

BAHRAIN

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

Secret report exposes the rape of a country by Al Khalifa

The sensational revelations last month by high-ranking official within the Government of Bahrain made history. Perhaps it was the first time in the recent history of this troubled island that such irrefutable documentary evidence of the evil activities by the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship had come out to the open. The ruling family stands accused of criminal acts of ethnic cleansing, using public money to fund its clandestine operations. These revelations were made by now but the Advisor to the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs who compiled the evidence in a 220-pages report that he delivered to the court of the ruler, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the prime minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. Copies were also handed to some political societies as well as embassies of the the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany. It was a well-calculated risk undertaken by Dr Salah Al Bandar, a British citizen of Sudanese origin. For the past twelve months he was entrusted with the re-organisation of the said ministry which is headed by Ahmad Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa, the brother of the notorious torturer (Abdul Aziz Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa).

Dr Al Bandar soon realised that he was working within a clandestine group headed by the minister, engaged in sinister activities against the native population, paid for by the minister from his "personal account" with Kuwait's Finance House. Although the source of funds is not known, it is expected that it comes directly from the country's oil income under the direction of Sheikh Hamad. The report contains includes copies of paid cheques and receipts signed by the recipients of funds for their services. These services include sending SMS messages against opposition figures, smearing the reputation of public personalities and defending the Al Khalifa in electronic sites, funding the main mouthpiece newspaper, Al Watan, of the regime, payments to religious extremists who are anti-Shia, payments for individuals and families who change their sectarian affiliation from Shia Islam and regular payments for "activists" in human rights groups who are known to be

agents of the Al Khalifa. Among the most dangerous group of recipients is that which is engaged in what Al Bandar calls "the Sectarian Switch" whose activities include anti-Shia campaigns in newspapers and other media, as well as the political naturalisation programme. The reaction of the Al Khalifa was swift. On the evening of Tuesday 12th September his flat in Manama was raided by the notorious secret police agents. He was handcuffed while the flat was ransacked. Two hours later he was driven to the airport where he was forced to board a flight to London. Simultaneously, his house in Rifaa, where his wife was staying, was also searched and property confiscated including computers and books. The Al Khalifa then claimed that Al Bandar was "Plotting to overthrow the government" a charge punishable by death. It is ironic that a person who is accused of these serious offences, has not been interrogated while handcuffed at his flat or jailed. Neither has a request for extradition been lodged with the British authorities. He was further accused of belonging to foreign intelligence agencies, most probably refereeing to British intelligence. In a subsequent meeting between the ruler and the heads of several political societies, in a damage-limitation exercise, he was quoted as saying that he did not like the British or the Americans. He said that he wanted Al Bandar to go to Sudan and solve the problem of Darfur and Fawzi Golid (the American of Somali origin in charge of the office of the American National Democratic Institute which had been closed few months earlier) to go back to Somalia to deal with the problems there.

Regardless of the motives of Al Bandar, the report is a serious document implicating the ruling family directly in a sinister plan to effect fundamental changes in the country that they had occupied by force and have since refused to recognise the right of its people to determine their destiny. The Al Khalifa have plundered the wealth of the country, its land and seashores in a

way that no other government in the world had done. They have committed many crimes against the people of Bahrain, imprisoning tens of thousands of them over the past three decades, killing scores of them in their torture chambers, exiling hundreds and subjugating the rest. Bahrain is a country that is being subjected to most horrific rape by the Al Khalifa gangs. Atiyyat Allah could not have run his clandestine network without the official sanction from the ruler himself.

Instead of being reprimanded, he came out forcefully, denying any wrong-doing and lashing out against the author of the report. He has remained securely in his position enjoying the protection of the state which has failed to take a single action to calm the situation. The plots and plans contained in the report are there to be implemented and will not stop short of the total subjugation of the country when the demographic balance has been fundamentally altered. It is also deafening to note the absence of any reaction from the British government for the allegations that its intelligence services were involved in the "plot" against the Al Khalifa. It is now clear that the Al Khalifa occupiers of Bahrain are implicated in ethnic cleansing which is a criminal act that has to be addressed by the international community. The United Nations have been approached by the people who signed a petition calling for self-determination and the involvement of the UN in drafting a new constitution for the country. The Al Khalifa rule is evil; it is an antiquated form of government which is now engaged in a serious clandestine operation to wipe out the natives of Bahrain. Silence should not be seen as an option by the international community; the Al Khalifa are not known for their adherence to international codes of conduct especially in terms of human rights and democratic standards. The "Bandargate" is a disgrace to this hereditary dictatorship and those who support their continued despotism and gross violations of human rights. Time is running out for a salvage operation to stop the annihilation of the natives of Bahrain. Ethnic cleansing is among the worst crimes, yet it is permitted in Bahrain.

