

# BAHRAIN

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

## Major uprising looming as political leaders detained

The ongoing political strife in Bahrain is a reflection of the century-old hostilities between the native Baharna and the occupiers of their land, currently represented by the Al Khlaifa family. The two parties have never been so far apart in their relations, perceptions and priorities. While the natives aspire to achieve stability, security and democracy, the ruling family has adopted a supremacist agenda full of hate, racism and desire for revenge. The recent political confrontations have consolidated the ground for further tension, and possible total disengagement. This is becoming a firmer belief among the Bahraini public as the ruling family becomes more vicious, less civilised and more barbaric. The recent arrests of the popular leaders and the subsequent hunger strike by seven leading figures in protest against the repressive policies of the regime have helped expose the deficient morality of the Al Khalifa, not only among the natives of Bahrain but in the world.

First there are the stands expressed by numerous human rights bodies such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, IFEX, Frontline, Article 19. They have all issued statements against the regime's repression and called for the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners. They have condemned the detention of people for peaceful expressing their opinion freely. These Statements, Urgent Actions and Appeals have established the fact that the detainees, including Mr Hassan Mushaime and Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad, were "Prisoners of Conscience". They have also been widely circulated by the organisations themselves and the active Bahraini groups worldwide to the dismay of the ruling family. Second came the unequivocal condemnation by the British Foreign Office Minister, Bill Rammell of the parading of the detainees on TV screens. He made no secret of his distaste for what he regarded as "contrary to Bahrain's commitments in accordance with the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights". Then came the US State Department's annual Human Rights Report which also condemned Bahrain as a country which seriously abuse the human rights of citizens. The two stands represented a serious setback for the regime's policies of deception and its campaign to buy off in-

ternational stands with oil money.

Third came the standoff with Iran on the issue of sovereignty. The ruling family attempted to bank on the statement of Sheikh Natiq Nouri, who had called the Shah's stands on Bahrain "foolish". He was referring to the Iranian monarch's settlement in 1971 with UK and Saudi Arabia that led to Iran relinquishing its claim for sovereignty over Bahrain in return for allowing him to put his hands on the three islands off the Trucial Coast. His comments caused an exaggerated furore by the Al Khalifa who saw it as a threat not to the sovereignty of Bahrain but their own sovereignty over that country. It was a challenge that they attempted to contain, but had achieved little in support. Apart from consolidating the unpopular image of the pro-Israel bloc led by Egypt and Saudi Arabia, their political achievements have been negligible. The issue of sovereignty in the eyes of the natives is tightly linked to political and democratic rights and reforms. The ruling family had disastrously failed its flirting with democracy and resorted to more repressive measures against the pro-democracy activists. The subsequent shuttle diplomacy between Manama and Tehran has greatly diminished the Al Khalifa credibility among its own supporters. It became clear that they could not sustain a drawn out media and political conflict with a country that has led the USA and the West to the point of political and psychological exhaustion.

Lastly, the Al Khlaifa were shocked by the solidarity among the people of Bahrain who succeeded in preserving their unity against the Al Khalifa occupation, repression and hereditary dictatorship. As media reports by Reuters, AFO, AP and other news agencies piled up over the past five weeks the regime's chances of a speedy recovery from the political trauma it has endured had greatly diminished. Today, Sheikh Hamad appears a lonely figure haunted by the natives desire to free itself and its country from his grip which has caused enormous ills in Bahrain. Over the 12 days during which the hunger strikers conducted their civil resistance movement through fasting and perseverance, thousands of Bahrainis had

flocked to the House of Abdul Wahab Hussain, the veteran opposition and leadership figure. With him were a few of his companions who had joined him in the hunger strike. Today, the figures of Abdul Wahab Hussain and Hassan Mushaime are towering above the heads of the ruling family. It was an embarrassing moment for the ruling family to see the Bahraini people converging from everywhere to express their solidarity, support and assistance to the hunger strikers. It was a serious step on the road to a long-awaited Civil rights Movement on the line of earlier movements in India led by Mahatma Ghandi, the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa and the Civil Rights Movement in USA.

