

BAHRAIN

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

No winners in the pseudo-elections as the political crisis deepens

This month the Al Khalifa rulers of Bahrain, supported by the US intelligence operators, plan to celebrate the second round of elections of half the members of the Shura Council. They will attempt to show that participation by some factions of opposition is tantamount to approval of Sheikh Hamad's political programme and the end of real opposition to the dictatorial regime of the Al Khlaifa family. To achieve this participation, the ruling family has adopted every possible unethical means in the battle of wills. They may achieve a degree of participation, but they will still be denied political or constitutional legitimacy. They will be disappointed further as a new creed of opposition figures and groups emerge from the ashes of previous battles and the unfinished business of point scoring. The percentage of participants in the elections for the powerless bodies may be higher than 2002, but the levels of anger among the citizens have increased dramatically over the past four years as Sheikh Hamad's policies ran off steam and became hostage of his personal ambitions and style of leadership. He has failed to establish a modern state governed by the rule of law in which all citizens have equal rights and obligations. He has failed to provide equal opportunities to the citizens or a just distribution of the country's wealth. According to Dr Salah Al Bandar, the former advisor to the ministry of cabinet affairs and whose report on the illegal activities by the Al Khalifa against the people of Bahrain caused an uproar, estimates that out of more than US\$5 billion annual oil income, only US\$ 2 billion go the treasury. The rest is misappropriated by Sheikh Hamad, his uncle and his son.

The Bahrain democratic scenario has been a failure, despite the claims by the US and Al Khalifa claims otherwise. It cannot be sustained for much longer as new opposition forces claim higher moral grounds in the battle against corruption, despotism and hereditary dictatorship. In the modern world where forces of democracy and human rights are at work, it is inconceivable that such regimes are allowed to rule modern societies with large educated elites, ambitious middle class and, more

dangerously, disenchanted young university leavers and a large chunk of unemployed. The social and political contradictions will, almost certainly, interact to produce sweeping changes not in the technocratic layers of the system but within the political hierarchy. In Bahrain, this clearly means that the position of the hereditary dictatorship of the Al Khalifa will gradually become untenable. The Al Bandar Report has miraculously emerged at this juncture only to provide ammunition to the opposition, though marginally fragmented by defections to Al Khalifa dictatorship, to rise above these incidental circumstances and rally itself behind noble aims of justice, equality and democracy. The said report has uncovered the existence of a dangerous network, led by a member of the ruling family and propped up by the royal court, whose aim is to sow seeds of social instability and sectarian strife. Fortunately, the reaction by the people has been that of utter anger and disgust, and calls for an impartial investigation of the role of Sheikh Hamad himself has severely damaged his own status.

Indeed, the propaganda machine has achieved marginal successes in the psychological war between the oppressors and the oppressed in favour of the Al Khalifa, but it will soon prove to be short-lived achievements. People's wills, awareness and determination cannot be overridden by corrupt media and hollow slogans by politicians. Even the involvement of the CIA in the making of the political programme of Sheikh Hamad is not a conclusive factor in determining the outcome of the struggle between the two sides. Neither is the religious alliance that has been tricked into believing the slogans of the ruling family, capable of providing long term security to the increasingly unpopular hereditary dictatorship. It may be true that a delicate balance between the temporal and religious establishments has brought about a degree of public silence, but history has repeatedly shown that such marriages of conveniences are often short-lived. The consequences to

both parties are disastrous. In Europe such alliances had led to the end of long-standing political systems. Both the hereditary dictatorships and religious establishments lost in the war for modernity and secularization.

In Bahrain, it is anticipated that the future political trend would turn against dictatorship and whoever supports it or offers it legitimacy; be it popular, constitutional or religious. The forthcoming pseudo elections for half the members of the powerless shura council are likely to lead to a more serious polarization of public opinion between those who sided with the Al Khalifa and those who opposed them. Some political analysts believe that the ongoing saga of unholy alliances and false promises are necessary to the emergence of a more credible political opposition based on popular support and political as well as religious legitimacy. This legitimacy is not drawn from politically-influenced stands by the clergy but from the religious sources outlawing dictatorship, injustice or supporting oppression. A "liberation theology" is likely to be borne out of the ongoing political crisis in Bahrain; where well-established political opposition goes back to the early part of the last century. It will be enlightened as well as principled and serious and is likely to precipitate a real change. Over the past few years, the people of Bahrain have become increasingly aware of the fact that the Al Khlaifa domination could not be an eternal one and that it may have already run its natural course.