Behind Bandargate; the story as told by the GDN

The Gulf Daily News
Wednesday 27 September 2006

A SECRET organisation's operation to influence the outcome of Bahrain's parliamentary elections was just the beginning of a five-year subterfuge, says the co-author of the Bandargate report.

Its long-term aim is to control Bahrain's political, economic and social fabric to suit its own purposes, says deported government consultant Dr Salah Al Bandar.

The elections are just part of the secret organisation's "five-year plan", being run by misusing the Central Informatics Organisation (CIO) and its facilities, said the Briton, who is married to a Bahraini.

Dr Al Bandar, who had been working as a strategic planning adviser to the Cabinet Affairs Ministry since October last year, was deported to the UK on September 13. He was arrested, questioned and put on a plane to London after circulating copies of the 240-page Bandargate report to Bahraini authorities, the British, US and German embassies and local political society heads.

The report charts a money trail which purportedly leads back to a senior government official directly involved in organising the elections. It alleges that payments totalling more than BD1 million have been made to government employees, members of the local Press, MPs, parliamentary candidates, civil societies, lawyers, bank employees, a Jordanian intelligence team and a Shura Council member. The report was produced under the banner of the London-registered non-governmental organisation the Gulf Centre for Democratic Development (GCDD), of which Dr Al Bandar is secretary-general. He says he compiled the report with four other GCDD investigators, while inputs from 13 others, after government employees began confiding in him about "unusual activities" in their offices.

Dr Al Bandar claimed to have received hundreds more pieces of evidence from employees and to have chosen the "most credible". "(In the report) the Gulf Centre for Democratic Development says that we would like to uncover a strategic plan to control the output of the coming elections and control at the end of the day, the country," he told the GDN yesterday. "This is a five-year plan, it is not something just for the elections - if you look to the appendix of the report we have put the strategic plan of this secret organisation. "It would like to control the overall period (five years) and not only the political, but the economics, the social, the cultural and even the religious, by converting people from one sect to the other.

"This is a comprehensive plan with a comprehensive organisational structure and very generous funding - I'm glad we managed to uncover the start of it. "If we waited for the end of it, which is intended

in the programme in five years, it could be much worse." Dr Al Bandar also raised suspicions over the role of a Gulf financial institution, where one of the accounts used to finance the organisation is based.

The financial institution has BD8 billion invested in construction, business, and higher education projects in Bahrain, he claimed.

Founding members of the financial institution, as well as government officials allegedly heading the "secret organisation", have known connections to the Muslim Brotherhood (a radical political group), said Dr Al Bandar.

He said the aim of the report was "to provide facts" and it would take the thorough investigation it calls for to be able to fully establish and analyse the wider motives of the organisation.

Dr Al Bandar denied ever being involved in the organisation himself. He said he was initially hired as a consultant for individuals working to establish a local Arabic language newspaper, between March and September last year, he said. The paper was later implicated in the GCDD report, which alleged it had received a subsidy of BD100,000 from the alleged organisation.

Dr Al Bandar said he was then approached to work as a strategic planning consultant for the Cabinet Affairs Ministry, where he began work in October last year. It was not long before people began to come to him, worried about things that were going on in their offices, he said.

"It begins by a person who came in to me, who I had great trust in and he shared with me a concern," said Dr Al Bandar. "I noticed there were very unusual meetings in his office. As a consultant I had never been party to this.

"There were meetings and people coming in and going out - and then this guy came to me and he expressed serious concerns. "It happened in February this year.

"One (employee) with much closer ties to (the senior government official allegedly at the head of the secret organisation) believed that there was something very unusual going on, which was taking (this official) beyond his mandate. "That was the starting point, on from there, from February we started our investigation.

"People around this secret organisation with very serious concerns started to bring pieces of evidence."

Dr Al Bandar said it became clear they were looking at "a secret organisation working outside the rule of law". "They didn't approach me because I am a consultant - they came as a group, as individuals, with different pieces of evidence," he said.

"We put the most credible, most checked information - if I had put every piece of evidence it would have been more than 1,000 pages. "By the end of July, we combined almost the (whole) body of the document and by August 15 or 20 I finished the final draft of this report."

