

BAHRAIN

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

Bahrainis suffer under the torturous weight of occupation

The release last month of scores of young Bahrainis from the torture cells of the ruling junta in the troubled land of Bahrain has raised more questions and provided less answers. After more than 20 months languishing in torture chambers, the youth were declared innocent on all counts and released. Under internal and external pressures, the rulers of Bahrain were forced to "drink the poison" of openly declaring the crime of persecuting the natives of the land to achieve their satanic aims. The saga has been one of the blackest episodes in the history of the criminal regime that has attempted to wipe out the natives without mercy or humanity. The testimonies of torture have stunned even those appointed by the ruling junta to preside over the trials of the Bahrainis. To their astonishment, the victims did not die of their wounds but remained vigilant and determined to expose the crimes that had been committed against them by senior members of the ruling junta, including the ruler himself. All pointers indicate his personal involvement in propping up the regime of torture from the day he assumed power ten years ago. Few months before succeeding his father, he had ordered his Death Squads to start work in earnest. They launched their era of crime by kidnapping a young man and killing him mercilessly. Nooh Khalil Al Nooh was snatched, tortured and killed before his body was dumped near his house. It was a horrific crime that was committed four months after Bahrain had signed the Convention Against Torture (CAT).

Sheikh Hamad has overseen the total transformation of the country in a way detrimental to the rights of the natives. He, himself, has overseen this transformation in four main areas; Torture, Sectarianism, Genocide and Despotism. Among his first acts was the imposition of Decree Law 56 in 2002 that gives impunity to torturers. That notorious law has led to disastrous consequences leading to an era of unprecedented torture. When the last group of prisoners were presented to the court earlier this year they exposed their mutilated bodies to the court that would have ignored them if there were no international observers. The torture regimes includes sexual

abuse, electrocution, beating, deprivation of sleep, hanging from the hands and feet and psychological pressures. Notorious torturers such as Ian Henderson, Adel Flaifel, Abdul Aziz Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa have been protected by the ruler and no victim could bring a legal writ against any of them. Sheikh Hamad has thus re-invigorated the torture regime as a tool of repression and is thus accused of serious crimes against humanity.

The second pillar of his rule is Sectarianism. To implement this policy he appointed the most notorious sectarian Al Khalifa official; Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, as the minister of the royal court. He is now acting as a prime minister. In the nineties he had produced his sectarian manifesto in the form of poems which promised to annihilate the Shia Muslims who are the natives of the land. Since his appointment, he has ensured that sectarianism becomes an institutionalised policy. The ruler and his sectarian lieutenant have adopted this policy, removing Shia from senior positions, reducing the number of Shia ministers to one minister and three powerless ministers without portfolios, and ensuring that Shia are not recruited in senior positions or within the ministries of interior and defence. Unless Khalid bin Ahmad is removed, prosecuted and punished for his declared sectarian agenda, the Al Khalifa junta will remain committed to implementing the agenda of hate against the majority natives.

The third pillar is genocide. The ruler stands accused of committing the crime of genocide with excellence. He may not have adopted means of physical extermination against the majority Shia natives, but his policies of disempowerment of these natives amount to genocide according to the third article of the United Nations Law on Genocide. He has systematically targeted the Shia Muslim natives in their welfare; forcing them out of their lands and villages, obliterating their history and culture, removing all historical monuments and artefacts that prove their centuries of existence in Bahrain, changing the boundaries of their villages to dilute their presence, displacing them

from the land by making it impossible for them to purchase land either because of artificial high cost or urging rich businessmen from other Gulf countries to purchase the lands of the natives. His methods also include the systematic purge of Shia from the capital, Manama and all coastal areas. Today, more than 90 per cent of coastline is owned by the Al Khalifa junta and their allies while the native sea-farers have been pushed inside the land.