It is clear from the determination of the two sides, the people and their leaders on one hand and the Al Khalifa occupiers on the other, that the scene has been set for years of conflict with both sharpening their swords and preparing for a long drawn out war of attrition. While the occupiers have the state resources and machinery, the people also possess the undefeatable tools of endurance, determination and deep-rooted conviction to face up to oppression, dictatorship and occupation. After two centuries the Al Khalifa have lost the chance to integrate in the Bahraini society and have remained secluded on every level; social, cultural, religious and political. The increasing awareness among the people to achieve a degree of civility is in stark contrast with the Al Khalifa's intransigence and failure to adapt to the needs of modernity and civility. The clinched fists of the stone-throwing youth are now haunting the officials of the regime, both inside the country and outside. The ongoing civil resistance movement possess the attributes of an all out campaign to eradicate dictatorship, antiquity and corruption. Muscle-stretching is not an option against a people who are ready to sacrifice on the road to freedom, especially if this readiness is visibly practiced by its leaders, as is the case of Bahrain. The uprising in this country has become a phenomena with resonances that transgress time and space. That is the secret of its present and, hopefully, future success.

---

## Bahrain: Fear rises for the lives of hunger strikers and

As more hunger strikers collapse, the political volatility in Bahrain takes more serious turns to the worse, while the people's resolve to resist the Al Khalifa occupation takes new dimensions. Last week, Sheikh Abdul Hadi Al Mokhowdher, one of the seven popular leaders on hunger strike, collapsed and was taken to hospital for few hours. On Friday, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace followed with low sugar level and high blood acidity. He is still receiving hospital treatment while continuing his hunger strike. There have been increasing support to the strikers who are protesting the illegal arrest and ill-treatment of Mr Hassan Mushaime' and Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad. Both had been arrested for opposing the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship, especially the refusal to draw up a democratic constitution and the crime of genocide resulting from the political naturalization programme being implemented by Sheikh Hamad.

The hunger strike has given impetus to the pro-democracy, anti-occupation movement. It has been extensively covered by international media despite the ruling family's attempts to bribe journalists and news houses. It has now been decided to end the hunger strike on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February, and start a new campaign with different forms of peaceful civil resistance means. The stand off between the people of Bahrain and the ruling family appears to have reached a point of no-return, with neither ready to back down. However, the negative image of the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship has tarnished the regime and may have forced some of its allies to question the wisdom of their supportive policies to an ailing and antiquated mode of dictatorship.

Meanwhile foreign businesses operating in Bahrain have been addressed by the Bahraini opposition which has informed them of the bleak situation and outlook in a country that has failed to stabilize. With a stagnant economy and widespread corruption by senior members of the ruling family, the economic prospects are gloomy and are unlikely to see marked improvement in the coming period. The opposition has also pointed out that it is intensifying its civil resistance campaign and urged those businesses to look for alternative locations outside of Bahrain. They are welcome to operate in Manama once the political conditions improve. The Al Khalifa dictatorship has denied equal opportunities to local or foreign businesses and their corrupt practices especially the commissions they impose on them have destroyed the economic prospects in a country whose policies of diversification have failed. Some businesses have already packed up and gone.

Others are in the process of calling it a day.

On another level, the minister of interior has expressed offensive sectarian comments in an interview with the Saudi newspaper, Al Sharq Al Awsat. He claimed that the native Shia Muslims have always been a minority in the Bahrain. The British historian, Lorimer, was falsely quoted in this respect. The Al Khalifa minister himself is accused of managing a torture regime against the Bahraini political detainees and is implicated in a recent address by tens of international human rights bodies to the UN Human Rights Council. To Bahrainis he represents the ugly face of torture and genocide and will be relentlessly pursued in international courts. This is in addition to another attempt to bring Sheikh Hamad and three of his lieutenants to justice. An earlier letter to Moreno Okampo, the

Prosecutor General at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The attacks against Bahrainis have continued. At least six Bahraini youth have been arrested in recent days by the Death Squads run by the royal court. Three of them were detained after the massive protest held on Friday near the Dana Mole. Three others were arrested in the town of Karzakkan for being in the area as fires broke out in disused dustbins on the side of the street.

The summary trials of two groups falsely accused of killing an already dead Pakistani policeman and burning the farm of the notorious torturer, Abdul Aziz Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa, have been postponed once again, as it became clear that no decent or impartial trial could convict any of the Bahrainis of wrongdoing based on testimonies of members of the Death Squads.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
21<sup>st</sup> February 2009

---

## Three serious developments in one week

As the crisis deepens, experts have warned that the country could go up in flames as the ruling family intensifies its repression and human rights violations at astronomical scale. Three main developments have taken place over the past week.

