

BAHRAIN

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

Together against state-sponsored terrorism on British soil

The recent escalation in State Terrorism adopted by the Al Khalifa junta against the Bahrainis is yet another indication of the state of desperation of the occupiers of this island in the middle of the Gulf. It is reminiscent of the extent to which dictatorial regimes would go in their attempts to silence opposition to their fledgling regimes as popular resistance intensifies. The attacks on three opposition figures in London have been swiftly condemned by the whole spectrum of the opposition and human rights bodies. However, they also raised eyebrows among opposition groups which were shocked to see that the Al Khalifa junta has finally decided to export its terrorism to UK with all the possible ramifications such acts may lead to.

There are several explanations to this fundamental change in tactics but it is also an indication of despair and deep feeling of lack of popular legitimacy. It is now abundantly clear that the Al Khalifa junta has lost the confidence of the people of Bahrain and embarked on a futile attempt to change the demography of the country through the implementation of population transfer similar to that that had been adopted by the Israelis after the occupation of Palestine. While the Al Khalifa junta still views this demographic engineering a way out of the chronic rejection by Bahrainis of a regime based on the mentality, ethics and policies of occupation, the outcome of this policy is far from clear. It could easily lead to more catastrophic outcome including civil war between the natives and the settlers.

While the investigations continue to catch the perpetrators of the attacks against members of the Bahrainis opposition, several facts have come to light. The first is that clear warning had been received by the Bahrainis opposition only few days prior to the attacks. The warnings came from close circles to the ruling junta. The attacks took the form of physical attacks in the street and an arson attack with the aim of liquidating a whole family. The second is that the sudden increase in the physical punishment of the activists has taken place in the past six months, and that several activists inside Bahrain had been kidnapped, tortured almost the point of death before be-

ing dumped in alleyways. It seems that the aim is to send a message to the members of the opposition that the Al Khalifa junta would no longer tolerate dissent in any shape or form. The third is the apparent lack of comprehension by the senior members of the junta that state terrorism had not worked in the past and is unlikely to work in now or in the future. Aggressors had always been defeated. This is what happened in India, Kenya, former Rhodesia, South Africa, Iraq and elsewhere. It is true that targeting opponents is tempting but its outcome could not be guaranteed. Forth is that the ruling junta has failed to observe the lessons of history including the fact that the oppressors may add few years to their political lives but their ultimate end of failure could not be doubted.

It has now become clear that the Al Khalifa failure in the Al Hujjaira saga had infuriated the "senior" members of the Al Khalifa junta. They were forced to abandon the failed stage-managed play and release the Bahraini hostages unwillingly. Despite the attempts to achieve a face-saving solution, including letters of plea from detainees, the regime was so humiliated to be exposed to be so fraudulent, liar and human rights violator that a total blackout was imposed on the state-run media not to discuss the black saga in any detail. Few insiders have confirmed that the Al Khalifa junta was so furious that the ruler, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, personally agreed to the launching of the state-sponsored terrorism against Bahrainis. It had been known for sometime that the royal court, under the management of a notorious sectarian, Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khlaifa, had formed squads of "Death Squads" to deal with the opposition activists in bloody ways. Among the heinous crimes committed by these squads are: the abduction, torture and leaving for dead of Jaffar Kadhem and several others, the killing of Musa Jaffar Mulla Khalil, with a car bomb, thought to be similar to those used against the Shia in Iraq, and the maiming of his colleague, Ali Sa'ad and the escalation of threats and torture against detainees.

The targeting of opponents in exile is a new addition to the black list of crimes committed by the Al Khalifa junta. It is potentially more serious than other tactics as it infringes on the sovereignty of other nations. The UK authorities have been alerted to this escalation, but they have hitherto refrained from taking the issue seriously. They ignore these warnings on the perils of the British people. Terrorism has always been a heinous crime and acts of terrorism are indications of desperation by groups or regimes who have failed to achieve their goals by peaceful means. The Bahraini opposition has always been civilized but also committed in the pursuit of their political goals. They will continue their goals of achieving a constitutional rule based on the will and aspiration of the Bahraini people. They will continue to oppose the mentality of occupation, oppression and dictatorship of the Al Khalifa junta. As they celebrate the National Day on 15th August which coincides with British withdrawal in 1971, they will affirm their commitment to democracy and the rule of law, their struggle against hereditary dictatorship and their resistance to the mentality of occupation. They will leave no stone unturned in this struggle, and will not be deterred by acts of state terrorism against the people of Bahrain. They will also remember the black day on 25th August 1975 when the Al Khalifa occupiers dissolved the only legitimate legislature based on a constitution written by the people of Bahrain. They do so with full conviction that eventually the will of the people will prevail while occupation, despotism and hereditary dictatorship will be destined to the dustbin of history. The Al Khalifa junta has engaged in serious acts of state terrorism, the latest of which are the unprovoked terrorist attacks against members of the Bahraini opposition. They need to be confronted with the full weight of the rule of law and by the total vigour of the UK's law enforcement agencies. Complacency will only lead to the proliferation of state-sponsored terrorism and blood will be spelt by the Al Khalifa Death Squads on British soil. That will be a black day for the freedom of speech.

