

BAHRAIN

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

Bahrain faces bleak future as crisis of legitimacy intensifies

The political horizon in Bahrain is transforming rapidly as the gap between the people and the ruling family becomes wider. The developments of the past six months have indicated a more sombre situation with both sides grinding their axes for eventual showdown. The level of mutual hate has reached unprecedented levels; with both sides employing the tools at their disposal. While the people have restricted their attacks to verbal description of the dictatorship, despotism and corruption, the ruling family, especially the forces at the royal work have spared not means of attack against the Bahrainis. The head of Sheikh Hamad's palace is a known sectarian figure who has been attacking the native majority Baharna in his colloquial poems. According to a recent article published by the Los Angeles Times, Khalifa bin Ahmad Al Khalifa has always favoured hawkish approach towards the Shia Muslims of Bahrain, including the use of severe force to undermine their existence and rights. He is known to be close to extremist groups and has been pivotal in the policy of demographic change in the country. Many of the "new Bahrainis" come from regions known to cultivate extremism and terrorism. In a recent letter to the US President, the woman activist, Ghada Jamshir, has appealed for a rethink of the US policy towards Bahrain in light of the excesses of Khalid bin Ahmad. Recent events have confirmed the long-held suspicion that the ruling family have decided to adopt Khalid bin Ahmad's "final solution" that aims at exterminating the natives so that the ruling family may complete its designs on the lands it had occupied. Several events are testimony to these new policies. First came the mass arrests that started in December 2007 and continued for the following twelve month. The domestic and international pressures forced the ruler and his clique to climb down and release most of the political prisoners. It was an episode reminiscent of the events of the nineties. The results were the same. Gross violations of human rights were reported. Bahrain was, once again, brought to the forefront of the countries who routinely abused political detainees and violated its obligations under the international conventions regulating human rights of prisoners. Second came the summary punishment of

activists. The mass arrests were replaced with targeted arrests against those who are considered "hardliners" in their demands for their rights. The short periods of arrests (lasting between few hours to two days) enabled the members of the notorious "Death Squads" to inflict maximum pain on the detainees. Among the first victims of this kind of horrible retribution was Ali Jassim who was killed on 17th December 2007. The killers have been shielded by Sheikh Hamad regimes. The third phase has been used in recent weeks, and involves more dangerous treatment including executions and assassinations. Last month Moosa Jaffar Mulla Khalil, 32, was assassinated by a car bomb planted by the Death Squads under the command of Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, sectarian head of the royal court. These developments are dangerous and could lead to the much-anticipated Armageddon. The victims have now become more resolute in demanding the end of the mentality of occupation employed by the ruling Al Khalifa family. Where the extremists amongst the ruling family are directing the assault on public liberties, human rights and political agenda, their victims have now realized that it would be futile to expect real changes among members of the Al Khalifa. The ruler has sided with the hardliners. Websites, run and managed under the supervision of the royal court have become hotbeds for extremists and killers. In recent weeks, direct threats against the lives of political activists have been made. No effort has been made by senior members of the Al Khalifa to disown these threats or condemn them. In addition to the threats of force, media attacks have become more vicious. The ruler has apparently embraced some of the extremists to wage verbal and religious attacks against the pro-democracy activists inside and outside the country. Among them are members of the ruler's councils, elected or appointed. In these circumstances concerns have been made to the international community. Specific demands have been made by representatives of the Bahraini people for UN agencies and human rights bodies to intervene to protect native Bahrainis from the dangers of extinction. The

threat is real. With an estimated 50 thousands foreigners granted Bahrainis nationality every year, the natives have become under threat unless international intervention is made.

While the scenario is bleak, the eventual outcome is brighter. With the civil resistance to the Al Khalifa policies of occupation on the rise, it is hard to see how the Al Khalifa occupiers could make an exit from the quagmire. The threats against the lives of the opposition figures have infuriated the opposition. Last month a senior religious scholar residing in the holy city of Najaf received warnings of a terrorist attack by people contracted by the Al Khalifa to liquidate Sheikh Mohammad Sanad. Since then, his personal protection has been enhanced, while senior religious scholars, including Ayatullah Sayyed Ali Al Sistani, have pledged their solidarity and support against those whose lives are threatened by despotic regimes. It is now expected that Bahrain will enter into a Summer of Fury as both sides have taken the decision of confrontations on local and international streets. The people appeal to other forces in the arena to urge them to take more responsible stands in defending the existence and rights of the native Baharna natives. As no wise man is known to be speak openly about these issues with sheikh Hamad and his lieutenants, Western democracies are urged to take firmer and more principled stands against population engineering, political depravity and dictatorship. The interests of all sides are inter-twined; the only way to secure these rights is through transparent policies towards the regimes which are most vicious and backward. No one is asking for donations, but the Bahraini pro-democracy activists will continue their relentless struggle until their legitimate rights are secured within their own country. As the recent events have shown, the Al Khalifa allies will always find themselves in defensive positions when it comes to the principles of reforms, establishing the rule of law or ending the demographic engineering plan. The Political naturalization has become a sham in the history of the Al Khalifa, Bahrain's seeks to distance itself from the history of occupation, domination and servitude.