First came the letter on 11th February of the UK Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Bill Rammell to Lord Avebury. Mr Rammell said: "We share your concerns over the Bahraini authority's decision to broadcast the alleged confessions of the accused on television. Broadcasting the confessions of the suspects was a breach of Bahrain's obligations under the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, to which Bahrain is a signatory. Our Ambassador made this point to the Minister of Interior on 15th January.

The Embassy has seen the broadcast of the "confessions" and did not see any physical evidence of torture. But the Ambassador also made the point to the Minister of Interior that the Bahraini government should ensure proper levels of access by doctor and the defence team to the detainees". The Minister ended his letter saying: "We will continue to monitor the situation and encourage Bahrain to uphold the obligations set out in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights".

The second was the decision by seven prominent opposition figures to enter into an open hunger strike to protest the continued detention of the leaders of the people, Mr Hassan Mushaime and Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad. The seven are: Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain, a prominent opposition figure who spent six years in jail in the nineties, Ayatullah Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, the Spokesman of Haq Movement

and a University lecturer, Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, a leading human rights activist, Sheikh Abdul Hadi Al Mokhowdher, Sheikh Saeed Al Nouri and Sheikh Fadhel Al Sitri. The seven have chosen to stay at the House of Abdul Wahab Hussain in the town of Nowaidrat. Delegations from the various societies and groups have visited them to declare their support. Hundreds of Bahrainis make a daily journey to show solidarity with the hunger strikers.

The third is the decision by a European Human Rights group to start a campaign for the arrest of four most prominent figures of the Al Khalifa for their role in genocidal policies against the Shia Muslims natives of Bahrain. A confidential letter has been submitted to the office of Moreno Ocampo, the Attorney General of the International Criminal Court. He was instrumental in indicting the Sudanese President, Omar Al Bashir, in relation to the Darfur crisis. International lawyers have determined that the situation in Bahrain is more serious than that in Darfur as the identity of the natives who represent over 70 percent of the population is under a serious threat by Sheikh Hamad's decision to grant Bahraini nationality to tens of thousands of foreigners. His aim is to alter the demographic balance against the natives on sectarian grounds. According to a human rights activist, the ball has now started rolling and it is only a matter of time before those considered responsible for the genocidal policies in Bahrain are brought to justice. A popular petition is underway to be signed by the natives and their international friends to urge the ICC officials start action against the Al Khalifa criminals. **15th February 2009**

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**

# 21 activists and policy makers from 19 countries call for release of prisoners

February 5, 2009

His Royal Highness  
Sheikh Hamad bin Issa AL KHALIFA  
King of Bahrain, Fax: +973 176 64 587

Your Highness:

We are twenty-one activists, policy-makers, faculty members and journalists from nineteen countries around the world.

We are writing You today to express our deep concerns about the safety and well-being of our friend and colleague, Dr. Abdul-Jalil Al-Singace. We are extremely worried about the rising campaign of harassment, defamation of character, and intimidation that has been waged against Dr. Al-Singace and others who are working to defend human rights and bring about peaceful political change. Furthermore, we are very concerned that two of his colleagues, Mr Hasan Mushaima and Mr Mohamed Habib Al-Muqdad, are still being detained, and we are deeply troubled by the manner of their arrest and detention.

We all had the chance to personally meet and know Dr. Al-Singace in 2007, during a summer program offered by the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law at Stanford's Freeman

Spogli Institute for International Studies. We all came to have a high regard for his character and commitment to human rights and values. That is why we respectfully request of your Royal Highness your most serious and urgent consideration of the following steps:

1. Secure the immediate and unconditional release from detention of Mr. Hassan Mushaima and Mr. Mohammed Habib Al-Muqdad.
2. Drop the charges against these two men, as well as against Dr. Al-Singace, and any reprisals related to their legitimate and peaceful activities seeking political reform and protection of human rights.
3. If there is serious evidence of any of these individuals being responsible for acts of violence or terrorism, charge them and try them according to international standards of due process, with international monitoring of the trial, while giving them the freedom to defend themselves.
4. Lift the travel ban against Dr. Abdul-Jalil Al-Singace.
5. Abolish the 2006 Counter Terrorism Law and amend the 1976 Penal Code to bring Bahrain into conformity with international human rights conventions, especially in relation to the practice of basic human rights and freedoms.
6. Cease the use of excessive force, arbitrary detention, and torture of detainees.

7. Cease targeting human rights defenders for harassment and defamation and instead ensure the protection of their own political and civil rights.