Bahrain is back to the black days when torturers' rule OK

The plight of about 30 Bahrainis languishing in Al Khalifa torture chambers has become a serious cause for worry among the people. Most of them have spent more than 18 months behind bars for trumpeted charges invented to justify their incarceration. Among them is a young Bahraini jailed, tortured and abused allegedly for possessing information about the torturers within the Al Khalifa notorious secret service. Hassan Salman, 26, was arrested on 14th May 2009 as he entered his office. He was led away to the torture centre at Al Adliya. He was then led to his flat which was thoroughly searched. Their belongings were confiscated including some CDs and private family photos. The Al Khalifa then took him to the prosecution office where he has been incarcerated ever since. Although all investigations were completed, this Bahraini young man has remained in dire conditions behind bars where the administration of torture is routine. He was paraded in front of an Al Khalifa kangaroo court which decided to intensify his ordeal by repeatedly extending his incarceration. On 12th July he was paraded again at the court which, once again, decided to postpone the hearing until 12th September. Time appears to be of no value especially when dealing with a real Bahraini. Mr

Hassan lives at the town of Sanabis which had its share of repression by the Al Khalifa. Although his lawyers requested a bail out, the Al Khalifa judges turned down the request. He is now back in the torture cells with a gloomy future ahead of him.

On 9th July a young Bahraini was stopped at Dubai airport and told that he was banned from entering the United Arab Emirates, on the basis of "information supplied by the Bahraini authorities". Mohammad Salman, 28, was detained at a room within the airport for several hours before returning him back to Bahrain. No reason or explanation was given to him for this action. Mr Salman is one of those arrested in the notorious case of Al Hujjaira, announced by the Al Khalifa last December. Thirty five people, including Mohammad Salman, were arrested, tortured and subjected to horrific ordeal for more than four months before they were released by a sudden decision by the ruler. Reliable information suggested that he had been told that the stage-managed show was weak in presentation and content and that any further court appearances by the defendants after the 24th March trial would become a trial of the regime not the victims. The feeling of defeat has pushed the Al Khalifa to more desperate acts including sponsoring ter-

rorist acts against activists inside and outside the country. Earlier this month another activist who was in detention with Mr Salman was arrested by the Syrian authorities as he tried to enter the country on his way to Iraq. He was subsequently released.

In another, and potentially more serious development, the Al Khalifa has decided to shun the international community by promoting torturers to public offices. Instead of heeding the call for the arrest and trial of torturers they have been sheltered, promoted and offered prestigious position within the political hierarchy. The most notorious torturer in the history of Bahrain has announced his candidacy to the shura council, whose 80 members are half-appointed half-elected. Although it is an ineffective body, the election or appointments of torturers as members confirms the long-held charge against the Al Khalifa that they are not fit to rule as they respect their own rules and laws that prohibit the use of torture. Since the present ruler inherited his position after the death of his father in 1999, other torturers have been awarded medals, appointed advisors, ambassadors or director generals in some government departments. The message is loud and clear.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

16th July 2009

Internationalising the case of Bahrain takes new dimensions

The Syrian authorities detained a prominent Bahraini personality on Wednesday 1st July as he was entering the country. Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad was on his way to Iraq when he was stopped by the Syrian border police and led away to an unknown destination. Nothing has been heard of him since. It is believed that the ruling Al Khalifa family had asked for his detention after its failure to prosecute him while he was in detention earlier this year. He was arrested in January by the Al Khalifa torturers, subjected to horrific ordeal with his colleague, Hassan Mushaime, before their release in May. He has been an outspoken critic of the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship and a leading figure in a charity helping orphaned children. Among the reasons given by Al Khalifa for his earlier detention was helping children in need without their permission. The latest episode is an indication of the extent to which the ruling family would go to curtail the freedom of Bahrainis. In Autumn 2001 the ruler summoned several leading figures to tell them that the US authorities had a list of 99 names of Bahrain's opposition figures who would be arrested if they set foot outside Bahrain. Subsequently the American Embassy issued a statement

denying that any Bahraini was on any American black list at the time. Many Bahrainis have either been arrested or banned by other Gulf states on orders from the Al Khalifa. Several demonstrations and protests in the past two days have been organised calling for his release. One citizen was severely injured by a sound bomb used by the mercenaries.