US pressure sought as Death Squads continue their abductions

Another abduction by the Death Squads has confirmed the suspicion that the ruling Al Khalifa family are out to kill and maim Bahrainis who oppose their dictatorial rule. A young Bahraini, Sayyed Adnan, was abducted in the early hours of yesterday, taken to a remote area, beaten up, abused and then dumped near his house. This is the second time in recent weeks in which a Bahraini has been treated in this vicious way. Jaffar Kahdhem had been subjected to a similar treatment two weeks ago. He left hospital last week only to be accused by the interior ministry of being "engaged in illegitimate relations" with a girl. This was the second justification for the abduction after the first in which it had claimed that he had been attacked by robbers who were trying to take his mobile phone. The abduction of Sayyed Adnan has now confirmed the worst-case scenario that the Al Khalifa have now decided to follow the path of the South American dictatorships which, in the eighties, used deployed Death Squads against the activists, especially in El Salvadore and Guatemala. The Bahraini people have stood up with

bravery to this onslaught by the occupiers of their land. In the past few days, the walls of karzakkan were painted with anti-regime slogans, calls for an immediate end to this barbaric regime and demand the immediate release of the political prisoners. Similar slogans were painted on the walls of Bilad Al Qadeem. The feelings of the public are running high as the fear of obliteration of the country's identity has spread among the people. The sectarian attacks against the majority of the Bahrainis by the newly-naturalised foreigners, mostly extremist elements, have increased in recent weeks. The earlier debacle of levelling unsubstantiated allegations against innocent Bahrainis that they were planning terrorist acts, has tarnished the reputation of the regime among the international human rights bodies. The political prisoners had succeeded in overturning the table on the head of the Al Khalifa in the last court appearance on 24th March. The regime was forced to swallow the poison and release the Bahraini hostages. This situation has forced Miss Ghada Jamshir, the woman activist who had been targeted for smear and banning from writ-

ing in the local media, to write to the US President, calling for international intervention to save the people of Bahrain from the claws of the Al Khalifa state-terrorism. The letter was handed to the First Secretary at the American Embassy in Manama. Miss Jamshir described the intensification of repression against the activists, the lack of transparency in the judicial system and the employment of foreigners as additional forces in security to attack the Bahrainis. She appealed for US pressure on the ruling family to introduce real reforms and end the misery that has engulfed the country for decades.

An article published by the Los Angeles Times has claimed that there are two factions within the ruling Al Khalifa family with regards to the ongoing instability in the country. The hawkish faction, led by Khalid bin Ahmad, the head of the royal court, adopts a strategy of empowering the extremists among the Sunnis to enable them to stand up to the challenges from the pro-democracy movement. The other, led by the crown prince adopts a softer approach towards the Shia majority.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
22 May 2009

Bahrainis subjected to bloody attacks by Death Squads

A young Bahraini was yesterday dragged by members of the Al Khalifa Death Squads from his work and led away to the torture chambers. Hassan Salman Bu Ali, 26, from Al Ne'aim, was manhandled by the mercenaries as he was taken from his office and subjected to horrific treatment by the torturers. Last night the ruling family issued an order to keep him behind bars for one week as he is investigated for allegedly revealing the names of torturers. The Al Khalifa has been running a secret web of informers, torturers and killers for the past few years as it faced insurrection by the natives calling for a people's constitution and an end to the policies of genocide against the native Baharna.

Meanwhile several human rights organisations have condemned the vicious attack by members of the Death Squads on Jaffar Kadhem, 32, who is still receiving treatment at the Salmaniya Hospital. Human Rights Watch (HRW) has issued a strong indictment against the dictatorial regime which has imposed a blackout on the crime committed against Mr Kadhem who had received horrific injuries to the face and body. In its statement released two days ago, HRW said: "Bahrain should immediately begin a thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction and torture of the human rights activist Ja'far Kadhim Ibrahim". It said the government should make public the results of the investigation into Ibra-

him's abduction and beating.