Once again, Sheikh Hamad has miscalculated by assuming that policies of deception, wooing and corruption would eventually lead to a stable regime. He will soon realize that without a proper mandate from the people for his role as a sovereign, he will his position will become untenable, regardless of the security plans he had set in place in the early days of his rule. Those who will take part in this months contest are unlikely to gain much beyond the material gains of would be members of the shura council. The outcome will be a surprise to everyone, including the ruling family and the religious hierarchy who have inadvertently supported Sheikh Hamad's disastrous political programme.

Bahrain: Al Bandar's report haunts the hereditary dictatorship

Bahrain has been plagued by the serious revelations in the report written by Dr Salah Al Bandar, the former advisor at the ministry of cabinet affairs. The feeling have soured and continue to affect the situation as the Al Khalifa ruling family continues its silence over the contents of the report. The people had hoped that Sheikh Hamad would order the arrest of Ahmad Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa for his clandestine activities directed against the majority Shia population. Instead, and as expected, the ruling family has rallied around the culprit, in the same way it did with regards to his brother, Abdul Azia Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa, the notorious torturer, Adel Flaifel, Ian Henderson and Khalid Al Ma'awdah.

Last week a delegation of senior clerics held a meeting with Sheikh Hamad, demanding to know more about the circumstances surrounding the report, the nature of Atiyyat Allah's activities and the whether the ruling family had sanctioned what he had done. As usual, Sheikh Hamad brushed aside their concerns, merely expressing "thanks and appreciation" for the role of the clerics in what he described as the national unity.

Meanwhile several meetings were held in response to the clandestine organization, funded and supported by the Al Khalifa. On 11th October, a seminar was held at Hamad Matam at the village of Wadyan

in Sitra. Sheikh Isa Al Jawdar, a known veteran opposition figure outlined his view with regards to the report. He called for three things: a new government to replace that of Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, who had been in his post since 1971, forming a new parliament with full authority, and the confining of the royal court to acceptable boundaries. In respect to that he said: "The conspiratorial plan against the people, the political naturalization and the misappropriation of land cannot be stopped as long as the royal court enjoys absolute powers in granting citizenship, controlling the lands and distributing as they like, and intervening in small and big affairs of the government and other institutions. The corrupt and sectarian elements uncovered by Al Bandar's report must be removed and the royal court's activities must be confined to the running of the royal affairs. Its budget must be cut in line with its streamlined activities so that it does not become a government in the shadows".

Dr Salah Al Bandar, a British of Sudanese origin, had issue a report about what he considers clandestine operations by a gang working under the minister of cabinet affairs aiming to effect dramatic changes in Bahrain including demographic, cultural and political changes. He expressed surprise at how the Al Khalifa are allowed to get away with murder, and how attempts

have been made to belittle the dangers of the activities of the gang. He is particularly incensed by the attempt by some groups to confine the problem to a marginal issue; that of the electronic voting. He said the main issue is the demographic change and the activities of what he called "the Sectarian Switch" group.

Meanwhile, the attempts to internationalise the case of Bahrain are gathering momentum. Following the delivery of the largest-ever petition to the United Nations Secretary General's office in August, plans are now in place to pursue the issue with other international bodies such as the European Parliament, the International Court of Justice and the European Union. The Movement of Rights and Political Rights (HAQ) has become the focal point of the future activities against the hereditary dictatorship in Bahrain. The calls for boycotting the Al Khalifa regime and its illegitimate institutions are worrying the dictatorial rule especially as international bodies and press are becoming more interested in the affairs of Bahrain. Most Bahrainis have lost in the ruling Al Khalifa family and are taking more seriously the idea of calling for an end to its mentality of occupation and exclusion. The next few months will be crucial for the country, especially as the calls for a new binding constitution are well-received by people.

Anger and despair as Sheikh Hamad's role in the treacherous design is exposed

As the people of Bahrain celebrated Eid Al Fitr marking the end of the holy month of Ramadhan a spirit of gloom and despair has dominated the public mood.

More news of further attempts to destabilise the demographic balance have caused anger and anxiety among the citizens of Bahrain. Thousands of these "new Bahrainis" were added to the electoral register to ensure the normalisation of their situation in the country. As the deadline for this step (19th October) approached, the Al Khalifa secret machine acted hastily to complete their registration. The process continued until late hours of that day while the people watched their plight being sealed by this hated regime helplessly.