Dr Al Bandar said he was not alone in compiling the report and some of those who helped were still in vulnerable positions, so he had to protect their identities. "I was given the final responsibility of compiling the report, but there were another 13 people and some of them (who gave evidence) are still in the den of the lion - I have to protect them," he said.

Dr Al Bandar stressed that he was never directly involved with the alleged secret organisation, or did he do any work for it. "I'm not taking any salary from that secret organisation, I'm taking salary from the Bahraini government. I take my salary as a consultant to the Minister of Cabinet Affairs and my file is there," he added. "I am on the payroll of the government of Bahrain - the secret organisation is working on the payroll of (the senior ranking government official), because he is paying them from his private bank account."

After sending copies of the report to the Bahraini authorities, which Dr Al Bandar claimed elicited no response, the group decided to approach civil societies and the media.

Dr Al Bandar insisted the motives behind leaking the report were to expose the "secret organisation" and prevent it from pressing ahead with its "dangerous" plans.

"We had decided to distribute it to the Press by September 15, but the acceleration (deportation) on the 13th in fact took the issue out of our hands," he said.

"This is serious, very dangerous and almost a coup d'etat against the ethos of the national charter and the constitution. "This is a secret organisation which is working outside the rule of law and it has a very specific organisational set up, which tried by all means to deprive a significant portion of citizens from their rights. "And at the same time (they) tried really to play not only with the elections, because the strategy of this group is far beyond the elections.

Dr Al Bandar, aged 52, is has been married for 16 years to Bahraini Layla Rajab, who is GCDD president and National Liberal Thought Society president. He said he submitted the report by hand to Bahraini authorities, to political society heads and the British, German and US embassies.

Dr Al Bandar said he submitted it to authorities in the US and UK because they have vested interests in Bahrain and to those in Germany because it chairs the European Union. The GCDD was established in Bahrain in October 2002, but could not get registration here. It was registered in London in April 2003.

Dr Al Bandar says he works for the organisation as an unpaid volunteer. The GCDD has three full-time staff, eight interns and a network of volunteers in the six GCC countries of 94 people.

People reject blind terrorism, call for intervention to save victims of Al Khalifa

On this day, the sad anniversary of the 2001 terrorist acts against the World Trade Centre buildings and the Pentagon, the people of Bahrain have repeated their rejection of terrorism that targets innocent civilians, regardless of the motives. They expressed their hope that serious political reforms are undertaken in order to forestall the inclination towards violence among the new generations of Muslims. They also called on the US Government to reform their policies in the Middle East by refraining from its total support of Israel and propping up of dictatorial regimes in the region, such as that of the Al Khalifa.

Several appeals have been made by human rights groups and activists for an international intervention to save the lives of scores of Bahraini political prisoners. For the past two weeks, many of them, especially those held at the Dry Dock torture chambers, have been on hunger strike in protest against their continued and illegal detention without a proper appearance at a court of law. They are considered prisoners of conscience by human rights organisations as their detention is known to be a retribution for their peaceful demonstrations earlier in the year against the hereditary dictatorship of the Al Khalifa. Their last appearance in court was on 16th August when the Royal Court instructed the "judge" to extend their imprisonment for another month. For the past five years political activists have periodically been

rounded up, detained, tortured before a royal decree is issued to "pardon" them as a gracious act. In the latest saga, prisoners have been subjected to severe torture, especially after they protested inside the torture chambers. They were beaten severely to the extent that many of the nineteen prisoners who took part have sustained serious injuries. Several of them have fainted and taken to hospitals for treatment. Families have been denied visits to their beloved ones who are held hostages by the Al Khalifa repressive dictatorship.

At another level, the horrific crime of demographic change in the country has taken new and more serious dimensions. Last week the official media launched an attack against what they called "Iranian attempts to change the demography of Bahrain", citing the purchase of a building in Muharraq by some individuals of Iranian origin as an attempt to change the sectarian balance in the country. It was an outrageous attempt to shift the domain of contention on the issue of demographic change from the Al Khalifa occupiers to Iran. The next day, agents of Al Khalifa covered the walls of Muharraq district with posters expressing support to the Al Khalifa in their endeavour to "protect" Bahrain from what is purported as "Iranian policy to change the demography of Bahrain". Over the past few years, the Al Khalifa have allowed rich businessmen from other Gulf states to purchase land in Bahrain, causing sharp rises in

land prices and depriving Bahrainis of affordable housing. The aim is to force the natives out of the country in order to complete the intended change in demography.