Yesterday, Front Line issued a similar statement in which it said that it was "deeply concerned following reports of the abduction and beating of human rights defender Mr Jaafar Kadhim in Manama, on 7 May 2009". It called on the authorities in Bahrain to: 1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the abduction and beating of Jaafar Kadhim, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards; 2. Guarantee the security and physical and psychological integrity of Jaafar Kadhim; 3. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Bahrain, carrying out their legitimate work in defence of human rights, are available to operate free of restrictions and reprisals. To counter these demands by the international bodies, the ruling Al Khalifa family has attempted to assassinate the victim while he laid down at his hospital bed. In the past two days, at least two attempts were made on his life. In the first attack, the hospital guard shouted loudly forcing them to flee. The guard, who is believed to be from the town of Jidhafs, was later summoned and warned of serious consequences if he resisted the Death Squads again. Yesterday, however, they managed to reach his bed and threatened him with violent retribution if he described to outsiders what had happened to him. Meanwhile, Mr Abbas Al Ekri was yesterday taken to a kangaroo court, presided

over by one of the Al Khalifa executioners, to answer for taking another victim of the Al Khalifa terrorism to hospital. Last week he took Ali Sa'ad, who is badly burnt and blinded in an assassination attempt that killed his companion in the car, Moosa Jaffar Mulla Khalil. The two were in the car which had been booby-trapped by the Death Squads. While Moosa was martyred instantly by the powerful, professionally-made bomb, Ali Sa'ad was taken to hospital by the defendant who happened to be passing by. Nothing has been heard of both in the past two days.

Bahrain's military dictator, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, has now decided to take our country into another phase of bloody confrontations, assassinations and collective punishment.

He has imported thousands of former Saddam's soldiers and spies to carry out assassinations, car bombs and wage a sectarian war against the majority Baharna population. A plot has been uncovered to assassinate a leading religious figure who is teaching at the Islamic Seminary in Najaf, Iraq. Ayatullah Sheikh Mohammad Sanad was to be killed by a terrorist group operating in Iraq, with links to the Al Khalifa family in Bahrain. The senior Ayatullah has been warned about the plot by informed sources and extra cautious measures have been implemented to protect him.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th May 2009

Calls for international intervention after attacks on activists

The vicious attack by three members of the Death Squads on Jaffar Kadhem, 32, from the town of Demestan has created an atmosphere of apprehension and fear among the Bahrainis. It was an audacious attack with a clear political message and has been described by those who saw the victim's horrible injuries as "pure terror". Mr Kadhem was on his way to Mr Hassan Mushaime's house when his car was intercepted by a car with three peoples inside. They dragged him into the car and drove him to a remote corner of the Town of Jidhafs. There they attacked him with their hands, batons and shoes all over his body. He was then dumped at the doorsteps of Mr Mushaime's house. He was blatantly told: "Let Mushaime help you", before leaving him for dead. Mr Mushaime, 61, called some friends who hurried the victim to Al Salmaniya hospital. He had sustained serious injuries to his eyes, face, head and body. The doctors treating him were horrified that such a treatment would be meted on citizens by the agents of the regime. The latest crime by the Sheikh Hamad's Death Squads has confirmed the existence of a policy of extermination of public figures who oppose the hereditary dictatorship. There have been several attacks in recent times on activists, in none of them has there been any arrest or

investigation. Following the release of many prisoners last month under international and local pressures, the ruling family wanted the Formula 1 race to pass without embarrassing incidents of political or security nature. As soon as the race finished towards the end of April, the Al Khalifa's plan was put into action. On 30th April, a young Bahraini was assassinated by the Death Squads. His car was blown to pieces leading to his instant death. Mr Moosa Jaffar was with his close friend, when their car was exploded by a booby-trap bomb. Moosa Jaffar Mull Khalil was at the steering wheel when he was killed; his companion, Ali Abdulla Sa'ad was seriously injured in the blast. He lost both eyes and is still fighting for his life. Similar crimes had been committed before. Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad's car was being booby-trapped by three members of the Death Squads at the early hours of the morning of 17th January 2009 when he came out of his house unexpectedly. The culprits fled the scene, and the attempt to fit the booby trap was foiled. The equipment fitted to the car was probably a listening device. Last year, Sayyed Ageel Al Sari, an activist young clergy man discovered a similar device fitted to his car. These attacks have continued unabated. The ruling family has kept a tight lip on these crimes. Their brazen action yesterday against Jaffar Kadhem is seen as a desper-