Please understand that our plea is apolitical. We are simply individuals concerned about human rights. Considering Bahrain's commitment and adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we trust Your personal attention to the matter.

**Sincerely**

David Abesadze, Head, Policy Analysis, Min. of Foreign Affairs Georgia  
Mohammad N Azizi Chairman, Center for Policy Priorities, Afghanistan  
Huda Ahmed Freelance journalist, UC Berkeley Iraq/ US  
Donya Aziz Member of Pakistan's National Assembly Pakistan  
Jay P. Chaudhary Independent Activists and Television Producer Nepal  
Laura Cosovanu Counselor, Stanford Univ. Law School Romania/ US  
Maina Kiai Former Chair, National Human Rights Commission Kenya  
Kingsley Bangwell Team Leader, Youngstars Foundation Nigeria  
Maria Eismont New Eurasia Foundation Russia  
Rabih El Chaer Independent Activist Lebanon  
Safnaz El Tarouty Assistant Lecturer, British Univ. Egypt  
Giao N. Hoang Attorney, Center for Legal Research & Services Vietnam  
Franck Kamunga ED, Droits Humains Sans Frontières DRC  
Hasmik Minasyan Career Foundation Canada  
Aasiya Riaz Joint Director, PILDAT Pakistan  
Taras Shevchenko Director, Kyiv Media Law Institute Ukraine  
Kathryn Stoner Weiss Associate Director, Center on US Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law  
Vera Tkachenko Legal Policy Research Centre Kazakhstan  
Roya Toloui Kurdish human rights activist Iran  
Aleksei Pak Legal Policy Research Centre Kazakhstan  
Olga Miroshnichenko Penal Reform International Kazakhstan

## **XIX** GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR FREE EXPRESSION **ARTICLE 19**

For immediate release, 5 February, 2009

ARTICLE 19 has written to Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of Bahrain, asking him to ensure that women's rights activist, Ghada Jamsheer, is protected from harassment and guaranteed her right to free expression.

Jamsheer is leader of the Women's Petition Committee which works to protect women and advocate for improved women's rights in the country's sharia courts. She has been repeatedly harassed in the course of her work and has been effectively banned from the country's media since 2007.

In November 2008, while attending the AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) Conference in South Africa, Jamsheer's home was reportedly entered by a state security agent and detailed photographs were taken of her residence. Her house phone, mobile phone and email account were also reportedly put under surveillance.

After reporting this incident to the police, Ms Jamsheer's 74-year-old mother and sister were then accused by the police of attacking the state security agent.

They are now facing court proceedings. Rather than the legitimate process of justice, this appears to be another attempt to intimidate Ms Jamsheer.

Ghada Jamsheer and her family have also received threatening text messages and have allegedly been followed by a car. Jamsheer is unable to publish any articles or obtain any media coverage under a reported media ban issued by His Excellency Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Minister of the Royal Court.

"The harassment campaign and the media ban against Ghada Jamsheer are directly related to her legitimate work in the defence of women's rights in Bahrain and is a clear violation of her right to freedom of expression and of the freedom of the press in Bahrain," comments Dr Agnès Callamard, Executive Director, ARTICLE 19. "It undermines much needed debate in Bahrain and, in particular, silences women's voices and discourages their participation in civil society."

In the letter to the Bahraini monarch, ARTICLE 19 expressed its concerns about the physical and psychological welfare of Ghada Jamsheer and her family, and urged the authorities to restore freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, by lifting the ban and putting a stop to all intimidation of human rights defenders in Bahrain.



# The Observatory For the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

## URGENT APPEAL

### Bahrain, February 6, 2009

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), has received new information and requests your urgent intervention in the following situation in Bahrain.

#### New information:

The Observatory was informed by reliable sources about the incommunicado detention of Mr. **Abduljalil Alsingace**, Head of the Human Rights Unit of the Haq Movement for Civil Liberties and Democracy in Bahrain, Mr. **Hasan Mushaima**, Secretary General of the Haq Movement of Civil Liberties and Democracy, and Mr. **Mohamed Habib Al-Meqdad**, a Shia religious scholar.

According to the information received, on January 26, 2009, Messrs. Abduljalil Alsingace, Hasan Mushaima and Mohamed Habib Al Meqdad were arrested by elements of the intelligence police and subsequently detained incommunicado. The former was released the following day from the Dry Dock detention centre while Messrs. Mushaima and Al Meqdad remain in solitary confinement, with no access to legal aid and without any explicit legal justification for their detention.

