

BAHRAIN

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

Murder, torture and arbitrary detentions cannot break the people's will

The past few weeks have witnessed an upsurge in political activism by the Bahraini opposition, as well as a dramatic increase in the level of revenge actions by the Al Khalifa ruling family. Summer has usually been a relatively quiet period in terms of political dynamism, but this year the situation has changed. First came the imposition by the ruler of the Law of Terror which stipulates death penalty not only for those who may plan terrorist activity, but also anyone attempting to challenge the Al Khalifa illegitimate constitution of 2002. It is a draconian law opposed not only by Bahrainis but also the international human rights organisations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The position of Bahrain as a member of the UN Human Rights Council has thus been greatly compromised. To make the situation worse, Death Squads, formed by Sheikh Hamad to deal with his opponents, have carried their first extra-judicial killing on 20th August when they stopped a young opposition activist, Mahdi Abdul Rahman, and shot him in broad daylight. The Al Khalifa has adamantly refused to investigate the murder, leading to serious security concerns among the citizens. To make his point, Sheikh Hamad ordered a bloody attack on political prisoners when they protested in their torture chambers against their continued illegal detention by the Al Khalifa security forces. Families have described the extent of injury and anguish among the prisoners, reporting that many of the 19 prisoners of conscience who had appeared at a trial session on 16th August were subsequently attacked in their cells, and left with serious injuries.

The opposition, which is escalating its peaceful activities against the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship, has taken one of its most daring initiatives when they went to New York to submit the largest-ever petition to the United Nations Secretary General's office. Their aim of internationalising the political crisis has thus taken new dimensions that the Al Khalifa could not tolerate. The petition had been signed by more than 82,000 Bahraini citizens,

calling for a UN role in helping the people of Bahrain to be given the right to self-determination. The submission of the petition was a painstaking exercise as the ruling family made every effort to sabotage it and prevent the crisis getting to the corridors of the UN. To make the matter worse for the Al Khalifa, the opposition has managed to stage a programme of activities outside Bahrain, starting in mid-August in New York and Washington, and culminating in seminars, press conferences and TV interviews in London. The Al Khalifa were so traumatised that the ruler, himself, contacted other Arab heads of state pleading with them to prevent any reporting on the activities of the Bahraini opposition. His efforts have yielded little results. The opposition has thus been emboldened to take their activities steps further as what they call "the Autumn of Fury" approaches.

The frustration of the dictatorial regime has been exacerbated by the granting by the UK authorities of political asylum to a political activist who has been repeatedly imprisoned since 1979. Abdul Rauf Al Shayeb's application for asylum was approved in a record time, leading to a negative reaction by the Al Khalifa against the UK authorities. The ruler, himself, asked for a meeting with the UK Ambassador in Bahrain, protesting in the strongest terms against the decision, but to no avail. The Al Khalifa press reacted in anger and launched a barrage of low-level scorns against supporters of the Bahraini cause, especially Lord Avebury. It looked for a while, as if the ruling family has no one amongst its members with a brain, diplomatic taste or political sound judgement to stop this farce. The spate of reactions by their officials has served the cause of the Bahraini opposition well. It is a demonstration of the emptiness of what the political programme that Sheikh Hamad had undertaken in the past few years. It is now clear to spectators, politicians and journalists that the Al Khalifa "democracy" is a farce and that despotism and dictatorship remain the

order of the day in this troubled Gulf state. The whole saga is also a test of the western powers supporting the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship and the wisdom behind the support of an antiquated regime that has refused to adapt to modern standards of democratic practices or human rights standards.

The next few months will be crucial in this test. Both the US and UK are engaged in what they termed "war on terror" and have repeatedly spoken of the need for serious political reforms in the region in addition to the military campaign to combat terrorism and stamp out the conditions under which it flourishes. The case of Bahrain has been a total failure of that policy. The Al Khalifa have adopted policies that benefited terrorists. Several terrorist-suspects held by the US have Bahraini passports, and it is expected that the process of political naturalisation adopted by the Al Khalifa in recent years has proliferated Bahraini nationality to members of foreign terrorist groups. Internally, Bahrain has become, more than ever, hostage to the evil designs of the Al Khalifa who have blundered its wealth and land, with policies aiming at forcing its native population to seek refuge in other countries. Their economic and security policies have been directed in such a way to ensure a dramatic change in the population composition so that the Al Khalifa are absolved of the charge that their regime represents a minority rule. The opposition has adopted a programme of civil resistance and rallied under a banner of national reconciliation and unity against the Al Khalifa dictatorship. While the regime may succeed in buying off some individuals and groups the majority of the dispossessed people have vowed to support the opposition and challenge the Al Khalifa despotism and their political, cultural and economic domination. It is a struggle that will continue unabated despite the cruelty of the ruling family, its greed and evil-designs. It has resorted to murder, arbitrary arrests and torture as a last attempt to silence opposition. The events of the past few weeks proved that they had failed. It is time for a real change.