The fourth pillar is despotism. Sheikh Hamad has become the most despotic ruler of the country and attempted to cover this with deception, cooption of opposition figures and buying off writers, religious figures, women activists and human rights enthusiasts. Oil money has been plundered at unprecedented rate. The ruler puts his hand on all oil income and allows only a trickle of the oil revenues to go to the treasury. This money has enabled him to silence those who are ready to praise the tyrant for money. He has imposed his own constitution, tailor-made to suit his agenda without allowing the participation of the people in the constitutional process. His "democracy" has been emptied of all relevance as it is conducted in accordance with an illegitimate constitution and enforced by the heavy hands of torturers and the media that has become a mouth piece for the despotism and dictatorship. Al Khalifa now occupy 17 out of 28 ministerial posts and most of the senior positions in the government department. Those who dissented have been harshly treated. The prisons have become notorious for the ill-treatment of prisoners, while the government machine has been directed to protect and serve the ruling junta. The government has become a tool of repression targeting activists, smearing their reputation, kidnapping and torturing those who call for the upholding the rule of law or writing people's constitution. Bahrain has thus become a country under occupation by a foreign family which has become a ruling military junta, supported by outside powers for unethical reasons. Struggle thus continues in order to end this episode which has become one of the blackest in the history of Bahrain.

The release of Karzakkan prisoners is an indictment of the torturers

The outrageous debacle suffered by the Al Khalifa ruling family in relation to the case of the Karzakkan's nineteen political prisoners has shaken the regime to the core and reduced its integrity to tatters.

The sustained torture of these young men over a period of several weeks has failed to produce any credible evidence that could incriminate them. The courage of the defence team in exposing the lies and fabrication of the torture apparatus run by Khalifa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, the former ambassador to UK, has ranked the regime among the worst offenders of human rights in the region. These Bahrainis have suffered since their arrest in December 1997 the most atrocious treatment ever meted against the people of Bahrain by the blood-thirsty Al Khalifa junta. Torture has not only been authenticated by the victims, their lawyers and local human rights bodies, but the Al Khalifa court itself found itself in the midst of unchallengeable evidence. It had to reject the "testimonies" drawn under duress by joint orders from the royal court, headed by the notorious criminal Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa and the former ambassador to UK. The alleged victim who had been supposedly killed by the 19 Bahrainis had died seven months prior to the "incident" in December 2007 in which he was allegedly killed. It was one of the most outrageous perjury in the recent history of Bah-

rain. The ruler now stands accused of the most serious crimes by overseeing these atrocious acts against Bahrainis who are subjected to the Al Khalifa occupation.

The regime was humiliated into total submission to the will of the people and the public opinion when, on Wednesday 14th October, to release unconditionally all the victims. The decision was taken to avoid international prosecution against the regime's torturers. However, the senior Al Khalifa figures, including the ruler, the minister of his court and that of the security apparatus, remain guilty of serious crimes against humanity. To distance himself from the torturers, the ruler, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, needs to repeal his notorious Law 56 that he had issued in 2002 to shelter the torturers. Failing to do so is tantamount to participation in the heinous crimes against the people of Bahrain.

The people have felt joy and relief as their sons were spared the gallows that had been awaiting them for the past two years. There are at least 11 more people from the town of Ma'amir who are awaiting the verdict by the Al Khalifa junta accused, yet again, of participation in a demonstration that allegedly led to the death of another mercenary. Once again, the torture of these Bahraini victims has shaken the human conscience as details of their maltreatment started to spread. Over the past week anti-regime protests continued in

many areas to demand the release of the Bahraini hostages from the torture chambers of the Al Khalifa occupiers. On Friday, protesters gathered in Malikiya calling for the release of the Ma'amir political prisoners. Men and women also participated in that protest in which photos of the hostages were raised. The people of Sitra took part in protests and demonstrations, burning tyres and writing slogans of the walls, before the foreign-staffed riot police attacked them with tear gas and rubber bullets. Similar situations were reported in Abu Saibe', Jidhafs and Daih and Bani Jamra. In all these areas the scenes were the same. Bahrainis take to the streets, foreign mercenaries acting on orders from the occupation junta attack mercilessly and the whole scene is transformed into chaos, stone-throwing, rubber-bullet shooting and arrests. As the regime becomes more throttled it attempts not to take prisoners. Instead protesters are subjected to horrific treatment on the side of the road, leaving many of them for dead.

