that his government has signed CAT and is probably "considering" allowing a human rights NGO to visit the country. The opposition believes that the government must also ratify the two covenants.

It is also worth noting that the Government of Bahrain had ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1990 and the Convention on the Right of the Child in 1992. The government refused to submit any of the periodic reports required by the two conventions. The government also violated all the clauses of the conventions by continually detaining and arresting children and by continually discriminating amongst citizens on the bases of religious, tribal and ethnic affiliation.

16 February: The Dry-Dock Prison in Hidd (which contains 709 detainees), witnessed an escalation of events. The notorious torturer, Mohammed Al-Dare mercilessly tortured Nail Abdul Amir and then was placed him in a solitary cell. Abdul Amir, had submitted a complaint regarding the continuous ill-treatment to the officer in charge Salih Al-Yamani (a Yemeni officer). As a result, a torture was sent to deal

... His legacy prevails

with him. Another detainee, Abdulla Swar, from Sanad, had received a similar treatment. Another detainee Mohammed Sabt, was also reportedly tortured and placed in a solitary cell.

17 February: Extensive presence of secret police personnel and security forces was witnessed in Markuban (Sitra), until late midnight. During their presence in the village they harassed and intimidated the residents in an attempt to provoke violence. Farther they attacked and snatched citizen who was getting ready to make his final preparations for his wedding due on Friday 20 February. Mr. Khalil Ebrahim Al Sindi, 26, has been detained by the security forces without a known reason. Also on 17 February, large number of security forces conducted a raid on the house of Mr. Mohammed Ahmed Al Ekri, 22, from Daih village. They ransacked his house and arrested him while he was asleep. There is a fear that Mr. Al Ekri health might deteriorate further, as he is believed to be in an unstable health condition.

19 February: The tales of young people tortured inside Bahrain's prison do not end. Hassan Mahmood Taher Tarada, age 18, (DOB 20/04/79, CPR No. 790406080, Passport No. 603838, Address House 615, Road 810, Hamad Town 1208.) had suffered a brain hemorrhage after his release last year. His family wants to take him out for treatment but his passport had been confiscated and hence can not receive a proper treatment

20 February: Political detainees in Al-Grain staged a hunger strike starting on Friday 20 February. These prisoners are subjected to ill-treatment in Al-Grain Prison, South of Bahrain. The brutality of prison officers had been escalated with various forms of torture, solitary confinements, banning of family-visits consistently imposed. The strikers do not know their fate and had been held indefinitely under the provisions of the State Security Law. Many of them had even passed the 3-year internment term specified by the unconstitutional State Security Law. Examples of such persons are Hussain Ahmad Al-Banna, 23 years old from Iskan-A'ali, Mohammed Ghannam, 28 from Sitra, Ali Hasan, 30 from Sitra.

20 February: The so-called "High Council for Islamic Affairs" contacted the persons in charge of mosques in Muharraq and ordered restrictions aimed at confiscating the rights of the citizens to practice their religion. One of the youths, Ali Al-Nasoo, was accused of violating the order and had been detained under the provisions of the State Security Law. Another elderly person by the name Haji Abdul Razzaq had been summoned for interrogation and intimidation.

21 February: the ruling Al-Khalifa family has appointed another person from their ranks to assume the role of Governor of Muharraq. The person is Isa bin Ahmed Mohammed Al-Khalifa, (Date of birth 26/March/1941). He joined the security service in November 1963 as an interrogation-officer and played this role in various torture centers. He was appointed in 1970 as chief of Airport Security and assumed a high ranking intelligence position in the mid seventies. In 1984 he was responsible for the Police HQ in the Central Region. Such a profile, family-affiliation and identity confirm the sus-

picious raised by many observers that the ruling tribe is moving towards the consolidation of a police-tribal state with total disregard to the aspirations of the nation.

21 February: Security forces attacked two families in Samahij and snatched two children: Jaffer Naser Ahmad, 13, Mohammed Hussain Ahmad Al-Yas, 13. The two children were tortured severely as they were being snatched from their families. An eyewitness said "a brick was used for hitting the child Jaffer". On 23 February, the security forces re-attacked and snatched the following: Abdul-Elah Yousif, 16, Ali Habib, 14, Saleh Atteya, 13, Yaser Abdulla Khalil, 13. On 24 February, another child by the name Mohammed Salman was also arrested.