Meanwhile, calls are being made for the international human rights to take up the case of Mahdi Abdul Rahman who was murdered by Sheikh Hamad's death squads. The regime has shielded the killers and refused to order an independent inquiry into this extra-judicial killing. There are also pressures on the UN Human Rights Council to bring the Al Khalifa regime to account for its repression against the people of Bahrain including arbitrary detention, systematic torture, institutionalised discrimination and extra-judicial killings of opponents. Bahrain is a member of the Council and the behaviour of its government has become an embarrassment to other members.

The Bahrain Human Rights Centre has issued a detailed statement about the political naturalisation by the hereditary dictatorship in Bahrain, highlighting its aims, methods and scope. It categorised the "new Bahrainis" into six categories, only two of which fall within the acceptable international laws. These represent the minority among these "new Bahrainis". The other four categories represents more than 90 percent and are the product of Sheikh Hamad's policies of hate and revulsion vis-à-vis the natives Bahrainis.

Attacks on freedom as Al Khalifa dirty plots unveiled

The ferocious attack on the freedom of speech and expression took a sharp turn to the worse on Friday night when a peaceful gathering was mercilessly attacked with tear gas and rubber bullets. The meeting was organised in an open space at Bilad Al Qadeem by Haq Movement to present to the people how the International Petition had been successfully handed to the Office of the United Nations. The meeting had been scheduled to take place one week earlier but the Al Khalifa dictatorship deployed their death squads to the venue (Sanabis Matam) hours before the event and threatened a bloody confrontation. The organisers decided to delay the event and avoid unnecessary bloodshed intended by the authorities. However, the Al Khalifa, once again, attacked the gathering which was attended by hundreds of citizens, causing injuries and mayhem. The meeting had been going on for more than one hour, and as soon as Mr Hassan Mushaima' began his address the death squads began firing indiscriminately into the crowd. Many sustained various injuries in the attack. The meeting was attended by human rights activists from

inside and outside the country, who expressed anger at the unprovoked attack. Calls have been made to bring those responsible for this crime to account at a court of law.

In a separate development the Al Khalifa regime was forced by the international pressure and the steadfastness of the detainees, to release the political prisoners without conditions. This U-turn came after it emerged that Bahrain's position at the UN Human Rights Council was untenable. The political prisoners went on a hunger strike that alerted the international community to their plight and plans were underway to call for a special rapporteur on human rights in Bahrain. The International Committee of the Red Cross had also been urged to visit the torture chambers after reports had indicated that torture and ill-treatment were rampant. Following their release, the prisoners are now considering taking steps against their torturers including reporting their ordeals to the international bodies whose functions include preventing torture and bringing torturers to justice.

The Al Khalifa aggression came at the backdrop of another development that

uncovered the extent of their evil plots against the natives of Bahrain. On 14th September, the authorities deported the British Political Advisor to the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, for writing a documentary report on the secret activities of a team formed by the ruling family to alter the delicate balance in the country. .

Al Khalifa meeting with Israelis

Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince of Bahrain, met Thursday 21st September with a number of foreign officials during the opening of the United Nations General Assembly, including the Foreign Minister and Crown Prince of Bahrain.

According to the Ynet news service (an Israeli network), the Crown Prince indicated that relations with Israel may improve soon. "The day is not far off when you can visit us and we can visit you," he said.

The two men also discussed other developments in the Middle East.

Massive attacks on freedom of expression

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights issued the following statement on the attack by Al Khalifa mercenaries on a public gathering on 15th September.

In a disturbing development which occurred yesterday evening, the Bahraini Interior Ministry banned a Public Seminar which was to be held by the HAQ Movement (Movement of Liberties & Democracy), under the pretext that it violates the Public Gathering Code. The Venue, in which the Seminar was to be held, was surrounded by special security forces and surveillance helicopters, hours before the event took place. The Local Police Precinct approached the Head of the Venue in which the Seminar was to be held, with orders that the Seminar be cancelled, and that a permit be requested in accordance to the Decree No. 18 of the year 1973 of Public Meetings, Processions and Gatherings ("Bahraini Gatherings Code"). In a statement to the BCHR HAQ's official spokesman stated that the movement refuses to submit to the controversial Code and will defy it, and declared that they would not request permission to exercise their natural rights. The movement did not wish to enter into a confrontation with the security forces or compromise peoples safety, therefore it chose to postpone the seminar until next week.