In a serious escalation of aggression against Bahrainis, Abbas Nooh, a young child of 12 years was arrested at the village of Kharijiyah of Sitra, severely beaten before being taken away to unknown destination. He had suffered a hit with a rubber bullet fired at close range by one of the mercenaries working for the Al Khalifa junta.

BFM, 18th October 2009

Country-wide protests call for release of political prisoners

The vicious attack by the foreign-staffed riot police yesterday on a peaceful protest at Al Malikiya has infuriated activists and human rights campaigners. Scores of Bahrainis had participated in the protest calling for the unconditional release of some 30 political prisoners who have been languishing in jails for almost two years. The protest started at 8.00 pm but was attacked twenty minutes later. Various means of repression were used extensively in the attack including chemical and tear gases and rubber bullets. The riot police spread inside the town, near the playground. There were running battles between the Bahrainis and the riot police for more than one hour. The town centre near the football playground was occupied by riot police and Death Squads as the angry youth showed bravery in fending off their aggression.

On 3rd October another demonstration at the locality of Mhazaa in Sitra was attacked by the foreign mercenaries. The youth had emerged from the town with strong zeal at 5.00pm, chanting anti-regime slogans and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the Bahrainis incarcerated for expressing their opinion. The town turned into a battle field after the mercenaries

launched their unprovoked attack. Several people were hit by rubber bullets while others suffered the effects of the intensive use of tear and chemical gases.

On 2nd October, several areas witnessed anti-regime demonstrations, burning tyres and exploding cylinders. The youth of Daih Town responded to the provocation of the foreign mercenaries with stones and fires to stop them entering the town. Similar scenes were witnessed in Malikiya town where tyres were burnt to stop the attackers reaching the people's homes. The mercenaries launched an attack against people, brandishing their rifles and heavy machinery in the faces of children and women, in a way the Israelis often do with the Palestinians. Fires were also seen near the Al Satir Market in Bani Jamra. Death Squads attempted to enter the town from another side in order to catch the peaceful demonstrators, but failed to achieve their aim. The town of Karzakkan also witnessed unrest on that day (Friday 2nd October) as the youth burnt tyres in the middle of the road to prevent the Death Squads entering the town. This spate of unrest has intensified in anticipation of the verdict against about 30 political prisoners who are on trial for their peaceful expression of opinion. The judges are members of the Al Khalifa junta, aided by foreign "judges"

who act on orders from the ruling junta.

The anger of the people became more marked as the ruler spent people's money to finance extravagant wedding parties for his son, Nasser, who was married to the ruler of Dubai. At a time when Bahrainis are unable to live in decent homes or get decent jobs, people's wealth is being plundered by the ruling Al Khalifa junta in shameless styles.

A recent trip to the notorious jails of Bahrain, human rights activists have confirmed that these jails are not fit for human habitation and that they fall far below the international standards of decency and human rights. Political prisoners in Jaw Prison have been denied the right to exercise outside the torture chambers. Gates of the cells are now closed before 9.00 am, while in the past they remained open until midday. Prisoners have also been prevented from religious congregation, holding religious celebrations or taking part in handicraft workshops. Newspapers and books have been reduced and only pro-junta publications are allowed. Prisoners are now subjected to severe restrictions, handcuffed and chained when they leave their cells. The police in charge of these prisoners are heavily armed.

