

BAHRAIN

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

More regime's crimes expected, the world must take a stand

With mounting resistance to the onslaught by the Al Khalifa on their homeland, Bahrainis have often embraced themselves to troubles, intimidation and aggression during the month of December. Year on year out, troubles erupted during this month as the political and psychological divergence between the people of Bahrain and the ruling family takes greater dimensions. Today, the polarization has become so shocking that no realistic prospects of reconciliation may be imagined by people of reason and intellect. The hatred is so deeply-rooted that many would promote the idea of total separation and an abrupt end to engagement in any form between the two sides. Instead of reading these signs with open minds, senior members of the ruling Al Khalifa are blinding themselves to the reality of the situation. Instead of heeding the calls to re-establish the relations with the people of Bahrain on principles of mutual recognition, respect and engagement, they have adopted a policy of marginalization, oppression and annihilation. The past three years in particular have witnessed a serious escalation in hostilities with the regime opting for unprecedented practices. Human rights have been grossly violated at enormous scales. The regime has used oil wealth to maintain a wall of silence, deception and misinformation to prevent outside intervention.

December has often been associated with acts of vengeance by the regime, and acts of defiance by the people. Over the years, Bahrainis were killed, arbitrary arrested and tortured as they attempted to make their feelings known to the outside world. The regime has assigned 16th December as a national day, something the people have rejected. It is the day when the previous ruler, Sheikh Isa, inherited his position upon the death in 1961 of his father. Bahrainis have never identified with this day. Instead they had designated 17th December as the Day of the Martyrs to honour those killed or maimed by the Death Squads, run and managed by the royal court. This year, the people have also drawn plans to make their voices heard on that day. It is thus clear that the two sides have two conflicting agendas on two consecutive days. The two days have become symbols of ever-

widening divergence between the two sides. As the two sides continued their efforts to challenge the other, Bahrainis fell victim to the regime's atrocities. This is one of the starkest symbolic divergence of relations between the two sides in which each of them attempts to nullify the other. It is a struggle between two identities; native and an imposed. It is a challenge for which both sides work relentlessly and attempt to entrench it in the hearts and minds of the new generations. This will be repeated this years.

The past three years have produced events that created serial reactions that had almost destroyed the reputation of the Al Khalifa rulers. At the heart of it is the insistence of the people to commemorate the Day of the Martyrs. The ruling family which is sensitive to the repeated assertions by the Bahrainis that they are occupiers, thieves and tyrants, has attempted to prevent any commemoration of the day in 1994 two Bahrainis were cold-bloodedly murdered by the Death Squads. It is not the event itself that makes the ruler and his clique extremely sensitive to these commemorations. To them the problem lies with the implications behind the killings, maiming and torture of Bahrainis. The commemorations often highlighted the fact that the present ruler has offered a blanket impunity to torturers, contrary to the tenets of the Convention Against Torture. To the rulers, those torturers are needed to break the will of the opponents of the occupational mentality of the Al Khalifa. Since the regime has no popular or constitutional legitimacy, torture has become the mean tool to subjugate the nation. This tool has, however, not been entirely useful. Victims of torture have often become staunch opponents who would not forget their ordeals inside the Al Khalifa torture chambers. In its attempts to neutralize the successes of the opposition, the ruler has continued to create its own "human rights" bodies, or gangos, whose aim is to enhance the image of the ruler and his lieutenants in the eyes of the outside world. Several bodies have been created, although their effectiveness have been questionable.

Bahrain is thus set for another showdown in the next few weeks. The ruling family has failed to silence the opposition which is widening in appeal and membership. The outside world has become ambivalent with the countless bodies (gangos) that the Al Khalifa have created to continue policies of corruption, deception and acrimony. Independent media and human rights bodies have exposed the fallacy of the regime with their objective reports about the regime. While sheikh Hamad and his lieutenants may have been able to buy off some organizations (they managed to bribe employees at Amnesty International and BBC TV Arabic service) others have remained faithful to their principles. In recent weeks reports by The Financial Times and Human Rights Watch have irritated the Al Khalifa and sent shivers along the spines of their establishments and personnel. The continued efforts by the opposition to issue writs against senior members of the Al Khalifa for crimes against humanity including torture and genocide, have worried senior figures in Manama and led to a media campaign against the activists inside and outside the country. The opposition have taken upon themselves not leave a stone unturned in the quest to bring torturers to justice. Sheikh Hamad has continued not only to shelter criminals but to institutionalize torture as a means of intimidating and silencing opponents. This has never been clearer especially after Decree Law 56/2002 was issued by the ruler himself. It gave a blanket impunity to those who had committed the worst acts of torture against opponents. In recent months, more evidence has emerged of the extent of human rights abuses inside the Al Khalifa jails. Personal testimonies have been prepared to support international writs against senior members of the Al Khalifa. More violations are expected in the coming weeks as the people continue their defiance of the forces of occupation, headed by the Al Khalifa. December, once again, could prove to be unique, bloody and perhaps decisive in the battle of legitimacy between the Bahrainis and the occupiers of their land.