In a further development, the ruling family has threatened to kill tens of Bahrainis who are held hostages at their torture chambers. Their agents working for the prosecution has demanded the execution of Bahrainis who had been languishing in torture chambers for the past two years, falsely accused of killing a mercenary working for the Al Khalifa. Several reports have confirmed that the victim had died of causes incompatible with attacks by rioters six months before the alleged date of their killing. But the ruling family is adamant on its programme of extermination and genocide against the people of Bahrain, a programme it had initiated soon after the present ruler took over following the demise of his father in 1999. Despite the pleas of the lawyers for new investigation following widespread claims of torture, the Al Khalifa are in no mood to abide by the rule of their own laws. On the days before the latest session on Tuesday 30th June, the

walls of Karzakkan, Ma'amir, Sitra, Al Daiha and Sanabis and Sitra and other areas were used by pro-democracy activists to write slogans calling for ending the emergency rule and the release of the political prisoners. Small fires were seen on the main roads in the areas of protests. The mercenaries used rubber bullets, tear and chemical gas against demonstrators.

Cases of intensive torture have now been authenticated in details despite the regime's heavy-handed policy against those who testify to international bodies. The extent of the evidence is overwhelming and those linked to the campaign to criminalise senior figures of the Al Khalifa are confident of an eventual trial of those Al Khalifa officials accused of serious crimes against humanity. The moves against the ruler, the present and former heads of national security and the minister of royal court are implicated in crimes against humanity. Of particular interest are the moves against the present Al Khalifa Ambassador to London, Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, who is accused of re-introducing torture at extensive scale when he was installed as the head of national security apparatus in 2005. Several of his victims have testified against him.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

3rd July 2009

British government urged to investigate attacks against Bahrainis

22-07-2009

In a serious and particular progress which may represent a new phase of targeting Bahraini activists outside their country, both Mr. Abbas Al-Omran – board member in the BCHR – and Mr. Ali Mushaima – administrative member in the Committee of Unemployed and Low-income – were subjected to physical abuse in the evening of 2 July 2009 in one of the streets of London, they then received a call warning them from continuing their protests in front of the Bahraini embassy. On 6 July 2009, the house of the Bahraini political opponent Dr. Saeed Al-Shehabi was exposed to a deliberate attempt of fire where the house's front and the car of Al-Shehabi's daughter were burnt. Police investigations showed that the fire was deliberate. It is to mention that since the last 2 years a group of Bahraini activists obtained the right to political asylum in UK, and it has witnessed as well the escalation of protest acts especially after appointing an intelligence officer accused of Human Rights Violation as an ambassador for the Bahraini government in the UK.

According to the testimonies of Ali Mushaima and Abbas Al-Omran, in the evening of 2 July 2009 and when they were returning from an educational activity heading towards their place of residence in London, they were subjected to physical abuse by people who seemed to have been waiting for them in one of the street corners. The group was made up of three people in their mid twenties and who were of African origins, and who were wearing head masks. Both Al-Omran and Mushaima attempted to escape the attack, but the attackers continued to chase them until Al-Omran fell to the ground due to the severity of the beating he was subjected to. His falling on the ground, the rise of screams and the attention of some of the people passing by or

the residents of the same neighborhood made the attackers escape. Mushaima suffered from injuries in different parts of the body and a bulge in the upper forehead. Abbas Al-Omran suffered from a swelling at top of the right eyebrow, and a swelling in the lower right shoulder with some wounds in both knees and elbow. After the escape of the attackers, Mushaima and Al-Omran hurried to inform the police who came after 10 minutes to the site of the attack and initiated an investigation in the incident. Apparently, the cameras installed in the streets recorded the attack that the defenders were exposed to.