ate act by an illegal regime that seeks to silence his opponents by any means. It is now widely established that the al Khalifa are recruiting members of the defunct defence teams of Saddam Hussein. They have been waging a sectarian war against the Bahrainis. Their tactics include creating sectarian confusion with the hope that these would provide a shield against the rising tide of anti-regime activism. At mid-day today, some officials from the Prosecutor's office visited the victim in an attempt to silence him after his case became one of the most audacious terrorist act in living memory. The criminals did not attempt to hide their heinous act; they wanted the message to be clear and decisive. It was a disastrous failure for the hereditary dictatorship.

The situation has now become so polarised between the ruling family and the people of Bahrain that it is unlikely that the two sides will be able to reconcile. The recent crimes of torture, summary justice in the streets against the Bahrainis and the spate of killings committed by the Death Squads have forced Bahrainis to seek international intervention to protect them against the evils of this hereditary dictatorship.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
8th May 2009

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

HRW: Investigate Abduction, Beating of Rights Activist

May 12, 2009
(New York) - Bahrain should immediately begin a thorough and impartial

investigation into the abduction and torture of the human rights activist Ja'far Kadhim Ibrahim, Human Rights Watch said today. Men whom Ibrahim believed were working for a Bahraini security agency abducted him on the night of May 7, 2009, and beat him severely with batons.

Ibrahim had been contacting political activists recently released from detention concerning their allegations that they had been subjected to torture and abuse in detention. Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), said Ibrahim believes that the men who attacked him are agents of the National Security Apparatus - an official security force - citing their use of walkie-talkies and the batons they used to beat him.

"It looks like the men who abducted and beat Ja'far Ibrahim intended to teach him a lesson - that pursuing torture allegations in Bahrain today carries a high price," said Joe Stork, deputy director of the Middle East division at Human

Rights Watch. "The government needs to appoint an independent prosecutor or commission to investigate this incident as the first step in bringing the attackers to justice."

Rajab told Human Rights Watch that he spoke with Ibrahim in his hospital room on May 8. Ibrahim said that at approximately 8:45 p.m. the previous day, he was driving in the Jid Hafsa neighborhood, west of the capital, Manama, when two cars cornered him on the road. At least six men in plain clothes, some with walkie-talkies, dragged Ibrahim from his car and confiscated his wallet and two mobile phones. The men blindfolded Ibrahim, forced him into one of their cars, and drove 10 to 15 minutes to an unidentified area, where they beat him unconscious.

When he recovered consciousness he found himself covered in blood and back in his car, alone. He attempted to drive himself to the nearby house of Hasan Mushaima, the head of Haq, an opposition political party. Eventually, acquaintances drove him to the nearby Salmania Public Hospital, where he remains with wounds to his face and head, as well as two broken ribs.

Photographs taken by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights show him badly bruised, with swollen facial features, stitches, and a

brace on his head and neck. At the time of the attack, Ibrahim was working on behalf of the BCHR and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, documenting recent allegations of torture in detention and assisting the families of detainees.

"The abduction and beating of Ja'far Ibrahim are a wake-up call that Bahrain needs to investigate seriously and hold accountable those responsible for violence against dissidents," Stork said. "The message here seems to be that torture is acceptable in Bahrain."

Ibrahim, 41 years old and a father of two, was himself only recently released from detention. In the early hours of February 4, he and fellow rights activist Ali Hassan Salman were taken from their homes by security agents without warrants or explanation and detained for a month without access to a lawyer or family members. Ibrahim was released on March 2.

Bahrain's obligations as party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights include the right of individuals not to be tortured and the right to freedom of association and peaceful public assembly. The UN Convention

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Bahrain's Shiites push for rights

By REBECCA SANTANA

MANAMA, Bahrain (AP) — It seemed like a moment of reconciliation in this Gulf island nation's bitter sectarian divide, when Sunni Muslim rulers suddenly released a group of jailed Shiite activists. Shiites, who days before had been burning tires in protests, cheered in the streets.

But it was a short-lived hope. Since the activists' release a month ago, there's been no sign the government is pursuing any dialogue with Shiites.

If that doesn't change, Shiites warn, more turmoil could be ahead.

Bahrain is tiny with only 530,000 citizens in an island nation smaller than New York City. But it is a key U.S. ally, home to the Navy's 5th Fleet, in the strategic and oil-rich Persian Gulf.