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Violations of the Al Khalifa Prosecution officials

The BCHR received numerous complaints and reports on the Public Prosecution's gross violations of human rights. These will be briefed highlighting the most flagrant and taking into consideration the reservation to publicize the names of detainees and lawyers who contributed in documenting these violations for their own safety. However, the Center will be ready to provide and announce those names and the details in any investigation carried out by an independent body. Noteworthy, the Prosecution was recently accused of manipulating the testimonies of prosecution witnesses in some of the cases which proves that the corruption has penetrated into those institutions that are initially accused of prejudice.

Following are some of the violations of the Prosecution that have been documented:

Late Night Interrogations

Many victims and detainees complained that the Public Prosecution interrogated them at very late hours of the night or at dawn, and usually, after questioning for long hours and exposing them to torture and ill-treatment by members of security apparatuses. The last episode which involved such act was the Prosecution's interrogation to children in Salmaniya Hospital who were fired upon in Sanabis by members of the Special Forces. The children and their families indicated to the local press that the interrogation was in their rooms at the hospital, without the presence of a lawyer, started at about half past twelve after midnight and ended at dawn. This was also the case with the detainees of the events in December 2007, December 2008, and the detainees of Karzakan and Ma'ameer who were all interrogated at late hours at night.

Interrogation without the Presence of Lawyers

There have been numerous cases in which the detainees were brought to the Prosecution very late at night, without the knowledge of their families or lawyers. Testimonies confirmed the persistence of the detainees to summon their lawyers during the interrogation in the Public Prosecution; however the prosecutor usually denies their request on the grounds that it is too late in the night to summon the lawyers. The prosecutor then insists on initiation and continuing the interrogation without any form of legal representation. This was the case with the detainees of December 2007 and the detainees of 2008, as well as the detainees of Karzakan.

Article (12) of the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors, states, "Prosecutors shall, in accordance with the law, perform their duties fairly, consistently and expeditiously, and respect and protect human dignity and uphold human rights, thus contributing to ensuring due process and

the smooth functioning of the criminal justice system."

Threatening and Forcing the Defendants to Sign Ready Confessions- Torture in the PP building

Detainees and victims of torture confirmed that heads of prosecution threatens or shouts at them to coerce them to admit or sign ready confessions that correspond with the confessions that have been extracted under torture. In case the defendant refuses to sign, the prosecutor threatens the detainee to call for his return to the same place he was interrogated for more torture. This has been confirmed by more than one detainee. Some even asserted that the prosecutor keeps the door of his office opened during the interrogation and allows the intelligence officer, who is in charge of the torture, and usually accompanies the detainee, to stand by the door to terrify him and force him to sign the ready statements taken under torture.

Testimonies of some of the detainees indicated that those who refused to sign ready statements presented to them by the head of prosecution were returned to the detention centers to face a share of torture, before being returned and forced to sign the prosecution papers without having the chance to read it or know what confessions were made against himself.

Other detainees testified that they refused to sign ready statements prepared by the prosecutor, and those were not returned to the detention centers again, but were taken to a room next to the Prosecution representative. Those detainees were faced with beating and kicking within earshot and in full view of the prosecutor. This has negatively impacted many detainees, who already experience a state of terror as soon as they enter the Prosecution building, where they are abused and ill-treated. Such attitude hastened them signing to sign confessions that prepared in advance by prosecutors without having seen its content.

These shameful acts of the Public Prosecution body contradict all the international standards, its members should abide by, particularly Articles (12) and (16) of the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors that have been referred to above.

Violating the Law

The Prosecution violated the law more than once by using authorities it is not even entitled to. At the end of the year 2008, in what was known as "Al-Hujjairah Plot", the Prosecution agreed to the request of the National Security Apparatus (NSA) to publicize the confessions and identities of those detained, during the period of arrest and investigation, while their case had not been transferred to the court yet.