At 2:30 pm on Sunday 5 July 2009, Mushaima received an unknown call on his mobile phone from an unnumbered call and from a person whose accent seems of African origins, saying, "Do you remember the beating you and your partner got a couple of nights ago? Next time, you will get killed if you continue your demonstrations and protests against the Bahraini government or in front of its embassy in London. You better stay away from the embassy or else you will face the same attack you were subjected to", the call ended in less than a minute. The next day, Mushaima conveyed the updates of the attack and the unknown call to the same security body.

Ali Mushaima and Abbas Al-Omran with a group of Bahraini activists living in London were all known for their continuous weekly peaceful protests, sometimes in front of the Bahrain embassy in London, and sometimes in Hyde Park Speakers' Corner. The aim of their activities and events was to draw attention to the human rights violations that are taking place in Bahrain. Mr. Abbas Al-Omran is a human rights activist who participated in establishing several human rights committees and groups in Bahrain. He was arrested more than once and was subjected to several physical abuses in the past due to his human rights activities before traveling to

London in December 2008, where he was surprised to see his name among the list of those involved in the "terrorist plot", and which later the charges against them were suspended with a Royal decision. Mr. Ali Mushaima, who obtained political refugee, had been an administrative member in the Committee of the Unemployed and Low-income before leaving Bahrain, and he is known for his human rights activity amidst the other demand committees. He had been subjected to physical abuses by the Special Security men and sometimes men with civilian clothes. This is the first time that both of them get subjected to abuses outside their country Bahrain.

In another incident and at around 3:30 am on Monday 6 July 2009, an anonymous person attempted to set fire to the house of the well-known political opponent and who is living in London Dr. Saeed Al-Shehabi, who was fast asleep with his family and children during the incident. According to the testimony of Al-Shehabi and his family, the fire was brought under control after the housewife took notice of it, and then they rushed to wake up the rest of the family members who worked on putting out the fire. The fire destroyed the front of the house and the car of Al-Shehabi's daughter and boxes for gathering paper in front of the house. The statements of witnesses and the spread of the smell of kerosene around the house confirm that the incident was deliberate. Dr. Saeed Al-Shehabi had received a warning less than a week before the incident about the Bahraini security apparatuses intention in carrying out imminent attacks against some of the opposition's activists abroad and human rights defenders. Dr. Saeed Al-Shehabi is one of the figures of the Bahraini opposition living in the UK and is heading the Bahrain Freedom Movement.

The Bahraini embassy in London is the only embassy apart from all other Bahraini embassies abroad which is closely linked to the National Security Apparatuses rather than ministry of foreign affairs. The current National Security Apparatuses is headed by Sheikh Khalifa bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa, the former ambassador in London. The current ambassador there is Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Rashid Al-Khalifa and he is the former president of the same Apparatuses. During the presidency of the former and current ambassador to this apparatus, it became infamous for the increasing attacks against human rights defenders or the political activists opposing the government. The majority of those obtaining political asylum in Britain are victims of these attacks, however this is the

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Bahrain officials make unprecedented Israel trip

Bahraini officials visited Israel in an official capacity for the first time on Friday to collect five of their nationals Israel was deporting, a Bahraini news report and an Israeli official said.

The Bahrain News Agency said the delegation was sent by the interior and foreign ministries to collect the five Bahrainis, who were detained on a boat bound for Gaza from Cyprus this week while trying to break the Israeli blockade on the territory.

An Israeli foreign ministry spokesman confirmed the delegation's arrival and said it was the first time officials from the Gulf state had visited Israel in an official capacity.

This is the first time Bahrainis have visited Israel but their only purpose was to process their nationals and fly them out, there is no other significance to their visit," spokesman Yigal Palmor said.

The Bahrain News Agency said the officials had arrived by air at Ben-Gurion International Airport.

The Israel navy intercepted and seized their small ferry boat on Tuesday. The vessel, operated by the U.S.-based Free Gaza Movement, was carrying pro-Palestinian activists and aid to the Gaza Strip from Cyprus.

The Israel navy maintains a blockade of the Gaza Strip, which is ruled by the Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas.

Bahrain may be first to make gestures to Israel

Jul. 22, 2009

Herb Keinon , THE JERUSALEM POST
US Middle East envoy George Mitchell, who is expected in Israel next week, is also expected to give a speech in Bahrain, which is emerging as a leading candidate to make some kind of gesture toward Israel to move the diplomatic process forward. State Department spokesman Philip Crowley - who last week characterized a Washington Post op-ed piece by Bahrain Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa calling for more engagement with Israel a "very, very welcome step" - said on Monday that Mitchell would be delivering a speech in the small Gulf island-state during his regional tour.