New victim of torture as regime takes steps to control HR activities

A serious case of torture has surfaced yesterday after a citizen was transferred to hospital for immediate treatment. On Friday morning (13th November) Mr Hassan Abdul Amir Radhi, from Al Ma'aamir town was taken from his torture cell to the Accident and Emergency department at the Salmaniya Hospital after his condition had deteriorated due to the extensive use of torture, used against him over the past 36 hours since his arrest on Wednesday night (11th November). He was taken to A&E bare-chested, with only a pair of trousers. He apparently suffered enormous injuries in his chest and he was suffering immensely during the transfer. The ruler, Sheikh Hamad, had institutionalized torture as a weapon against his opponents, by issuing the notorious Decree 56/2002 that offered impunity to torturers. Despite repeated calls from the Committee overseeing the implementation of the Convention Against Torture (CAT), to repeal this decree, he has adamantly refused to do so.

The arrest and torture of this young Bahraini has come amid continuing unrest in preparation for the forthcoming Day of the Martyrs on 17th December. Yesterday, there were clashes in Karbabad, between Bahrainis and the Death Squads, that are managed by the royal court. In

the early hours of Sunday, the people had demonstrated against the regime only to be attacked by the heavily armed squads, supported by riot police. On Saturday, the Jidhafs market was scene to several fires started by demonstrators as they protested against the continued repression by the ruling family. The youth used stones and Molotov cocktail to stop the Death Squads and riot police attacking their areas. More troops were dispatched to the area to contain the skirmishes that continued until the early hours of the morning. Subsequently, the District of Mawazan was bombarded with chemical and tear gas. The neighbouring Al Jamma district was also targeted for no clear reason. The day before, Bani Jamra. It was a sad scene to see the youth attending to a young Bahraini who was seriously injured with a rubber bullet fired by the attackers. Several people experienced respiratory problems as they fought off the aggressive forces who mercilessly attacked their homes. Images of the canisters containing prohibited substances were placed on the electronic websites in a cry for help by the Bahrainis. There were persistent sound of gun fire as the foreign mercenaries attempted to break the will of the Bahrainis especially after their homes were targeted. Some youth came out of their cars to join the resistance to the Al

Khalifa occupation, which is gathering momentum.

Meanwhile the well-known liberal writer, Ali Saleh, has been sanctioned by the authorities because of his neutral writings and commentaries.

In recognition of its role, the Director of BCHR, Mr Nabil Rajab, has been appointed as a member of the Advisory Board of the Washington-base human rights watchdog "Human Rights Watch". This is a boost to human rights activists who have been randomly targeted with various means. Among the worst tools of deception in this field is the creation of an official body to defend the black reputation of the regime in this area. The ruler, not his half-elected council, has ordered the creation of this new body "the National Organisation of Human Rights" in the face of mounting criticism of its black records. While it has been hailed by the government's media as a step forward, human rights activists view it as yet another attempt to nationalized human rights work to prevent any criticism of the ruling family whose members have been engaged in serious human rights violations, among them Abdul Aziz Atiyyat Allah Al Khalifa, and the defunct, Abdul Rahman bin Saqer Al Khalifa and others.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

16th November 2009

Tense situation amid lack of exit strategy

The political strife is gathering momentum as a prelude to the Day of the Martyrs on 17th December, with daily protests in various parts of the country. Yesterday, the residents of Al Maqsha town went out to the main road, burning tyres at the entrance of the town and chanting anti regime slogans. Few minutes later, the foreign-staffed riot police approached the area to extinguish the fires. The protesters had three four demands; the immediate release of the political prisoners, ending the attacks against activists, drawing a democratic people's constitution and stopping the political naturalisation project. Several Bahrainis are languishing in jails, falsely accused of killing a Pakistani mercenary.

Similar protests took place in other areas. In Bani Jamra, Abu Saibe' Daih and Samaheej, tyres were burnt in the middle of the main roads in these areas last Saturday 31st October. In Dair town, Northern Bahrain, running battles between the youth and the foreign mercenaries continued for several hours. The people expressed their repugnance at the continuation of the ruling family's policies of discrimination, repression, political naturalisation and illegal detention and abuse of Bahrainis. The foreign-staffed riot police deployed sound bombs, tear and chemical gases and rubber bullets to disperse the

protesters.

