

# BAHRAIN

*Issued by the "Bahrain Freedom Movement" to promote human and constitutional rights*

## People's power will ensure defeat of the Al Khalifa despotism

The continuing political strife in Bahrain is yet another indication that the half-hearted measures adopted by both the Al Khalifa ruling family and their backers in Washington and London are simply faltering. The national reconciliation has not materialised and the political experiment has produced no results. Human rights abuses by the regime are on the increase and political activists are being targeted and punished for standing up against oppression and political injustice. Two significant factors are keeping this dictatorial regime in place: the unwavering support by the American and British government to this hereditary dictatorship, and the large amounts of petrodollars available in the hands of Sheikh Hamad and his clique as a result of the record-high oil prices. While the political and security support from Washington and London is cushioning the impact of the popular unrest, the enormous cash flow has enabled these dictators to vent off the anger of certain elements in the society and maintain a tight grip on the situation. Both governments are, once again, reminded of the dangerous mentality of the Al Khalifa family and their tactics not only on the well-being and political and economic rights of the people of Bahrain but also on the national security of USA and UK. Over the past ten years, they have allied themselves with extremist tendencies, offered them Bahraini nationality and money and, in certain cases, media tools. Their aim is to use them against the majority Shia population of Bahrain whose rejection of their dictatorship has threatened their political domination.

The appearance of the ruler of Bahrain in a photo session with Michael Jackson was not a coincidence. It was a calculated and cunning move intended to re-assure western audience of the liberalism of the Al Khalifa regime at a time when their relations with extremist tendencies that threaten regional and world peace were causing alarm among their allies especially it became clear that Bahraini nationality was granted to individuals who were subsequently became detainees at Guantanamo. The policy of deception adopted by Sheikh Hamad and his clique is thus

not confined to internal audience but foreign powers are also targeted. To many, the example of Saddam Hussain is being replicated in the case of Bahrain, though at a smaller scale, but the complexity of the regional and international relations, and the US debacle in Iraq are making the major players reluctant to take firm stands against regimes such as that of the Al Khalifa. Last month, for example, a US official reiterated his government's commitment to support the Gulf monarchies. The words of David Welsh, Assistant Undersecretary for Near East Affairs at the State Department, came at a time when the world was hoping for a serious political change that would ensure a democratic transformation in the Middle East. The U-turn policy of the Washington on democratisation is likely to lead to more political stagnation and tension in a region renowned for its lack of democracy, transparency and respect for human rights.

The almost daily protests, demonstrations and other opposition activities is a reminder that the situation may be spiralling towards a level of instability with unpredictable consequences. The inability of the ruling family to adapt to modern values has become endemic in almost all walks of life. The frustration of the people due to the lack of tangible reforms has reflected itself in increasing level of opposition that has now opted to operate outside the laws and rules of the ruling family. Noisy explosions of large gas cylinders are causing enormous damage to the reputation of the ruling family which is struggling to shrug off accusations of incompetence, backwardness and despotism. The world is now beginning to realise the futility of the Al Khalifa attempts to maintain a lid on the people's frustration. For the past fifteen months, several international bodies have expressed doubts about the effectiveness of their political programme, and issued damning reports about the situation. Few weeks ago, the international watchdog responsible for classification of world countries with regards to their human rights record has placed

Bahrain at near the bottom of the scale, and as such, the Al Khalifa are struggling to get a place at the newly-formed UN Human Rights Council. This body has now replaced the UN Human Rights Commission and is expected to be more effective in countering human rights abuses by abusive regimes such as that of Bahrain. This is a big blow to Sheikh Hamad who had relied on Washington's support to salvage him from the wrath of the Bahraini people and others.