Meanwhile the Al Bandar Report, which highlighted the secret Al Khalifa organisation empowered to complete the treacherous designs against the people of Bahrain, has become the talk of the day among the people as its implications were exposed by various groups incensed by the plot. Al Bandar has insisted that the electronic voting was only marginal in his report and that the core issue is the Al Khalifa policies on demographic engineering and their relentless efforts to ensure a complete revamp of the country. Al Bandar has also highlighted the security implications of the "clever card" project which aims at transforming the coun-

try into a large web of security that makes every movement of the ordinary citizens exposed to the notorious and ruthless secret service of the ruling family.

Furthermore, the lack of any action by the ruling family in relation to the exposures made by the Al Bandar report has caused more anger among the people. A delegation composed of four senior clerics met Sheikh Hamad at his palace demanding an action in relation to the report. Sheikh Hamad, on his part, turned the table around and told them that he expected them to take the role of the riot police to calm the angry masses. He said to them: I rely on you to control the streets, a demand that has infuriated the political activists and those concerned with human political rights.

The meeting came at a time when there are increasing signs of the direct involvement of the royal court in the secret plan uncovered by Al Bandar report. Mr Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, a senior human rights activist, highlighted this fact in his speech at a religious rally on 13th October. He pointed to the role of Sheikh Hamad in this treacherous design and demanded an explanation for his continued silence and attempts to brush aside the accusations of his personal involvement. In democratic countries such revelations would lead to an immediate fall of elected governments as such activities are outside the law and are funded by

public money. In Bahrain, however, the Al Khalifa believe that the whole country, including its people, land and wealth, to be their own private property and that they are mandated to act as they have done for two centuries.

The Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship has taken steps to stop the public row over the Al Bandar report. The independent Haq Movement has been specifically targeted by the secret service for the activities of its members to highlight the report in special sessions held in Ramadhan in all parts of the country. Attempts were made to cordon off any known venue for such activity by the riot and security police. The Movement was thus forced to hold its meetings without prior declarations in order to be able to spread public awareness of the dangers of the Al Khalifa treacherous designs. It has managed to secure a direct interview with the author of the report, Dr Salah Al Bandar, and is still attempting to make the interview available to the public, in the face of determined efforts by the Al Khalifa to stop them. The ruling family is becoming extremely nervous at the prospect of a low turnout in the coming pseudo-elections in November. Independent polls have suggested that 68 percent of the people of Muharraq would boycott the voting process in protest at the whole political project of the Al Khalifa.

Statement by Bahraini Human Rights Activists

The "Bandar-Gate" Scandal, the dangerous role played by some human rights societies and Relation to the Secret Governmental Web

We the undersigned – Bahraini Human Rights Activists and defenders – express our deep concern on what was included in the report made by Dr. Salah Al-Bandar, the Strategic Planning's Chancellor of the Bahraini government; a British citizen of Sudanese origin. Dr Al-Bandar was dismissed and arrested and lately forced to depart from the country because of the report he compiled. The Al-Bandar report discussed the existence of a dangerous secret organization within the government headed by a member of the royal family, the Minister of State of Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Ahmad bin Ateyatalla Al Khalifa.

The goal of this secret organization is eliminating and marginalizing Shias, weakening them in elections and steering them to sectarian clash with the Sunni sect. As well as ruining the reputation of political activists, oppositions figures and independent human rights activists. It also aims at ruining the electoral process and creating false civil society institutions or penetrating the already existing and independent ones.

According to the mentioned report, high governmental panels, members from the Municipal and Representative Council, politicians, news reporters, a Jordanian intelligence team, an Egyptian media group and Human rights activists or societies, have all contributed in this organization. A large sum of money estimated to be millions of dollars was dedicated for achieving this project.

What raises our concerns is the mention of two human rights societies in this report which is supported by documents, copies of cheques, bank statements, receipts and some letters related to carrying out this secret dangerous plan. Among the societies that were mentioned in the report is the "Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society" which is headed by Mrs. Huda Azra Nono but actually run by the member of government appointed Al-Shura Council Mr. Faisal Foulad with the help of Mrs. Ahdiya Ahmad, who recently was appointed as an official spokesperson for the 2006 elections as well as Tareq Jalil Al-Safar. The Bahrain Jurists' Society was also mentioned and which is headed by the lawyer Mr. Yousif Hashemi, a member of the Bahrain Institute for Political Development with the help of the lawyer Mrs. Massoma Abdul-Kareem, the legal affairs chancellor at the Prime Ministers Cabinet Council and 2006 election committee vice president. The report indicated that these two societies have received money from governmental panels in order to weaken and ruin the reputation of the Bahraini human rights organizations and activists working in the hu-

man rights field through the participation in national and international conferences and forums dedicated for human rights. Mr. Faisal Foulad, one of the main members in this organization opened an office for his society in London.