In Sitra, demonstrators took to the streets protesting the arrest of innocent Bahrainis. They closed the roads with burning tyres and raising their fists as they chanted anti-regime slogans. The riot police attacked the demonstrators mercilessly as they fled the scene. Running battles between the Bahrainis and the foreign mercenaries continued for one hour at least. Some houses were raided with damage to the properties.

On Tuesday 3rd November, the youth of Karzakkan demonstrated near the entrance of the town. Tyres were burnt to prevent the heavily-armed Death Squads from entering the town and wreaking havoc on the residents. The riot police made extensive use of tear and chemical gases as they attempted to exact collective punishment against the Bahrainis. The message of the protesters was clear; they stand in one trench with the prisoners of conscience who have been mistreated by the regime's torture officials.

The above protests are sample of the daily events in Bahrain whose people are now fed up with the political system imposed on them by the use of force. In those villages and towns, protests have continued over the past weeks and are likely to escalate in the coming few weeks as the people prepare for the Day of the Martyrs.

These developments followed the "human chain" event that was organised earlier in

the week. It was organised by the political societies to protest the continuing demographic change being implemented by the ruling Al Khalifa family through the political naturalisation programme. People stood alongside each other, holding hands and stretching for more than two kilometres, starting from a central mosque in Manama named after Ahmad Al Khalifa, who had started the occupation of Bahrain two centuries ago. The chain reached the Bahrain National Museum. The participants carried banners with the slogan "No to political naturalisation". More than 10,000 Bahrainis took part in the event.

The Al Khalifa ruling family resorted to more sinister tactics. In addition to the heavy-handed treatment of protesters, government agents have, in recent times, used extremely sectarian language to create a wedge among the various factions of the opposition. Its aim is to weaken the national consensus that has existed for eight decades of struggle against the hereditary dictatorship. Circulars and statements signed by unknown entities have been produced by the secret service as a weapon to undermine the national unity. Fictional names have been used along the lines of the groups operating in Afghanistan and Iraq. The aim is to create fear in the minds of the activists. These tactics have failed in the past and are unlikely to work this time.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

5th November 2009

BAHRAIN: No to normalisation

By Deena Jawhar, Manama

US pressure on allied Arab states to make “gestures” to Israel has produced something of a backlash in Bahrain and presented the government with an unexpected and unwelcome challenge to its authority and style of political management.

On 27 October the elected lower MEI Vol. II, Issue 1: 6 November 2009 21 chamber of parliament unanimously approved a bill banning all contacts between Bahraini citizens and Israel and penalising violators with a \$25,000 fine or up to five years’ imprisonment.

The unity displayed by the various political blocs represented in the house was an unusual occurrence in itself, reflecting the strength of popular feeling about the Palestinian cause among the country’s Shi’a and Sunnis alike. But the move has also set the MPs at loggerheads with the government, and most likely with the unelected upper chamber appointed by King Hamad, whose hand-picked members will have to approve the bill for it to become law.

The bill was ostensibly tabled in response to the recent incursion by Israeli forces into the al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem. But it also reflected underlying opposition to a whole series of measures and stances adopted by the government in recent years: the closure of an Israel boycott office in 2005; a proposal by the foreign minister last year to establish a regional forum including Israel; a call for dialogue with Israelis made by Crown Prince Sheikh Salman bin-Hamad in a Washington Post article published in July; and King Hamad’s regular meetings with pro-Israel groups during trips abroad.

Although the government insists that it has no relations with Israel, it sees the bill as an infringement of its authority and control over foreign policy and of its commitments

Under international treaties such as the Free Trade Agreement with the US. It also claimed it was at odds with the Saudi-authored Arab Peace Initiative which offered Israel normalisation in exchange for its withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

But it has proven very difficult for the government to sell this argument to MPs and the general public, who suspect it of pursuing normalisation with Israel by the back door. “What is the benefit of normalisation with the Zionist enemy,” wondered legislator Muhammad Khaled, “particularly as we are not a neighbouring country or an ally?”

The crown prince’s answer, that normalisation and peace would bring economic benefits and trade, washes with few Bahrainis.

There could be significant political repercussions if the bill is blocked by the upper house. The government’s domestic standing can only suffer if it is seen to override the popular will at a critical juncture for the Palestinian cause. Such a move would also refocus attention on the limitations that were built into the parliamentary system when it was restored in 2002 after a 27-year suspension. The introduction of the upper house was an extremely contentious move at the time and was widely seen

as a mechanism to disempower the elected chamber. Many members of the upper house would also be placed in an awkward bind.