The Ministry of Information and some local newspapers, based on the approval of the head of prosecution directly responsible for the case, published the confessions which were recorded and broadcasted on Bahrain TV channel and in the newspapers without

the knowledge or consent of the detainees or their lawyers. Hence, the Prosecution conspired with the National Security Apparatus in criminalizing those detainees in the public view before presenting their case to court, which is incompatible with the articles of Decree Code no. 46 of 2002 of the Criminal Procedures and that of Penal Code no. 15 of 1976 in revealing the identity of the defendants, exposing and ruining their reputation, let alone the effect it has on the course of justice by utilizing the media. The Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors in the Criminal Proceedings indicate, in Article (13), on the necessity of "Keep matters in their possession confidential, unless the performance of duty or the needs of justice require otherwise; Consider the views and concerns of victims when their personal interests are affected and ensure that victims are informed of their rights in accordance with the Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power".

Overlooking Torture Cases and Opposing Independent Medical Reports

Testimonies of detainees as well as some of their lawyers have recurred that Prosecution representatives overlook the documentation of torture cases which are usually fresh in front of them, or when the detainee expresses orally and/or by showing the torture scores which are apparent on his body. These signs on the detainee were due to the ill-treatment to extract forced confessions he was exposed to when he was at the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) or in the Police Fort- NSA Headquarter.

Moreover, the Prosecution took a negative stance in dealing with the reports of the medical committees and was defending the security apparatuses and their violations, abuse and torture which were mentioned by more than one detainee and in more than one case. The Prosecution considered a default position of challenging and questioning those testimonies and reports, at a time where it was supposed to initiate an immediate investigation in the torture claims and present to the court those proven to practice torture. Article (15) of the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors, states, "Prosecutors shall give due attention to the prosecution of crimes committed by public officials, particularly corruption, abuse of power, grave violations of human rights and other crimes recognized by international law and, where authorized by law or consistent with local practice, the investigation of such offences."

The Role of the Public Prosecution

While it is expected from the Prosecution body to be an honorable opponent, the attitude of the members of this organization, their security and military background which is characterized by trying to exhibit their loyalty to their subordinates as well as their prejudice.

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Shura Council members vote to stop contacts with Israel

MANAMA (Reuters) - Bahrain's parliament on Tuesday approved legislation penalising contacts with Israel, a move which could complicate Gulf Arab leaders' efforts to promote peace talks with Israel.

"Whoever holds any communication or official talks with Israeli officials or travels to Israel will face a fine ... and/or a jail sentence of three to five years," member of parliament Jalal Fairooz from the Shi'ite Al-Wefaq bloc, an opposition group that was the driving force behind the move. "The motivation is that steps are being taken by certain countries to allow certain talks to be held with Israeli officials. Israeli delegates have managed to participate in events in Arab countries with no treaties with Israel."

Diplomats and analysts say Arab governments have been pressured by the administration of U.S. President Barack Obama to make steps towards normalising ties in order to help encourage Israel to enter peace talks with Palestinians. But popular sentiment has been opposed to such moves. An Egyptian writer is facing disciplinary action by the journalists union for meeting the Israeli ambassador in Cairo.

Bahrain's Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa wrote in the Washington Post in July that Arabs had not done enough to communicate directly with Israelis.

Bahraini officials visited Israel in July in an official capacity for the first time to collect five of their nationals Israel was deporting after seizing them on a ship bound for the Palestinian territory of Gaza, blockaded by Israel. Bahrain's parliament has limited powers and bills must pass through an upper house whose members are chosen by the king. Ultimate power lies with the ruling family.

Egypt, Jordan and Mauritania are the only Arab League states with formal ties with Israel.

WHY? A life of luxury makes me feel very guilty

I AM a British lady who has been working in Bahrain for the past two years.

My best friend is a Bahraini woman with three children. Being close to her I have come to know how companies and organisations treat expats differently from the locals in almost everything.

We expats living in Bahrain live a luxurious life, unlike most of the locals. The company pays for our accommodation, electricity, social allowance, return tickets, medical insurance, children's schooling and other benefits and not forgetting the double or even the triple salaries we get when compared to that of the Bahrainis being in the same designation.