Israeli officials said that while any gesture or step from Bahrain would obviously be welcomed, the country did not have a leading role in the Arab world, and it was unlikely it would lead the way for other countries - such as Saudi Arabia - to take steps toward normalization with Israel.

"Gestures by Bahrain would be nice, but don't necessarily mean anything," one official said. "The question is what influence they would have on any other country, and the answer is none. Obviously it is better than nothing, but moves by Bahrain won't change anything in Arab public opinion or Arab politics."

US government sources have said in recent

weeks that US President Barack Obama's pressure on Israel to stop settlement construction has been accompanied by equal pressure on the Arab world to make some gestures of normalization toward the Jewish state at the beginning, and not the end, of the diplomatic process.

Obama's overtures to Saudi Arabia have, however, fallen on deaf ears so far, and a personal letter to Morocco's King Muhammad VI earlier this year to "be a leader in bridging gaps between Israel and the Arab world" has not had any visible effect.

Bahrain, a pro-Western country with Sunni rulers and a Shi'ite majority, is a close American ally and hosts the US Navy's 5th Fleet. Last year Bahrain's king appointed a Jewish woman as his kingdom's envoy to Washington.

The Jewish community in Bahrain dates back to antiquity, houses the only synagogue in the Persian Gulf, and today numbers between 30 and 50 people.

In the Washington Post op-ed on Friday, the Bahraini crown prince wrote that the Arab world had "not done enough to communicate directly with the people of Israel. An Israeli might be forgiven for thinking that every Muslim voice is raised in hatred, because that is usually the only one he hears. Just as an Arab might be forgiven for thinking every Is-

raeli wants the destruction of every Palestinian."

Essentially, he wrote, the Arab world has not done a good enough job demonstrating to Israelis how the Arab Peace initiative launched by Saudi Arabia in 2002 "can form part of a peace between equals in a troubled land holy to three great faiths. Others have been less reticent, recognizing that our success would threaten their vested interest in keeping Palestinians and Israelis at each other's throats. They want victims to stay victims so they can be manipulated as proxies in a wider game for power. The rest of us - the overwhelming majority - have the opposite interest."

Khalifa said both sides "must stop the small-minded waiting game in which each side refuses to budge until the other side makes the first move. We've got to be bigger than that. All sides need to take simultaneous, good-faith action if peace is to have a chance."

British government urged to investigate attacks

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first time where human rights defenders and political activists get subjected to attacks in a European capital.

The Bahraini authorities had consistently pressurized the British government to put an end to the Bahraini opposition's activity in London, or to stop providing refuge for the human rights defenders, but without any significant result. In the same context, during his visit to the British capital last year, the King of Bahrain met both Dr. Saeed Al-Shehabi, head of the Bahrain Freedom Movement, and Hasan Mushaima, president of Haq Movement who was at that time on a visit to the British capital. The King asked Dr. Saeed Al-Shehabi to return to Bahrain, and he even spoke of opening serious dialogue with the Bahraini opposition, however this dialogue never started and Hasan Mushaima was later imprisoned with dozens of political activists and human rights defenders on charges relating to terrorism. They were later released after the escalation of people's protests and mounting criticism of international organizations and Bahrain's friendly countries. Among those attempts, the Colonel Isa Meselam also met the former president of the Committee of Martyrs and Torture Victims Mr. Abdul-Raof Al-

Shayeb urging him to return to his home country and to work from the inside, however those attempts also failed due to doubting promises that have no confirmations on the ground, especially that the Authorities had tried to put Al-Shayeb in jail on ethical charges which forced him to seek refuge in the British capital.

While the Bahrain Center for Human Rights recognizes and values the positive and humane approach of the British authorities for providing refuge for the activists and human rights defenders that are fleeing the Human Rights violations in Bahrain, it calls upon it for initiating an urgent investigation in the circumstances of the attacks and the relation of the security authorities in Bahrain to those attacks as well, and to reveal the results of those investigations. The BCHR also calls the British Authorities to provide protection to those activists and defenders who chose peaceful work as a means to fulfill their human rights demands. The BCHR demands the Bahraini Authorities to stop targeting the human rights defenders and political opponents, and to open the door for dialogue in order to reach solutions that address all the unresolved human rights files.



This Bahraini, Essa Ali Sarhan was arrested recently. These are images of his torture