Given the tortuous nature of the legislative process in Bahrain, time is on the government’s side. It will probably let the saga play out until after next year’s parliamentary elections in the small hope that either the issue will die down, more compliant MPs will be elected, or the Middle East peace process takes off.

Middle East International
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Moral lessons to Con from the Telegraph readers

Last month Bahrain’s ministry of information, the mouthpiece of the Al Khalifa, organised a seminar at the House of Lords at which three of their stooges hurled abuse and accusations against the native Bahrainis. One of those who attended the seminar was Con Coughlin, the Daily Telegraph’s executive foreign editor. He subsequently wrote an article praising the Al Khalifa dictatorship and condemning the granting of asylum to few (not more than five in the past three years) Bahrainis some of whom had been severely tortured by the Al Khalifa. The gifted journalist did not bother himself to speak to those opponents and was happy to add one more mouthpiece to the Al Khalifa media empire. Luckily the British readers have reacted with instinctual clarity, rebuffing the writer and those he was supporting. Here are some of the comments

I wonder if Con’s obsession reflects the true view of his handler at MI6. In the 50s, Con would have seen “reds under the bed” everywhere.

“Bahrain provides the U.S. with a massive naval base”. That means Bahrain is good. No matter that it is not a democracy, eh Con? That doesn’t matter one bit.

Con, did you not feel it was necessary to tell your readers that the seminar you attended was actually hosted on behalf of the Bahraini Government and it’s infamous Ministry of Information?

What a load of camel dung this article is. So much so in fact that it reads to me as if Con is getting his grubby mits greased just to say nice things about Bahrain’s ruling elite. I would not be surprised if there’s a nice 5 star trip out there for some further “research” – probably sometime around the next F1 eh Con.

Firstly, to say that Bahrain’s govt relation’s with the Shia majority population has been “on occasion, strained” is a massive understatement as anyone who knows the truth will tell you. Bahraini govt policy of the 80’s and 90s AND today is one of beatings, torture and disappearance for anyone who dares to clash horns with the ruling Al Khalifas (especially, the evil visior prime minister who incidently has piliged the

country’s education system, welfare, oil reserves, telecoms you name it and all to line his own pockets to the purported tune of \$4bn – incredible). How can a person of such a tiny and totally inconsequential island make that kind of money I ask you – and no the oil ran out more than a generation ago before you ask. Well that Godfather now deludes himself in his dotage, with that the likes of forced gatherings of “followers” taking place and “humanity” awards from “the UN” or Thailand – all paid for by and to placate this evil gangster. Truly a a bad human being.

Then the king, so what that he has a British education, do we sideline our doctrine of free speech and the right to asylum for those that would be tortured or put to death in their own country simply because they disagree. And all of this because the king has a plummy English accent and offers the Americans a naval base. This is a joke. The king does not allow a huge US naval out of the kindness of his heart. He is doing this because he’s shit scared that either the Iranians at home or the Iranians in Iran will attack him. In addition the statement that he doesnt want to “use tanks and guns” to rule, is a very thinly veiled threat to those that would get in the way of his next palace building (he has about 8)!

So in summing up Con, you really are no expert on this middle eastern affair and you do nothing for democracy or decent journalism by being the sycophant of despot rulers against those who’s voices are not heard.

As a Brit I’m proud that we allow freedom in our country and I believe our govt should start to take a keener interest in the so called democratisation of Bahrain – to make sure it is truly on the right track.

This represents yet another glaring example of the total lack of control from this Government as to who is living in the UK.

Sorry Con but you’ve been totally spoonfed BS and swallowed it whole.

Did you know that this article (because of readers’ comments) was blocked?”

Continued on Page 5

Columnist Saleh banned from critic writings to Authorities

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) expresses its concerns about the continuous repressive attitude towards journalists, writers and columnists in Bahrain. Many of them were summoned before public prosecutions or courts because of exercising their professional rights in tackling public issues. Others were silently suspended from writing or reporting by their employers and chief-editors of the relevant newspapers. In doing so, the employers express their opposition to the opinions of some journalists or columnists, presume self-censorship position fearing reprisals from the Authorities or receive direct phone calls from figure members of the ruling family or the Government.

The BCHR has learned that Mr. Ali Saleh, a journalist and columnist, was suspended from writing in Albilad newspaper (www.albiladpress.com) since his last column scheduled for Wednesday October 15th. Mr. Saleh noticed that his column was not published as planned, so he approached the officials at Albilad newspaper enquiring about his article. He was advised that based on orders from "High level Authorities", he has been "indefinitely suspended" from writing.