The next few months are crucial for the Al Khalifa as they prepare for elections to their tailor-made Shura (Consultative) Council, which is stripped of legislative or executive powers. The past four years have proved this body as ineffective, powerless and conformist, and is viewed by the people as a body of stooges and obedient poodles. Despite their elaborate programme of deception and containment, the Al Khalifa have failed to win the hearts and minds of the people and the opposition is now gaining stronger grounds for boycotting the hereditary rule, not only on matters of principle, but also on the results of a negative balance sheet. The opposition has vowed to internationalise the cause of the people of Bahrain and called on the UN to intervene and attempt to salvage the situation before it gets out of control. Sheikh Hamad and his clique are furious at the turn of events while the opposition is heading forward in its campaign of civil resistance against the dictatorial rule of the Al Khalifa. Recent attempts to sow the seeds of discord among the people, tarnish the reputation of activists and inflict collective punishment on the people are likely to cause more blows to the regime than to the intended targets. It can confidently be claimed that the Bahraini opposition has been reborn and will succeed in dealing the hereditary dictatorship serious blows in the coming months. The hope is that both Washington and London would not repeat their previous mistakes, and would, this time at least, side with the people of Bahrain in their struggle to achieve self-determination that would lead to modern democratic experience and rid the country of this ancient and despotic regime. The Nepalese experience is vivid in our minds.

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## Call for the arrest of one of the oldest dictators in the Gulf

Curses by the torture victims preceded the visit Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa to the United Kingdom this week. He is here for the graduation of one of his sons at Sandhurst. It is the first by Bahrain's prime minister for more than a decade, and is seen as an attempt to bolster his international image following years of negative imaging. For quarter of a century, he had been implicated in crimes against humanity for his role in extensive use of torture against political detainees. Scores had died in the torture chambers which were run by the Sheikh Khalifa and his chief torture lieutenant, Ian Henderson. The BBC and Channel 4 had broadcast programmes documenting the evidence against the two men. The British Police is in possession of a large dossier on the torture of Bahrainis, including testimonies of victims.

The Bahraini prime minister rose to notoriety in August 1975 when he took the disastrous decision to abandon the brief democratic experiment that had been started in 1972 following the British withdrawal from Bahrain and the rest of the Gulf after 150 years of protection. He ordered the suspension of all the articles of the 1973 contractual constitution relating freedoms and democratic practice, and the dissolution of the first National Assembly in the history of the country that had been occupied by the Al Khalifa dynasty two centuries earlier. For the following 25 years a reign of terror ensued under the notorious State Security Law and the State Security Court. Sheikh Khalifa continued his ruthless campaign against opponents, aided by Ian Henderson. Corruption became the order of the day in that period during which the Al Khalifa plundered the wealth of the country. Today, only three percent of the land is allocated to the people; the rest is in the hands of this corrupt regime. The oil revenue goes to the ruling family and only a fraction of the real income goes to the budget.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa has remained in his post as prime minister since 1971, the longest serving prime minister in the world. The Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship is supported by both the American and British governments on political, military and security levels. British and American "advisors" are running the show behind the scene and are doing everything to shelter the torturers, thieves and despots. In the past five years, these "advisors" have managed to change the image of this dictatorship without implementing real changes that could lead to democracy. The government of Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa consists of 22 ministers, half of whom are from the ruling family. The Shura Council with half of its members are elected in fraudulent ways, is a symbolic body that has no legislative powers.

The people of Bahrain are angry that this notorious life-long dictator and torturer be allowed into the UK while political prisoners languish in his torture chambers merely for their peaceful expression of opinion. We urge you to do whatever you can to:

Demand the arrest of Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and try him for his role in the torture to death of Bahraini citizens.

Call on the British Government to withdraw her support to the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship in political, military and security matters.

Urge the British Government to demand that the Al Khalifa constitution of 2002 be repealed, and a new one, based on popular consensus be formulated.

Call for the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners, investigate their torture claims and bring those responsible to justice.

Offer moral and political support to the

people of Bahrain in their peaceful struggle to determine their destiny in line with UN conventions.

Support the people's petition which has been signed by tens of thousands of Bahraini citizens, calling on the UN to facilitate the writing of a new constitution by the people.

Call for the implementation of the 2005 recommendations by the UN Commission in charge of the Convention Against Torture (CAT) to re-write Royal Decree No 56 in a way that does not give impunity to torturers.