Call to the ICRC to visit the Bahraini prisoners

The Bahraini opposition and human rights bodies have called on the International Committee of the Red Cross to make urgent visit to Bahrain's prisons after the political prisoners were viciously attacked and tortured. It is expected that the orders for the merciless attack came directly from the royal court, where a mentality of revenge has been rampant.

The attack came over the weekend in response to a hunger strike by the prisoners who have languished in Al Khalifa jails for more than six months without trial. When they were taken last week to an Al-Khalifa controlled court, the judge received orders to postpone the trial for another month. This procedure has continued since the young Bahrainis were snatched by the Al Khalifa death squads following a peaceful demonstration against the hereditary dictatorship earlier in the year. After the prisoners were returned to the torture chambers from the court, they started a hunger strike, hoping that their trial would be brought forward. They are confident of acquittal in a normal court of law because they had committed not crime, and the Al Khalifa have failed, in earlier court appearances, to produce any evidence of wrongdoing by the political detainees.

When the news of their hunger strike to the outside world, Sheikh Hamad took

revenge by ordering that they be paraded in the heat of the summer sun where temperatures exceed 50 degrees, barefooted and without proper clothing. A young teenaged prisoner was threatened with sexual assault by one of the torturers and threatened with severe retributions if he leaked the news to his family. Some families have been holding protests at the roundabout of Rifaa, near the royal palace. The families have also been threatened with immoral acts if they continued their protests. They have described horrific scenes when they visited their beloved sons, saying that some of them were limping and in bad physical shapes as a result of torture and repeated attacks. We repeat our call to the ICRC to make an immediate visit to the torture chambers an investigate the extent of human rights abuses that are taking place on a regular basis behind bars. We also urge human rights organisations to issue condemnation of the Al Khalifa barbarism, call for the immediate release of the political detainees and submit reports to the UN Human Rights Council to condemn these barbaric acts.

On 16th August nineteen political prisoners, detained by the Al Khalifa as hostages earlier in the year, were today brought to a kangaroo court, but the Al Khalifa-appointed judge postponed the trial for one month, for no logical reasons.

Earlier, the judge, who acts on orders from the ruling family, had given the impression that he would release the hostages. But orders from the Palace prevented him from taking this decision. The prisoners reacted angrily to this decision, and started defiant slogans. The Al Khalifa ordered their mercenaries, armed with batons and possibly weapons to surround the court compound. They were rushed back to the torture chambers at the Dry Dock, Al Hura and Umm Al Hasam prisons. The feelings among the people are becoming tense as the Al Khalifa resort to old-style methods of collective punishment for peaceful expression of opinion and protests. The nineteen are: Sayyed Mustafa, from Jidhafs, Musa Abd Ali, from Al Ikr village, Majeed Ali Al Tashani, from Bilad Al Qadeem, Naji Slman from Al Hamala, Hussain Mohammad Slmand, from Al Hamala, Ahmad Abdulla Ahmad from Hamad town, Hussain Hassan Ali from Nuwaidrat, Qane' Saleh from Sitra, Mohammad Jassim Khalifa from Iskan Al Sanabis, Ahmad Jaffar Al Mutaqhawwi from Duraz, Jaffar Shamakhar from Al Malikiya, Ahmad Jaffar Al Qassab from Al Nu'aim, Hassan Al Afoo, from Al Nu'aim, Hassan Hamada, from Al Nu'aim, Faish Abdulla from Nuwaidrat, Hilal Ali Mohammad, from Nuwaidrat, Sadeq Hussain Jaffar, from Sar and Sayyed Ali from Sanad.