23 February: 23 February, women of Sanabis went out in a demonstration demanding an end to repression and release of their sons, husbands, fathers and relatives. The security forces mounted an aggressive attack against the residents and chased people of all ages on the streets and into the houses. The mercenaries attacked entire families and arrested scores of people. Amongst those arrested were Zaynab Sahwan, 37, (a mother of five children), Khadija Sahwan, 27, (a mother of three children). These women were intimidated and beaten inside their house before being snatched and taken away to the centres of torture. It is worth noting that this family has three sons in jail, Mohammed Sahwan (sentenced to 15 years), Jaffer Sahwan (sentenced to 5 years), and Abbas Sahwan (held indefinitely for the past 3 years). Another woman, Khatoon Ali Jassim, 37, (mother of 3 children) was also intimidated, insulted and summoned for interrogation.

26 February: Scores of citizens marched along the main Budaya Highway near Daih and Jedhafs on 26 February, around 6.30 pm. The youths raised placards and chanted slogans demanding an end to repression, release of jailed leaders and political prisoners, and restoration of the dissolved parliament. One of the placards carried a slogan written in Arabic and English saying "We are not terrorists; We seek political reforms". Other placards called for the immediate release of the jailed leader, Sheikh Al-Jamri. Traffic was brought to a halt on the main highway as demonstrators marched with bravery.

28 February: The State Security Court would be holding three "quickie" sessions to pass long prison terms against 16 persons who had been arrested in 1996. The first session was initially scheduled for Saturday 28 February. The sixteen persons are Ali Darwish, 28, Engineer; Seyyed Mohammed, 27, Programmer; Mohammed Ali, 25, Teacher; Seyyed Fadhil Shubbar, 29, Teacher; Ali Salman, 30, Teacher; Seyyed Saeed Al-Majid, 30, Employee; Abdulla, 35, Employee; Farhad Khorshid, 30, Employee; Yousif Habib, 28, Employee; Mohsin Al-Sheikh, 35, Manager; Ali Al-Mestani, 30, Employee; Jamil Jawahiri, 27, Shop-owner; Ismael Khalil, 21, Fisherman; brother of Ismael Khalil, 25; Mahdi Saleh, 23, Employee; Ali Masha-Allah, 24, Employee. These people had suffered extreme forms of torture and were expected to have had their sentences passed earlier last year. However, their bodies carried all the visible signs of exhaustion and torture and hence the delay.

Home Thought: Rediscovering "As Soon As Possible"

When the Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa stood before the National Assembly (NA) to report the activities and achievements of his cabinet on 23 October 1974, he started with praising the members of the NA for their sincere endeavour to reinforce the basis and foundations of constitutionality through purposeful dialogue and constructive criticism. In his speech, he further emphasized how the NA had been a chief assistant and an incentive for the government towards a better future. He then assured the NA members of his commitment to always proceed forward with firm faith and confidence in the members.

Ten Months later, the NA had been dissolved and article (65) of the constitution suspended. The Prime Minister's faith and confidence in the NA reached the point where he had to terminate its existence. Although the PM had not yet explained the contradiction but "a tree is known by its fruit".

A year later, the PM assured the Kuwaiti Chief in Editor of the "Al-Seyasah" newspaper in an interview on 25 August 1976, issue 2940 that "the return of the parliamentary life in Bahrain had been under diligent study and consultation, and that it would be restored as soon as the study finishes". Twenty-two years later, the PM is still studying the case.

His Highness received numerous awards and certificates from most renowned and distinguished world establishments, the last of which were the Resolution of UN. Sub-Commission on Human Rights, the European parliament resolution, the U.S. State Department Human Rights report, Amnesty International, and last but not least, Human Rights Watch. They unanimously certified with distinction that the State of Bahrain has become a fertile ground for human rights violations conducted by the PM and his associates. On this occasion, The opposition wishes not to miss the opportunity to award the PM A Doctorate in for his tremendous efforts to continue studying for more than 2 decades.