The Observatory expresses its deepest concern about Messrs. Hasan Mushaima and Mohamed Habib Al-Meqdad's incommunicado detention, and fears that they might be accused of charges indicated in the 2006 Counter Terrorism Law and the 1976 Penal Code, including "joining a group and supporting it financially to prevent authorities from implementing laws" as well as "abusing personal freedom of citizens through acts of terror". The Observatory recalls indeed that seven human rights defenders, including the three above-mentioned, had already been arrested in December amid allegations of "Terror Plot" (see background information).

The Observatory warns that some tenets of the 2006 Counter-Terrorism Law nurture an environment in which impunity and violation of basic human rights is allowed to propagate, such as Article 6 of the said Law, which provides life imprisonment in case of "establishment of an illegal association which opposes Bahrain's constitution and which uses terrorism as a mean to achieve its goals", an article that can be abusively used to sanction and silence all dissenting voices in the country. Given the prominent leadership roles of all detainees in their respective organisations, there is a real threat that they might be charged on the basis of the 2006 Law, and sentenced

to imprisonment.

The Observatory fears that the mentioned defenders have been targeted to deter them from pursuing their human rights activities, and urges the Bahraini authorities to put an end to all forms of harassment against them, in line with the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 9, 1998.

#### Background information:

On December 15, 2008, the authorities staged a wave of arrests to later announce uncovering an alleged "Terror Plot". Approximately twenty youths involved in social protest movements were arrested and detained incommunicado until December 28, 2008. According to the detainees' lawyers, the detainees showed signs of ill-treatment and torture during interrogation.

On December 28, 2008, a Government-owned and run TV "Bahrain Satellite" channel broadcast a pre-recorded video displaying unrelated images of violence amidst confessions of some of the detainees. The second day, daily newspapers showed publication of these confessions, names and pictures of thirteen of the youths, among them those shown in the TV broadcast.

One of the detainees, Mr. Hasan Ali Fateel - a former member of the Unemployed Committee - stated in his confession that Mr. **Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja**, former President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and Protection Coordinator at Frontline, had encouraged the unemployed in 2006 to organize a series of sit-ins near the Royal Court and the House of Representatives, without making any relevant connection with the alleged terrorist scheme. He also mentioned the names of Mr. Hasan Mushaima and Dr. Alsingace as being instigators for demonstrations and public protests. Other detainees stated in their broadcast "confessions" that they had been instigated and instructed by Messrs. Mohamed Habib Al-Meqdad, **Ali Ahmed**, **Ali Mushaima**, a former leading member of the Unemployed Committee living in the United Kingdom as political refugee, and **Abdulraoof Al-Shayeb**, former President of the National Committee for Martyrs and Victims of Torture living in the United Kingdom as political refugee, to carry out planned acts of terror. All are well known, outspoken and leading participants in activities involving the promotion and protection of human rights, in particular the question of the equality in the enjoyment of economic, political and social rights in Bahrain, particularly in relation to the Shi'a minority.

Messrs. Ali Mushaima and Abdulraoof

Alshayeb are now UK residents as they enjoy political asylum status after fleeing repression of the local authorities due to their human rights activities. Before and after the announcement of the alleged "Terror Plot" in December, the Bahrain authorities have been unsuccessfully exerting diplomatic pressure on the British authorities to have their political refugees status nullified in the UK.

#### Actions requested:

Please write to the authorities of Bahrain urging them to:

- Ensure that the physical and psychological integrity of Messrs. Alsingace, Mushaima and Al Meqdad be guaranteed in all circumstances;
- Disclose the whereabouts of, and immediately release Messrs. Mushaima and Al Meqdad, since their detention is arbitrary as it seems to merely aim at sanctioning their human rights activities;
- Put an end to all forms of harassment against them as well as against all human rights defenders in Bahrain;
- Conform with the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 9, 1998, in particular its Article 1, which provides that "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels", as well as Article 12(1) that provides "everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to participate in peaceful activities against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms", and Article 12(2) ("the State shall take all necessary measures to ensure the protection by the competent authorities of everyone, individually or in association with others, against any violence, threats, retaliation, *de facto* or *de jure* adverse discrimination, pressure or any other arbitrary action as a consequence of his or her legitimate exercise of the rights referred to in the present Declaration");
- Ensure in all circumstances respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with international human rights standards and international instruments ratified by Bahrain.