It breaks my heart to see my friend working a full time job leaving her children at home to support her family in the hope of giving them a decent life and of course could not because all her salary goes to paying for the accommodation, electricity and other bills!

Why, tell me why, do companies pay all these bills for us and not Bahrainis? Do Bahrainis live on the street? Live in the dark? Bahrainis should enjoy their country and not curse it (from what I see). Why do you differentiate? We are all human beings and have the same needs.

When will governments and authority realise that Bahrainis need to be treated like human beings and care whether they can afford their expensive country?

Have they ever thought that the reasons why crimes have increased in the past few years is that people get very lowly paid salaries and cannot afford to offer a decent living for their children! Why does authority treat Bahrainis as third class citizens and expats as first. Why?

Holly Mueller, Gulf Daily News

Violations by the Prosecution, Cont from P3

This has revealed a repetitive tendency of the Public Prosecution to search for legal articles that criminalize activists and human rights defenders, after the success of the latter and their activities in compelling the authorities and exposing their systematic violations. The case of the young man, Hasan Ali, who was accused of publishing information about the NSA – and was sentenced on 16 September 2009 to three years imprisonment – has disclosed the Public Prosecution's intentions in targeting human rights defenders and the attempt to incriminate them.

This highlights the role and conduct of the Prosecution which disregarded all complaints filed by the activists on smearing their reputation and the harassments practiced by those who are servile to the security apparatuses, (among the complaints that the Prosecution have disregarded: the smearing campaign by using SMS messages from mobile phones in December 2005 against Sheikh Ali Salman – Secretary General of Alwefaq Society, as well as against Mr. Hasan Mushaima – Secretary General of Haq Movement in February 2006, in addition to various harassments and threats to Mr. Nabeel Rajab – president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights- and his wife since 2005).

The Prosecution strived to criminalize activists by using laws that violate rights and which are locally and internationally condemned because they contradict the most basic standards of human right (Gatherings Code, Penal Code, Counter Terrorism Law, Civic Societies law and others). This achieved with the support of the Bahraini judiciary which is known for its lack of independence or impartiality.

The Demands of the BCHR

Based on the above, and in order to achieve justice and secure its proper function and integrity, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights calls for the following:

1. The Public Prosecution body should comply and adhere with the international standards related to its function and duties, in particular and foremost the Guidelines on the Role of Prosecutors adopted by the Eighth UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in September 1990.
2. Changing the current team of the Public Prosecution, starting from the Attorney-General and including heads of prosecution and prosecutors, and to recruit a specialized and experienced team with a good repute, and whose record is devoid of any connection with the security or military apparatuses or previous records of violations of human rights.
3. Reinitiating the interrogation in all the cases mentioned earlier, in which the Prosecution played an active role in convicting the activists and subjecting them to torture, abuse or illegal procedures that contradict the international standards to which Bahrain vowed to adhere to.
4. To lift the immunity of the current members of the Prosecution and present the perpetrators to the court for the charges of:
 - Conspiring with the intelligence and security apparatuses
 - Concealing the violations of human rights and the detainees
 - Transgressions that amount to crime against humanity, public right and the right of the defendants.

Country-wide protests, Cont from P 2

Moreover, the Al Khalifa have been engaged in other plans to undermine the opposition on three-pronged axis. The first is wooing some activists who are in need of financial income to work with them, directly or otherwise. The second is creating discord among the activists inside jail and after their release. In recent days these tactics have led to unnecessary quarrels among the youth who have been lured into these quarrels. The third is the smearing of their reputation through the use of cold-war-style sex scandals, in which young activists are lured into immoral liaisons by women who had, themselves, become victims of blackmail by the immoral members of the Al Khalifa junta. These tactics are lower than the low, but who cares?

Bahrain Freedom Movement
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