Your support to the troubled people of Bahrain under the dictatorship of Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa will be a positive step in countering dictatorship, terrorism and extremism which thrive under dictatorial regimes such as that of the Al Khalifa

*Bahrain Freedom Movement  
9 April 2006*

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## More repression by Al Khalifa

As the political crisis deepens in Bahrain, the Al Khalifa ruling family has resorted to threats and intimidation at a level unheard of before. Abusive text messages, emails and verbal attacks have become common practice by their secret service agents have been sent to thousands of mobile phones. Prominent figures in the opposition have been targeted by this dirty war being waged by the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship. The senior figures of the newly-formed popular movement, Haq, have been specifically targeted including Hassan Mushaima and Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace. The movement is perhaps the bravest step taken by the people of Bahrain as the struggle against the dictatorial regime escalates. It reflects the diversity of the society, and comprises of Islamists and liberals from both the Shia and Sunni communities. It is gradually taking the shape of the High Executive Committee of the fifties which almost unseated the Al Khalifa tribal rule, if it was not for the British protection of this dictatorship. However, there are worrying signs that the ruling family, with the tacit support of two foreign powers, may start a campaign of repression that could lead to the arrest of senior opposition figures. The people of Bahrain appeal to the international community to take immediate steps to stop the state terrorism against them. The opposition has been both civilised and peaceful while the ruling family is the main cause of instability and dictatorship.

The nationalised media has also been mobilised in the psychological war be-

ing waged against the solid opposition to the Al Khalifa despotism. Over the past few weeks, articles and news items were fabricated to project a negative image of the opposition, and to undermine the morale of the rising opposition to the dictatorship. Among the tricks being employed is the portrayal of opposition figures contemplating the participation in Al Khalifa's dormant bodies whose main aim is to deceive the outside world of the existence of democratic practices. The local media, which is directed and controlled by the ruling family has become a tool of deception and incitation against active opposition elements.

In a recent statement, the Arab Network to Defence Human Rights has condemned the attacks on human rights activists and opposition figures and noted the increasingly abusive and threatening attacks against people like Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja and Nabil Rajab of the Bahrain Centre of Human Rights which was banned by the ruling family. Furthermore, the ruling family has adopted the policy of mass retaliation against young activists who continue to reject their destructive political programmes. Yesterday, the Al Khalifa court sentenced seven young men to one year imprisonment for taking part in a peaceful demonstration calling for democratic reforms.

The situation in the country is becoming more polarised as tens of thousands of citizens vowed to boycott the ruling family because of its countless crimes against the people of Bahrain.

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## Two international petitions on Bahrain

**First, a petition demanding the release of political prisoners and ending their abusive treatment. It was signed by twenty organisations: March 29, 2006**

The undersigned express their concerns and condemnation for detention of group of citizens who were accused of unauthorized gathering in Bahrain airport and then prosecuted for a period of one-to-two years. They are enduring hard circumstances and maltreatment in the jail. It is to be mentioned that this is not the first detention of its kind, but a series of abusive and continuous detentions against those participants associated with recent peaceful gatherings. Thus, an immediate and swift intervention by civic societies and international organizations is necessary to secure protection of those citizens.

That State Security authorities in the Kingdom of Bahrain deploy violence and abusive detention as a mean for stopping the demands for social justice and maintenance of human rights values. These measures are in full breach of all the agreements and the international treaties which mandate respect of human rights.

In this context, we, the undersigned, demand that the Bahraini authorities to put an end to such detentions and set out an independent and transpar-

ent investigation in those incidents, and immediately release all the prisoners who were judged by a lacking impartiality judgement.

### **The signatories:**

Bahrain Youths for Human Rights - Bahrain, Bahrain Center Human Rights - Bahrain, The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information- Egypt, Associations Lebanese Civic Societies- Lebanon, Cairo Center for Human Rights Studies - Egypt, The Democratic Social Forum - Yemen, Arabic Sisters Forum for Human Rights - Yemen, Forum of Political Development - Yemen, The Yemeni observatory for Human Rights - Yemen, The Democratic School - Yemen, Yemeni Organization for Defending Rights and Liberties - Yemen, Organization of Development of Young Leaderships - Yemen, Organization of Socialist Youths - Yemen, Yemeni Center For Youths Development - Yemen, Hisham Mubarak Law Center - Egypt, Nadeem Center for treatment & Physiological Rehabilitation - Egypt, Egyptian Association for Combat of Torture - Egypt, South Youths Organization - Iraq, Organization of Peace and Freedom Coalition - German, The Environmental & Social Development Center - Syrian, Habi Rights Center

**Second: International Petition calling for democratic reforms in Bahrain, signed by more than 60 prominent international persons:**

Following hereunder: the original petition (in English) from participants at the "Fourth Assembly" Advancing Democracy: Justice, Pluralism, and Participation - Istanbul, Turkey, April 2-5, 2006, to the king of Bahrain.