Around two months after the dissolution of the NA, the Crown Prince His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, stated in an interview with the Kuwaiti "Al-Seyasah" newspaper on 9 December 1975, that "The members of the parliament were waiting for a miracle to rescue them from the critical situation which the NA has fallen in during the discussion on the State Security Law, and the miracle has been fulfilled through the dissolution". Then he went on to say "In my opinion the NA members felt very relaxed about the dissolution". Of course, what ever the Crown Prince says must be taken as a fact. Therefore, events have to be reinterpreted and it had to be said that an MI like Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri were pleased by the dissolution of the NA, so much so that he decided to take a long vacation in one of the solitary cells in one of the purpose-designed torture centres.

"As soon as possible" is the phrase it Crown prince had used to answer "Al-Seyasah" newspaper's reporter when requested to clarify when will the parliamentary life be restored. The Guinness Book of Records must be thrilled to add the longest ever "as soon as possible"

Private Eye: Free Gifts to MPs

The British "Private Eye" published an article on Bahrain on 6 February saying: "David Wilshire, Tory MP for Spelthorne, achieved maximum publicity for his questions about what he calls government sleaze. On 26 January he asked searching questions about the cost of new furniture at 10 and 11 Downing Street. He also asked about "the cost of partners being taken overseas by ministers". Can this be the same David Wilshire who went with his wife to the dictatorship of Bahrain last October?"

The visit was paid for by the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, which specialises in freebies and perks for MPs who behave in a friendly way to the Bahraini dictators. Mrs. Wilshire was reported to be "delighted" with the gift of jewelry, which she got from the emir there. Meanwhile, as the jailing and torturing of dissidents in Bahrain plumbs new depths, the British parliament has made another mighty effort to establish good relations with the dictators. A cocktail party in the Commons on 27 January was well attended by various members of the Al Khalifa ruling family. Dr John Marek, Labour MP for Wrexham, gave the speech of welcome in which he praised the "historical relations linking Bahrain and Britain", and formally set up a new British-Bahraini parliamentary association. (The Bahraini parliament has been dissolved since 1975)".

US State Department:

On 30 January, the U.S. Department of State issued its annual Human Rights Report for 1997.

Extracts: In 1975 the Government suspended some provisions of the 1973 Constitution, including those articles relating to the National Assembly, which was disbanded and never reconstituted.

Bahrain experienced continued political unrest during the year, including bomb and arson attacks on public and private property. There are few judicial checks on the actions of the Amir and his government, and the courts are subject to government pressure.

The Ministry of Interior is responsible for public security. It controls the public security force (police) and the extensive security service, which are responsible for maintaining internal order. The Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) is responsible for defending against external threats. It did not play a role in internal security during the year. Security forces committed serious human rights abuses.

There was no change in the Government's human rights practices and numerous serious problems remain. The main problems continue to include the denial of the right of citizens to change their government; political and other extrajudicial killings; torture; arbitrary arrest; incommunicado and prolonged detention; involuntary exile; limitations on or the denial of the right to a fair public trial, especially in the security court; infringements on citizens' right to privacy; and restrictions on freedom of speech, press, assembly, associ, and worker rights. The Government imposes some limits on freedom of religion and movement.

International Pen:

International Pen "Writers in prison committee" sent the following letter to the Amir of Bahrain on 30 January 1998. ((His Highness

Sheikh Issa bin Salman al-Khalifa.

Your Highness: We write to you on behalf of International PEN, the worldwide writers' association with a 77-year history of defending the freedom of the written word, to express our grave concern over the continuing detention without charge or trial of Sheikh Al-Jamri, a 60-year-old poet and religious scholar.

As we understand it, Sheikh Al-Jamri is a former member of the National Assembly. After this body was dissolved in 1975, he became a prominent proponent for its reinstatement. He was arrested on 20 January 1996, along with eight other prominent Shi'a Muslim clerics, apparently in connection with a petition he circulated calling for constitutional change. He has now been held for more than two years and latest reports indicate that his health has been poor and that he has been having treatment for a heart condition and high blood pressure.

It appears to us, that Sheikh Al-Jamri is being held merely for exercising freedom of expression, a right guaranteed to all by Article 19 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. His continuing imprisonment, especially in light of his failing health, is a matter for general dismay and we urge you to order his unconditioned release.

Sincerely, Moris Farhi.