Bahrain: Largest Petition handed to UN

In a historic step, the largest-ever petition signed by Bahrainis, has been officially handed to the United Nations in New York. At 3.00 pm local time, 14th August the Bahraini delegation consisted of Mr Hassan Mushaime', the Chairman of the Haq Movement, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, Director of the Office of Media and International Relations, Maryam Al Khawaja, a young woman activist and Hussain Abdulla, a US-based activist. A representative of the UN Secretary General met the delegation who delivered the petition to him.

The petition calls on the UN to take steps to allow the people of Bahrain to determine their destiny, starting with new constitution. It has been signed by more than 82,000 Bahrainis, men and women and is considered the largest in the history of the country. The delegation received a warm reception by the staff of the Secretary General's Office, and spent a good time presenting the case to the officials who took a keen interest in the issue. This is the first time the people's case has taken an international dimension and could have lead to fundamental changes in the status quo in

this troubled island that had been ruled by the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship for the past 200 years.

Earlier in the day, a press conference was held at the Carnegie Institute for Peace in which Mr Hassan Mushaime', Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace and Mr Hussain Abdulla took part. It was attended by members of the press, academia and Middle East specialists. The delegation presented the case of Bahrain and a good discussion ensued. Several other meetings with political and human rights institutions were also held.

The regime has become more blatant in its methods of repression after the imposition of several draconian laws by virtual royal decrees. The most outrageous of these is the law of terrorism that has just been ratified and will soon be implemented. One of the clauses stipulates death penalty to anyone who challenges the Al Khalifa rule or their constitution. In the past five years the country has taken big steps backward as Sheikh Hamad continued his drive to fundamentally alter the character of the country and turn it into an Al Khalifa fiefdom.

Front line concerned over Bahrain's new anti terror bill

2 August 2006

A new anti terror law that is awaiting final ratification by the king of Bahrain, King Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifah, could place restrictions on the activities of human rights defenders in Bahrain, specifically their defense of the rights of freedom of expression and association.

The parliament of Bahrain has already approved the "protecting society from terrorists acts" bill and has so far ignored calls to review the law by Martin Scheinin, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism.

Director of Front Line, Mary Lawlor said: "it is worrying that Bahrain is disregarding international concerns about this proposed law especially since Bahrain is a member of the new UN Human Rights Council."

Front Line is concerned that the broad and vague definitions of terrorist acts contained within the bill may be used to restrict the activities of human rights defenders, in relation to the rights of freedom of association, expression and assembly.

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The anatomy of occupation and hostage taking by Israel and Al

The people of Bahrain have solidly supported the right of the Lebanese and Palestinians to fight occupation and demand the release of their prisoners. These people understand the significance of both: the occupation and the prisoners, or more realistically, hostages. Over the past four weeks the people of Bahrain have taken to the streets in support of the Islamic and National Resistance in Lebanon and Palestine, calling for an immediate ceasefire and lambasting the United States as the main defender (and possibly instigator) of the Zionist aggression. The images of mutilated bodies of Lebanese civilians, the destruction of villages and towns and the ongoing aggression to annihilate the country have broken the hearts of the people and forced them to continue their protests. A recent survey has shown that Bahrain has seen the most demonstrations per capita in the Arab and Muslim world.

Now to the main issues of occupation and prisoners. Bahrain is the only Arab country that is ruled by occupation. The islands were occupied by the Al Khalifa family in 1783 and have never become part of the social or cultural fabric of these troubled islands. Their failure to integrate with the society meant that they have constantly felt both isolated and threatened. They have chosen their own ghettos and, in recent years, misappropriated most land and coastlines. The whole population live in less than 10 percent of the land, while the rest is under the control of the Al Khalifa. A recent inspection of the islands through Google Earth system has revealed that the coastlines have been transformed into private harbours with tens of jetties for the anchoring of the super-luxurious yachts owned by the Al Khalifa and their cronies. Within the land, Google Earth reveals disturbing images of massive lands and palaces of the self-styled "sheikhs" while the natives are squeezed into small townships that lack basic amenities of sanitation, greenery, leisure places or suitable accommodation.