His Majesty Hamad Bin Issa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain,

We the undersigned, participants at the "Fourth Assembly" Advancing Democracy: Justice, Pluralism, and Participation - Istanbul, Turkey, April 2-5, 2006, Applauding all recent positive developments in the Kingdom of Bahrain, we call upon your Majesty and the Bahrain authorities:

To implement further democratic reformers securing separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, the right of citizens to change their government, reforming the electoral system in order to secure fair representation, and empowering elected representatives to have full powers as in any democratic parliament,

To re-open the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, secure the safety of human rights and democracy defenders and their rights to operate freely and amend the laws restricting freedoms of opinion, the press, and peaceful assembly, and

To release human rights defenders and others who were arrested since December 2005, in connection with cases related to freedom of expression and peaceful gatherings.

We wish your Majesty all the best in your efforts in turning Bahrain into a model in the region of democracy and prosperity.

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## Unfair trials lead to arbitrary detention of activists

7 Bahraini's Sentenced to 1 Year in Jail  
Continuation of Speedy, Unfair Trials and Sentences Following "Airport Case"  
Bahrain Centre for Human Rights  
Ref: 19040609

The Lower Bahraini Criminal Court sentenced seven defendants yesterday to a period of one year in jail. The defendants, Jaffar Abduljabbar Jaffar, Ahmed Yousuf Ahmed Nasser, Mohammed Abdulrasool Ahmed Ahmed, Abdulla Madan Ahmed, Mohammed Hassan Yousuf Saif, Ali Jaffar Jassim and Jaffar Hussain Mahmood Yousuf were arrested in connection with an "Unauthorized" demonstration which was dispersed by force by the special-police- force in the Sanabis-Daih area on the Western skirts of Manama (BCHR Ref: 02010606 for details of arrest).

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights had previously published a report in relations to this case, calling for an intervention and an end to the Bahraini Authorities continuous violations of the rights of the detainees. The Centre had received information that the detainees were held

incommunicado for at least three days after their arrest, during which they were reportedly subjected to mistreatment and torture to give information on others and sign confessions. For two days, the relatives of most of the detainees remained uninformed of the arrest and the where about of their children.

Another issue which calls for worry, is the fact the more than one of the detainees was, and still is in need of medical treatment. Ali Jaffar Jassim suffers, according to members of his family, of psychological problems, and is in need of medical attention. His lawyer had previously submitted medical papers to the Court Judge, and requested Ali's release accordingly. This however did not influence the judges decision and Ali received a one year sentence.

The Centre calls for the immediate release of the detainees, and the annulment of the Courts verdict based on the ground that the arrests of the detainees was done randomly, and the Public Prosecutor used highly questionable means to obtain confessions from the detainees, in addition to

the fact that the Prosecution did not comply to the most basic International standards of Human and Prisoners right. The Centre also calls for an immediate review of the judicial system which has continuously proved to be far from an independent entity. The Bahraini Riot Police, the Public Prosecutor and the Judge seem to be interlinked in a very questionable and unbalanced manner, which results in speedy unfair trials delivering sentences based on laws which violate International Standards and Human Rights Treaties which Bahrain has signed.

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## More repression, Cont from P 2

The confiscation of vast areas of land and sea by the Al Khalifa at a time of severe housing crisis, the plundering of the oil revenues by them, the nationalisation of almost every aspect of public life and the crime of demographic change have now convinced the people of the need to counter these crimes with every possible peaceful means at their disposal.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
20<sup>th</sup> April 2006

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## UN rights council blow for Bahrain

By KANWAL TARIQ HAMEED

BAHRAIN has been dealt a blow in its campaign for election to the new United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). Its own record in supporting international human rights causes has been ranked well down the scale by a global watchdog.

Countries with poor records should not be voted on to the council by the United Nations General Assembly, says Human Rights Watch (HRW).

It has produced a scale ranking Bahrain 11th out of 18 Asian countries in terms of their record in backing human rights issues in conventions, treaties, protocols and resolutions at the UN General Assembly.

Bahrain is ranked 7th out of 10 Asian countries in a table listing their "pro-human" rights voting record on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) from 2003 to 2005.

The organisation has just launched a website detailing the voting record of each HRC candidate at the UN General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, gauging what percentage of its votes were "pro-human rights".