Mr. Saleh (67yrs) started journalism profession when he was 23 years old, while his column writing experience exceeds 33 years. He joined Albilad newspaper last April, writing a column every Wednesday. Earlier, he was a columnist at different periods in "Akhbar Al-Khaleej", "Alwasat" and "Alayam" newspapers. According to Mr Saleh, these newspapers stopped his articles, or actually "disposed him", with different excuses, all of it focused on the fact that his writings "do not conform" with their policies. Moreover, "other newspapers, like Almeethaq, Alwaqt and Alwatan, strictly refused to accept me as one of its columnists", he stated.

Based on the information collected by the BCHR, the orders to suspend Ali Saleh from writing were from the Royal Court officials who were not pleased with a series of published articles written by him focusing on demands for genuine democratic reforms, reinforcement of state of laws instead of policies of individualisms and gestures. Moreover, Ali was critic to what is called "Reform Project" proposed up by the ruler in 2002 to establish democracy in Bahrain. According to Ali: "This project ceased to exist, after retracting when 2002 constitution was issued in undemocratic way, in addition to the procedures, decrees and development which brought Bahrain back to unilateralism power, the executive one".

Mr. Ali Saleh considered his suspension "one of the measures taken by the local Authority to muzzle the mouths, attack freedom of opinion and expression, and prevent criticism and demands for reform, which contrasts the claim of democracy".

The BCHR expresses its deep regret to the lack of tolerance by the Authorities to other different views exposing State violations and criticizing its practices on the ground, in contrast to what the Government trying to convey through publicity programs inside and outside Bahrain. The BCHR calls upon the Authorities to respect and uphold international human rights conventions and covenants ratified by Bahrain, specifically those on freedom of expression. In particular, reference is made to Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified by Bahrain in September 2006, which refers to the right to hold opinions without interference and the right to freedom of expression.

On this occasion, Nabeel Rajab, president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights stated that: "We are strongly dismayed by this escalation against journalists and practices to mute voices. We remind the Bahraini Authorities of its commit-



ments and obligations to respect international covenants on human rights". Rajab added: "What makes us most concerned are the constraining orders which come through telephone calls from offices of top officials. These are expected to be more careful and pay attention to listen to views and criticisms in the light of the claimed democracy and freedom of expression". "The continuing harassment of journalists in this way is a retraction and revival of the old State security tactics. It reinforces the position of Bahrain in the black list of countries that violate human rights and freedom of expression". Rajab concluded: "What happened to Mr. Ali Saleh is shameful and unbecoming for journalists in Bahrain, which claims to be

democratic".

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Send appeals to the Bahraini Authorities to:

- Stop harassing journalists, columnists and writers when expressing their views in public matter and issues related to exposure of corruption, misconduct and any public subject.
- Left the ban on Mr. Ali Saleh, ensuring no reprisals are carried out against him as a result of criticizing policies and programs of the ruling elite.
- Cease suspension policies which come from back doors without any judicial or legalized procedure, expected to secure the rights of journalists and members of the media establishments their professional and human rights.

APPEAL and TAKE ACTION TO:

- Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, King of Bahrain
 - Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, Cabinet Prime Minister
- Fax: +97 3 1 721 1363

Please copy appeals to the source if possible.

MORE INFORMATION:

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Moral Lessons; *Cont from Page 3*

in Bahrain this morning? Unblocked now.

Alibongo's comments are correct (aside from oil, which is still extracted at the miniscule rate of 27,000). barrels per day).

I am shocked that the Telegraph would publish a totally non-researched article like this.

5 mins of research on google would show that all your statements are questionable or false.

If you want a research trip, please send me a private email. I will pay for an economy class fare and you can stay in my spare room. Then I will show you the REAL Bahrain. I'm serious.

Only Bahrain, which planet are you from, hey come here, because if caught ,they will be let off ,and apply to become British subjects, of course, being a terrorist or have terrorist documents isn't a category that disqualifies you from entering or becoming a British subject. unfortunately ,you lot ,in the media ,are either thick, or just full of crap.

"the genial Sandhurst -educated King"

Genial? Comical to say the least.

Your talking about a man who issued a Royal Decree ensuring that neither he, nor his unelected regime could EVER be held responsible for the atrocities and abuses of the 90s.

Like other autocratic regimes, the Bahraini Govt is hell-bent on suppressing political activists, pro democracy campaigners and anyone calling for a change of Government. The Al Khalifa regime has a well documented history of trying to criminalize political activists by branding them "terrorists" or "Islamic fundamentalists