The Seminar was expected to shed light on the campaign carried out last month in the United States and the United Kingdoms by the "HAQ" movement, during which the representatives of the movement submitted a petition to the office of the United Nation Secretary General, signed by 82,000 Bahrainis calling for a new constitution. Significantly, The Bahraini Prime Minister had recently issued public threats against the activists who lead the campaign (BCHR Ref: 06090301) and the BCHR fears that the authorities might take action against members of the Movement in accordance to the highly excessive penalties associated with the gathering Code.

On a related matter, the BCHR has learnt that the authorities had banned another Seminar 2 weeks ago which was to be organized by political societies on the issue of "Political Naturalization". Similar pretexts were used as justification for the banning. The Venue in which the Seminar was to be held, the "Al-Uruba Club" has previously been closed down by the authorities for hosting the BCHR seminar on "Poverty and Economic Rights". The Gathering Code has been used to prevent many events since, and the recent amendments made to the former merely increases its restrictiveness and enhance its capability of violating such basic rights as freedom of gathering, freedom of assembly and freedom of Speech long guaranteed by the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Bahraini Gathering Code, has been condemned by local as well as international Human Rights Organizations in that it restricts freedom of speech as well as freedom of gathering in a way as to impose censorship on any entity which opposes the authority, and provides the authorities with an overall authority to ban any gathering or event. In an open letter to the Bahraini King prior to approval of additional restrictive amendments to the Code, Human Rights Watch warned that: "that the law as presently drafted has the potential to undermine rather than protect the right of peaceful assembly as codified in Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)."[1] Furthermore,

in a joint letter by Amnesty international and Article 19, the law was criticized on numerous bases, and its penalties were described as "excessive and disproportionate for speech-related conduct"[2].

The BCHR calls once again for an immediate review of the Bahraini Gathering Code, which if kept in its current state will allow the authorities to impose further restrictions and violations on people's Civil liberties and Human Rights. The Centre also calls for the protection of activists who merely exercise their right to freedom of speech, assembly and gathering.

[1] Human Rights Watch: Letter on the Amendments to Law 18 (1973) on Public Gatherings, 8th June 2006

[2] Joint Letter by Amnesty International and ARTICLE

Bahrain expels Briton for report on Shiites, charges him with sedition

The Associated Press

Published: September 21, 2006

CAIRO, Egypt Bahraini authorities have expelled and pressed sedition charges against a government consultant with British citizenship who distributed a report saying the government was running a campaign to keep Shiites out of positions of power.

Salah al-Bandar, a Briton of Sudanese origin, was forced to leave the tiny Gulf kingdom last week, according to a statement issued Thursday by the public prosecutors office spokesman Nawaf Hamza.

He was then charged with "working against the interests of Bahrain" and issuing "wrong information" with the aim of sowing sedition, the statement said. It did not explain why the charges came after the expulsion.

"Sedition" in government statements often refers to attempts to stir up tensions between Shiites and Sunnis. Bahrain has a Shiite Muslim majority — about 60 percent of its 725,000 citizens — but is dominated by a Sunni leadership, and Shiites complain of discrimination, saying they are squeezed out of having a say in running the country.

Al-Bandar, who lived in Bahrain 16 years and gained citizenship, worked for years as a consultant at the government's Central Information Organization — in charge of keeping statistics — and in the prime minister's office and helped found a pro-government newspaper, Al-Watan. But in early September, he distributed a 240-page report accusing the head of the CIO of creating a network of spies and organizations aimed at removing Shiites from all influential positions in Bahrain and limiting their chances to reach par-

liament.

On Wednesday, seven opposition leaders met with Bahrain's king, Sheik Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and called for an investigation into the claims in al-Bandar's report. There was no reply to the demand.

The flap comes ahead of parliament elections that the king is expected to call for later this year — one in which Shiites are hoping to make gains so they can push their demands for reform. Many had expected the king to announce the date of the elections on Wednesday, but he did not do so.

Al-Bandar gave his report to political societies — the country's version of political parties, which are banned — as well as the British, German and U.S. embassies in Bahrain.

After the expulsion order, al-Bandar left for London on Sept. 13. His Bahraini wife, Layla Rajab, who heads the National Liberal Thought Society and remained in Bahrain, told AP that police confiscated his laptop, computer, CDs, papers and other items from their home. Bahrain, a close U.S. ally where the Navy's 5th Fleet is based, saw a wave of riots in the early summer by Shiites demanding greater rights.