The documents that were leaked by Dr. Al-Bandar indicated that this society received large sums of money and conspired to weaken "The Parallel Conference for the Forum of the Future". The "Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society" repetitively clashed with non-governmental human rights panels and organizations, through issuing false reports and sending them to international organizations in order to ruin the reputation of the independent Bahraini human rights panels in those regional and international quarters, as well as spying on their work outside Bahrain.

In addition, the representative of the society Mr. Faisal Foulad was dismissed from the meeting which was held at the UN Anti-Torture Committee in Geneva with Bahraini human rights organizations, after suspecting his role in spying on the human rights organization and activists and handing the information over to the government.

We the undersigned, would like to bring to your attention the seriousness of dealing with members of this secret organization or departments working in it, such as the "Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society" and the "Bahrain Jurists' Society", as these societies played their role in ruining the function and reputation of civil society institutes in Bahrain via governmental funding.

Signed by

1. Mohammed Al-Masqati – President of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights.
2. Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja – President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.
3. Nabeel Rajab – Vice-President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.
4. Fawzia Rabea – Coordinator of the Civil Association for Anti-Violence against Women.
5. Dhiya Al-Layth – Liberties Society and Promoting Bahraini Democracy.
6. Abd Al-Nabi Al-Ukri – Bahrain Organization for Human Rights.
7. Nasser Alber Destani – Bahraini Alliance for the Criminal Court.
8. Sonya Taher – Coordinator of the "Deprived from the Bahraini Citizenship" Committee.
9. Ghada Jamsheer – President of the Women Petition Committee.
10. Raouf Al-Shayeb – National Committee of Torture Victims.
11. Abduljalil Alsingace - Human Rights Activist
12. Ramla Jawad - Human Rights Activist



Reporters sans frontières (RSF), Paris

BAHRAIN: Website blocked one month ahead of parliamentary elections

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IFEX - News from the international freedom of expression community -ALERT - BAHRAIN

27 October 2006

Website blocked one month ahead of parliamentary elections

SOURCE: Reporters sans frontières (RSF), Paris

(RSF/IFEX) - The following is an abridged, translated version of an RSF alert:

On 26 October 2006, access to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) website (<http://www.bahrainrights.org>) was blocked by Batelco, Bahrain's main Internet service provider (ISP). This action may be linked to the website's coverage of "Bandargate", a political scandal involving the royal family and several Bahraini politicians.

In March 2006, the Social Development Ministry threatened the directors of BCHR with disciplinary action if they did not stop their activities. The Cassation Court had ordered the center's closure on 22 February. Members of the organisation currently risk a prison sentence of up to six months and a 500 BD (approx. 1,045 euro) fine.

The vice-president of BCHR, Abd al-Hadi al-Khawaja, was arrested in September 2004 after publishing an article in which he criticized Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa al-Khalifa and denounced the country's economic problems (see IFEX alert of 29 September 2004).

The BCHR is a non-governmental organization that promotes human rights in Bahrain. Its 26 founding members are doctors, lawyers and journalists.

Abdulhadi Alkhawaja is the organisation's current president.

Seven other information and discussion websites have also been blocked in Bahrain by Batelco: <http://www.montadayat.org> - <http://shaheedbh.com> -

<http://www.ahraralbahrain.com> - <http://www.bahraintimes.org> -

<http://www.alsaheefa.net> - <http://www.tubli.net> - <http://www.rezgar.com>

In RSF's latest ranking of press freedom, Bahrain was ranked 111th out of 168 countries.

Royal Court's Chief of Staff sectarian character exposed

The following poems were written by members of Ruling family reveal hatred and sectarian discrimination against the majority Shi'a in Bahrain

The first poetry was written by Shaikh Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al-Khalifa (a prominent poet and member of the ruling family), While the second poem is a response written by Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, who is now the Minister of the Royal Court.

The two poetry, that contain deep hatred an defamatory, reveal the policy which was practiced in the nineties against Shi'a uprising (killing and forcible exile), and the new secret policy (marginlization in politics and society) which was uncovered, documented and leaked last month by a British councilor of the government, Dr. Salah Al-Bander.