In a dramatic move in recent days, the Al Khalifa-controlled Bahrain Telecom has banned Google Earth through its network, thus making it impossible to see the crimes of the ruling family against the people and the environment. Small jetties have been dug in the sea, destroying the coral reef and with it a whole sea environment. The Al Khalifa are above the law and order and are behaving as absolute dictatorship. People have protested against this infringement of one of the basic human rights, ie, the freedom of information. This step was taken in line with similar steps banning electronic sites that are not favourable with the policies of the Al Khalifa. Bahrain is

thus a land under occupation, where occupiers dictate the rules and laws that are applicable only to the indigenous people, while they are not bound by them.

As with prisoners, the people are increasingly making the analogy with the occupied territories and Lebanon. After a lull in the human rights abuses, the Al Khalifa have now resorted to their old-style policies, exploiting any opportunity to arrest and torture opponents. There are now more than sixty political prisoners who are languishing in torture chambers with no fair trials or proper representations. The only crime they committed is their refusal to accept the legitimacy of the Al

Khalifa occupation and their insistence on being ruled by a constitution to be written under the United Nations auspices. Plans are now underway to submit a popular petition to the UN calling for its intervention to assist the people of Bahrain to determine their own destiny. It is the largest ever popular petition, signed by tens of thousands of citizens. It is reported that the Al Khalifa are greatly disturbed by the submission of the petition, and had attempted to confiscate it before it left the country. Sadly to them, the petition is now in a safe place and plans are underway to hand it to the appropriate UN bodies.

Political Naturalization Continues

Since the death of the late Amir of Bahrain and the rise of his Son and Self-proclaimed King, Shaikh Hamad, the political naturalization continued unabated. Four years of undisclosed granting of citizenship to thousands of foreigners has reached epidemic proportion. Political Societies expressed their concerns that these practices are continuing in the absence of transparency. Further, political naturalization has increased in recent months since a number of opposition groups expressed their intent to enter the elections at the end of this year.

The granting of citizenships to the many thousands is against the current laws of the country. The action is also irresponsible as it brings uneducated and unskilled people to an already exhausted economy as a result of the deep rooted corruption in the government, especially members of the ruling family.

This kind of political naturalization generates unprecedented pressure on health, housing and other services, as these sectors have been suffering from being poorly targeted by the government expenditure for decades. This also forms a great injustice to the indigenous people of the country who have been deprived of their basic economic and social rights. Bahrain has witnessed serious problems with the ever increasing unemployment. These practices will further exacerbate this issue to proportions beyond the control of anybody.

From a security perspective, the ruling family is employing these foreigners in the Interior and Defense Ministries while it deprives other citizens from jobs in the same Ministries. These foreign people cannot demonstrate loyalty to Bahrain, and therefore their presence in these two Ministries poses a great danger for the security of the country.

Just like the 2002 elections, the ruling family will use this political naturalization, coupled with the proposed Government controlled electronic voting, to

influence the results of the pseudo-elections and marginalize the less obedient groups in an already institutionally weakened parliament.

It is obvious that the ruling family has two objectives behind this move. On one hand it intends to change social structure of the Bahrain society, and on the other it wants to further marginalize the indigenous population, even when some groups decided to join its hopeless political programme.

Frontline concerned

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Article 1 of the bill defines a prohibited terrorist act as including any act that threatens "national unity". Front Line believes that such a broad definition of what constitutes a terrorist act may result in the restriction of the legitimate peaceful activities of human rights defenders in Bahrain.

In particular, Article 6 of the Bill defines a terrorist association or organization as being one, which aims to "prevent any of the State enterprises or public authorities from exercising their duty" and to harm "the national unity". This definition may be used to restrict the activities of human rights defenders who criticize the Bahraini authorities in relation to human rights issues.

Front Line is also concerned about Article 11 of the Bill, which makes it a criminal offence to promote terrorist acts and to possess documents containing such promotional material. As the definition of terrorism in the Bill is so vague, Front Line believes that this Article may prevent human rights defenders from defending the right to freedom of expression and opinion and that this would be contrary to Article 6 of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

bill<http://www.frontlinedefenders.org/news/3258>

Bahrain ratifies 'counter-terrorism bill' despite pleas by UN, AI and ICJ

Concerns of possibility of torture and threats to freedom of speech and association

Bahrain Center for Human Rights
14 August 2006

Ref: 14080601 <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/272>

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) welcomes the recent decision by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to approve ratifying Bahrain's accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The BCHR hopes that the government will now take the necessary action to guarantee the civil and political rights for the Bahraini people, in both law and practice, as laid out in the Covenant.