It also lies on a fault line in the standoff dividing the Middle East, where Sunni Arab governments fear any sign of the growing power of Shiite Iran.

Bahrain's Shiites say they have nothing to do with Iran and are only seeking equality in a country where they are the majority. But their demands are seen by many Sunnis as a stalking horse for Tehran's regional ambitions. "The question now that the Arab world is facing is the question of loyalty — how you identify yourself," said Mustafa Alani, a security expert at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai.

Other Arab nations with Shiite populations watch Bahrain closely. If Bahrain's sectarian divide gets out of control, it could inflame tensions in other areas where Shiites advocate for more rights such as Saudi Arabia. "If the scale of things escalates in Bahrain, it's going to escalate elsewhere," said Toby Jones, an assistant professor of Middle East history at New Jersey's Rutgers University who studies Bahrain.

Shiites make up as much as 70 percent of Bahrain's population, according to a 2008 State Department report. But the country is ruled by a Sunni elite headed by the ruling Khalifa family.

Shiites have complained of discrimination for decades. They say Sunnis get the best government jobs and housing, while Shiites are barred from high posts in the military and security forces and suffer from higher rates of poverty.

Shiites say the situation is only getting worse. The percentage of high-level government posts held by Shiites has fallen to 13 percent in 2008 from between 25 and 30 percent in 1999, according to the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. Wefaq, the only Shiite group in parliament, has 17 of the elected lower house's 40 seats — a low proportion that Shiites blame on gerrymandering of districts to favor Sunnis.

Far from the modern glass office buildings of downtown Manama, Shiite villages are easily identified by crumbling apartment buildings, now blackened with char marks

from tires burned in recent protests. Posters of opposition leaders and graffiti bashing Bahrain's royal family plaster the walls. Shiites also accuse the government of trying to change the sectarian balance by giving citizenship to Sunnis from Yemen, Pakistan, Syria and Jordan, a claim the government denies.

Sunnis, in turn, accuse Shiites of secret loyalty to Iran. "The Shia — they are with Iran," said Noora al-Fadhel, a 21-year-old Sunni woman at a shopping mall. Iran, she said, is trying to stir up Shiites against Sunnis.

Ghanim Fadhul Al Buainain, a Sunni lawmaker from the pro-government Al-Asala party, contends Iran definitely has "some influence" among the country's Shiites.

Shiites dispute the accusation they get orders from Iran. They point out that most Bahraini Shiites turn for spiritual leadership to Iraq's most prominent Shiite cleric — Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani — not Iran's supreme leader.

But fears of Iran's influence could become a self-fulfilling prophecy, said rights activist Abdulhadi Alkhwaja. "If the ruling family keeps the same policies, cornering the Shia, marginalizing them,

while Iran is gaining regional influence, there will come one day when most of the Shia in Bahrain will revert to Iran," he said.

Earlier this year, protests exploded in Shiite areas after a number of top Shiite opposition leaders were arrested. The detainees were put on trial in February, accused of seeking to overthrow the government through terrorism.

In mid-April, the king issued a surprise pardon that freed 22 of the arrested Shiites, along with around 150 other prisoners held on security charges.

Since then, however, ties have remained strained. Some Shiites say they don't think the government was seeking reconciliation, but merely wanted to quiet protests ahead of a high-profile annual Formula 1 race in April.

Nazar al-Baharna, a Shiite who serves as state minister of foreign affairs, denies any government discrimination and says protests are not the way to solve problems. "If we are a country of law, then they have to go through the proper channels," he said.

But many Shiites say frustrations are growing. Young protesters "think their future is lost before their eyes. They see themselves as without a job," said human rights activist Naji Fati.



Abu JaFFeR

HRW calls for investigation, *Continued from Page 3*

against Torture and Other Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to which Bahrain is a state party, prohibits torture and cruel and inhuman treatment and requires all cases of torture to be investigated and the perpetrators prosecuted. Bahraini press coverage of Ibrahim's abuse has been limited to one article in the independent newspaper Al Wasat on May 9, in which a spokesperson for the director of the Northern Governorate Police said that Ibrahim was a victim of robbery, despite the fact that, according to Rajab, no money had been taken from his billfold. The websites of many prominent critics of the government and most human rights organizations that would normally have published details of such an incident continue to be blocked in Bahrain.

Human Rights Watch said the government should make public the results of the investigation into Ibrahim's abduction and beating.