First poetry

Written by Shaikh Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al-Khalifa

What this rumpus is about that
The Sons of Marhoon & Shubber (the Shi'a) are making
On a daily basis, villages are engulfed with fires with no fear from the police nor the regime
Oh Shaik! if they were after the rule
On us, it would be the biggest blows
The rule won't fit them no matter how they cry
We'll fight them with our mercenaries when hardship demands
We lived with them years and centuries long
But they never aided us in battles and grieves
Our soldiers are coming from abroad
And assist us with vessels and convoys
And we see no help from the sons of Shubber
And our hope in them life long was false
When difficulties crumbled on them, they get terrified
Non of them will stand wars
We went to the far lands of Arabs seeking help
As we only knew them but not our neighbors
The Al-Ajam (Persians) stepped on them, they continued beseeching
And none of them raised a voice of objection
Portuguese (during Portuguese possession of Bahrain 1512-1621) made their women to be pregnant
By hunting and raping their women in desolated places
With ignominy, they still walk about
And for the said reasons their eyes are greened
Those under utter mortification would kneel down
And live their world as humbled and unsuccessful
Show them the intensity and always beware
Don't let your country be plundered
They all came swimming from Jesha (name of a village in Saudi Arabia)
And from Qateef (name of a town in Saudi Arabia) and from every desolated places.
All of them are foreigners who came (to Bahrain) begging from us,
The house of Al-Otoob (Al-Khalifa's root) who are the people of generosity and bestowals

Their history is known by all
And you are against and petrified in the war days

Second poetry: a response written by Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa minister of the royal court

I possess the remedy of the sons of Shobber & Marhoon (the Shi'a)
Oh, Abo-Mohamed, oh the provider of good news to his beloved ones
We shall deport them to Howar, Jenan and Noon islands
As to their earnings, they fit for fishing
With a shining and sharp sward
We spill their bloods until they all die
They carry no value and they won't boost irrespective to their numbers
They are busters who would strive for cunning and blows
We'll stop their annual processions in the streets
As their poems throws us insults
We must remove them from every sensitive position
As the days showed us their weird actions
They want to rule this country for being ma-

majority
Their excessive numbers hopefully is exploited to looting
They never in all life ruled nor thought of it too
Only served as a farmer and riding donkeys
They never in all life defended damned enemy (Qatar & Bahrain issue)
As they were covered and losers
They never in all life dived with those diving
In deep blue seas full of difficulties
Once they reached positions, at which they looked down on others
And once they tasted the essence of power they sought to be insolent
Oh, our victorious Shaikh, we self-sacrifice, but don't be with them easy
It wouldn't add any value once they reached their goals
You have standing by vicious strong warriors
That you only need to order them for the wars

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Lord Avebury's remarks at the Al Bandar's Press Conference

Lord Avebury, vice-chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, chairing a press conference given by Dr Salah al-Bandar, a British citizen who was expelled from Bahrain on September 13, in Committee Room 3A, House of Lords, at 11.00 on Thursday October 5, will say:
Dr al-Bandar, a British citizen who had lived in Bahrain for 16 years was expelled from Bahrain for blowing the whistle on a dirty tricks gang run by the Minister of Cabinet Affairs and head of the Central Information Organisation, Sheikh Ahmed bin Attiyatallah al-Khalifa.
According to Dr al-Bandar, the Minister paid five main operatives a total of more than \$2.7 million to run:
a secret intelligence cell spying on Shi'as 'GONGOS' – government operated bogus NGOs like the 'Bahraini Jurists Society' and the 'Bahraini Human Rights Watch Society' internet forums and websites that foment sectarian hatreds subsidisation of 'new converts' payments for election rigging
Under the heading 'Bandargate', The Gulf Daily News has verified the signatures on some of the many documents published by Dr al-Bandar, and the Bahrain Tribune says the report contains hundreds of pages of supporting material, apparently authentic.
There have been no challenges to the authenticity of the documents, and the Minister himself has made no response other than personal attacks on the author. This

week, the public prosecutor has announced Dr al-Bandar is being charged with theft and illegal possession of state documents, and will be tried in absentia. This is an admission that Dr al-Bandar's evidence is genuine.
We can't say, as Palmerston did in 1850, that "a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England will protect him against injustice and wrong". But we can give a voice to our citizens when they suffer injustice and wrong, especially when they are being punished for upholding high standards of governance and exposing serious misconduct.
Dr al-Bandar is a brave man who deserves the support of his fellow-citizens, and especially at a time when the government of Bahrain – ie the royal family, of which this Minister is a member – is busy silencing its critics. The Public Gatherings, Processions and Assembly Code, ratified on July 20, is the latest attack on freedom of expression, but it is part of a steady erosion of people's rights. The Foreign Office say that 'democracy, good governance and human rights are major objectives' of their policy, and we shall see what they have to say when one of our own citizens is a victim of oppression.