However, the BCHR is disappointed and distressed by HM King Hamad's simultaneous decision to ratify the 'Protecting Society from Terrorist Acts' bill, against the advice of several international legal and human rights bodies, concerned that it is prone to abuse.

The United Nations "Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism", Martin Scheinin, wrote in a press statement on July 25, urging HM the King NOT to ratify the law:

One of the main concerns is the overly broad definition of terrorism which is seen to be at variance with the principle of legality enshrined in several human rights

instruments, including Article 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which represents a universal standard also in respect of countries that have not yet ratified the Covenant.

Among the many concerns of Amnesty International was that the law would transfer authority normally vested in the judiciary to the public prosecutor:

The Bill grants the Public Prosecutor excessive discretion and heightens the risk of torture or ill-treatment, and arbitrary detention.

Article 27 allows for extensive detention before charge without judicial review. It only demands that the public prosecutor reviews the detention of any individual held for more than five days if the arresting authorities seek to extend the detention period. This can be for another 10 days. The public prosecutor is not a judicial authority and lacks the requisite independence to be a check against arbitrary detention. Furthermore, Article 28 of the Bill allows the security services to ask for extension of pre-charge detention (as specified in Article 27) on the basis of secret evidence which the detainee has no access to and cannot challenge.

A press release from the **International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)** stated:

"The exclusion of judicial safeguards in the Bahraini law carries a serious and foreseeable risk of torture and other

forms of ill-treatment", said Mr Staberock [Director of ICJ's Global Security and Rule of Law Programme]. "It will reverse some of the recent reforms undertaken by Bahrain and runs counter the conclusions of the UN Committee Against Torture, which had urged Bahrain to bring its counter-terrorism law into compliance with the Convention Against Torture", he continued. The ICJ therefore strongly urges the authorities to reconsider the adoption of the law and to ensure that it fully complies with Bahrain's international obligations, and in particular the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

The BCHR concurs with the opinion of the aforementioned bodies that the new law allows for the possibility of torture, and threatens freedom of association and expression for legitimate citizens, which is especially concerning as Bahrain now sits on the new UN Human Rights Council. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights therefore urges HM King Hamad to repeal the law, or modify it to provide legal safeguards, making it consistent with the recently ratified Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international human rights standards.

Detainees Held Incommunicado for 5 days Following unfair Trial

Complaint of Police Brutality and Mistreatment

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) is highly concerned upon receiving information from the "Dana Mall" (BCHR REF: 06081701) defendants families, that since Tuesday the 15th of August, the detainees had been held incommunicado. All contacts with the detainees were cut and visits were not permitted until this past Sunday morning. The BCHR was informed that the defendants were moved to a different location by the police and later moved back to the Dry-Dock Jail where they were originally detained. Family members claim that the defendants had been on hunger strike since the Court session last Tuesday and their health had deteriorated leading to more than three being moved to hospital over the past week.

Relatives confirmed that some of the defendants, namely Mr. Moosa Abdali, aged 25, Activist of the Unemployment Committee, Hassan Al-Afoo, aged 20, and Hassan Hamada, aged 16, were moved to the hospital. One family member told the BCHR that when he visited his son last Monday, he noticed signs of beating on his sons body. Others have made the same

claims and told the BCHR that the beating came after the detainees staged a protest against another postponement of one month by the Court Judge last Tuesday. The authorities, the families allege, have been stalling and extending the trial while refusing to release the defendants on bail.

The Detainees have since broken the strike after negotiating with the authorities for better treatment. The BCHR received a letter from the detainees which conveyed the specifics of the incident (kindly find a translated copy attached). The Detainees complain of harsh treatment, brutal beating and sexual harassment of a minor detainee, and if these allegations prove to be true, the BCHR fears for the safety of the detainees as their detention continues to be extended, and the same Police Officers continue to supervise and enforce a questionable method of prison regulations long scrutinized for its failure to protect the rights of the prisoners.

The BCHR calls for an investigation into claims of beating and mistreatment of the detainees. The investigation has to be



Musa Abd Ali sustained serious injuries during the attack

done and supervised by an independent entity, which must secure the safety of the prisoners should they choose to convey any information relating to any mistreatment. The BCHR also calls for the immediate release of those detainees with no viable evidence that justifies their detention, specifically the minors and the activists held on this case.