Chair, Writers in Prison Committee

Bar Society:

The Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales sent the following letter to the Amir of Bahrain on 30 January 1998

((HH Sheikh Issa bin Salman al Khalifa

Your Highness: We are writing to you for the fourth time on behalf of the Bar Human Rights Society of England and Wales regarding the situation in Bahrain.

A year ago we wrote to you expressing our concern about the detention of Sheikh Al-Jamri by the Bahrain authorities without charge or trial. It is now two years since Sheikh Al-Jamri was first arrested. We understand that he is still being held in solitary confinement and has still not been charged with any offence. Such detention violates not only the Rule of Law but also interrecognised standards of justice; it is clearly of grave concern to international legal community. We urge you to follow up the suggestion made by Lord Avebury to Mr. Asho-alla of your government in November 1997 and to set up a meeting between British and Bahraini lawyers to discuss the working of the State Security Court. We would be more than happy to coordinate such a meeting. We look forward to hearing from you.

Respectfully Yours, Nicholas Stewart, QC

Amnesty International:

12 February 1998: Fear of Medical neglect Bahrain: Sheikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri, aged 60, Sheikh Hassan Sultan, Sheikh 'Ali 'Ashour, Sheikh 'Ali bin Ahmad al-Jeddhaifi, Sheikh Hussein al-Deihi, Hassan Meshema'a, Sayyed Ibrahim 'Adnan al-Alawi, Abdul Wahab Hussein.

According to reports, Sheikh 'Abdu al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri, currently detained at al-Qal'a Prison in al-Manama, has at times been denied his regular supply of medicines required for his high blood pressure, back and respiratory problems. This is reportedly in order to force him to sign an undertaking that he will not

engage in any political activity against the government if released. Sheikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri is said to have refused to sign the undertaking. Amnesty International fears he may be at risk of further medical neglect.

Shaikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri and the other seven above-named are prominent Muslim Shi'a leaders and religious figures detained without charge or trial since their arrests on 22 January 1996. Although they were originally held incommunicado it is now that they are allowed visits from their families. Their arrests came at a time of mass arrests carried out by security forces in response to public demonstrations angry at the closure of mosques. Details regarding others detained are not available. Amnesty International considers the above-named to be prisoners of conscience.

The eight leaders were also detained during periods of unrest in 1994-1995 and held without charge or trial until their release in September 1995.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: In June 1997, Shaikh 'Ali Mirza al-Nakkas, a blind Shi'a Muslim cleric, died in custody in al-Qal'a Prison. Although a spokesman for the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior reportedly attributed his death to respiratory problems there were reports suggesting medical neglect may have been the cause.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION:

- expressing concern at reports that Shaikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri has been subjected to medical neglect;

- seeking assurances that he and other detainees be granted access to full and proper medical care;

- calling for Shaikh 'Abd al-Amir Mansur al-Jamri and the other seven, arrested on 22 January 1996, to be released immediately and unconditionally as prisoners of conscience.

Article 19:

Article 19 sent a letter to the Amir of Bahrain on 16 February 1998: ((His Excellency Shaikh Issa Salman Al-Khalifa

Your Excellency: ARTICLE 19, The International Centre Against Censorship, is extremely concerned about the continuing detention without charge or trial of Shaikh Abd Al-Amir Mansur Al -Jamri, a 60-year old writer and scholar. According to our information, Shaikh Al-Jamri, a former member of Bahrain's National Assembly, dissolved by the Amir in 1975, has been a prominent campaigner for the establishment of democracy in country during the January 1996 popular demonstrations.

On 20 January 1996, Shaikh Al-Jamri was arrested with eight other prominent Shi'a clerics and was jailed since his arrest, without charge or trial, under the 1974 State Security Law. Further information received by ARTICLE 19 recently indicates that Shaikh Al-Jamri suffers from severe illness which requires urgent medical attention. ARTICLE 19 believes that Shaikh Al-Jamri is a prisoner of conscience and his continued imprisonment is a grave violation of his fundamental right to freedom of expression as guaranteed by international human rights law. We, therefore, demand that Shaikh Al-Jamri be immediately and unconditionally released and that his rights to freedom of political expression and peaceful assembly are guaranteed and respected.

Yours sincerely, Frances D'Souza