The council is being formed to replace the Commission for Human Rights, which was scrapped last year after it became widely discredited for allegedly being a body of dishonest diplomatic dealings and dual standards.

With UN General Assembly scheduled to elect 47 initial members to the new council on May 9, candidates with the lowest human rights record must not be backed, says HRW.

It says Bahrain scores 20 per cent in the UN General Assembly voting record and 11pc in the Commission of Human Rights record, for voting "pro-human rights".

Bahrain's vote in favour of a "No Action Motion" blocking debate on Sudan's human rights record in the 60th session of the General Assembly last year and its vote against a resolution calling for the abolition of the death penalty in the 60th session of the Commission for Human Rights in 2004, are cited by HRW as an example of votes "against human rights". The table also shows that Bahrain is signatory to six out of 14 "core human rights treaties and protocols" and has ratified both protocols to the Geneva Conventions.

Scores for the Asian candidates for the voting record at the UN General Assembly ranged from 10pc in the cases of Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia to 95pc for Japan. Saudi Arabia scored 25pc and China and Pakistan both 15pc.

Of the Latin American candidates, Cuba and Venezuela voted in favour of human

rights positions only 20pc of the time, while Nicaragua and Peru scored 100pc. Among the African contenders, the vote percentages ranged from 35pc to 55pc, while all nine candidates from the Western European and others group scored 100pc. Once all candidates for the HRC have been announced next month, HRW says it will recommend that certain countries not be elected.

Bahrain is committed to supporting the UN human rights machinery, the Foreign Affairs Ministry said yesterday.

The promotion and protection of human rights is "one of the main priorities of Bahrain's domestic and foreign policy agenda", it said.

"The Government believes that human rights are key pillars for national development," according to a statement released by ministry representative and former ambassador and permanent representative to the UN Office at Geneva, Saeed Mohammed Al Faihani.

He is currently managing Bahrain's cam-

paign for election to the rights council. Bahrain will commit itself to the principles of consultation, dialogue and cooperation with all UN members, particularly those on the Human Rights Council, "in a spirit of transparency and openness, in order to strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide", said the statement.

It said Bahrain was party to the following major human rights conventions: Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, 1926 Slavery Convention, 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime.

The HRC is expected convene in June.

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### Bahrain's candidacy for the UN Human Rights Council must mean better protection for human rights defenders

During a recent visit to meet with human rights defenders in Bahrain, the Deputy Director of Front Line welcomed the candidacy of Bahrain for election to the new UN Human Rights Council.

Bahrain is a candidate for one of the 13 seats allocated to the region of Asia on the UN Human Rights Council. The council, which meets for the first time in June, replaces the discredited UN Human Rights Commission.

Speaking from Manama, Andrew Anderson said that Bahrain's candidacy "demonstrates a commitment to international human rights mechanisms and openness to scrutiny of Bahrain's human rights record, which must now also be reflected in measures to ensure the protection of human rights defenders in Bahrain."

Front Line has been concerned by a pattern of attacks against human rights defenders in Bahrain, including the attempted Government closure of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, ill-treatment and torture of human rights defenders and the detention and prosecution of human rights defenders for exercising their legitimate rights. In the 5 April letter submitting its candidacy for election to the UN Human Rights Council the Government proclaims: "Bahrain also has a large and vibrant community of non-governmental organizations, a number of which are concerned with human rights issues." Ensuring that

human rights defenders can operate freely in conformity with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders should indeed be part of the criteria to be evaluated during the election of the Council.

Front Line has called on the Bahraini authorities to:

- 1) End efforts to close down the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and provide a proper legal framework for independent human rights organizations to operate freely in conformity with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders
- 2) Release all those human rights defenders who are detained for their non-violent and legitimate activities in defence of human rights including Mosa Abdali, Mohsen Alsalman, Hasan Abdelnabi all from the Unemployed Committee, Gane Ahmed from the Committee of Hereditary Blood Diseases, and Hasan Alhadad an independent activist
- 3) Initiate independent investigations into the assault and torture of human rights activists including Mosa Abdali, Nabeel Rajab, Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja and Abdul-Raof Abdullah Al Shaeab and into the judicial harassment against the women human rights defender Ghada Yusuf Jamsheer, who has had 17 judicial cases against her over the 17 years and bring those responsible to justice.

24 April 2006

Front Line Press Release