

BAHRAIN

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

After failure of the play; time to pursue real criminals

A bloody scene may have come to an end, but the show continues, with its remarkable history that has baffled even those nearest to the circles of power in the small Gulf country, Bahrain. The latest scene was heavily scripted, and exploited until it became irrelevant to those who had commissioned its latest episode. It is one of those instances where bad strikes mercilessly. This time the Al Khalifa's fortunes appeared to have run out. The episode went drastically wrong at almost every front. The outcome will certainly not please the tyrants who thought they could inflict maximum human damage without repercussions. The failure started to emerge when the torturers faced the formidable will of the people's representatives who were taken hostage. In their chains, blindfolded, shackled and handcuffed, they exhibited a resolve that destroyed their torturers. They were forced to sign false statement after maltreated for fourteen days and nights. But when they were taken to the Al Khalifa-appointed prosecutors in the presence of their lawyers they did two things that broke shattered their torturers; they refused to sign those statements confirming that their first signature had been obtained under torture. Then they exhibited parts of their mutilated bodies to their lawyers. From then onward; senior Al Khalifa members were implicated in what is termed "war against humanity". Torture is forbidden by international law, and successive UN meetings and summits had drawn frameworks to incriminate anyone practicing it. The ruler who is now widely accused of committing "silent genocide" and several others of his close lieutenants, especially the present and former presidents of the National Security Agency (NSA) are now being pursued for "crimes against humanity".

The claim that the Bahraini detainees had been engaged in a "plot to overthrow the regime" gradually melted away. No one now gives it any credence. On 15th September the US State Department spokesman brushed away this claim confirming that the US had no information to suggest that there had been a plot to overthrow the regime. The British Government, two of whose nationals are implicated in the alleged plot refused to be drawn into this fabrication. Twenty years ago, the British

intelligence services were duped into believing that some Bahraini refugees had been involved in terrorism. Three Bahrainis were arrested only to be released few days later after the police had found no basis for the allegations. In 1996 the Al Khalifa tried several Bahrainis during the popular uprising. Three of them were refugees in UK. Although they were convicted by the Al Khalifa courts the UK police refused to accept the jurisdiction of that court. Instead the refugees were visited at their homes and re-assured that they would be protected against any evil act by the Al Khalifa rulers. Nothing has changed this time except that the torture regime has become harsher and that the Al Khalifa have become embroiled in corruption and human rights violations to a level that would allow none of their friends and allies to salvage them from their self-inflicted injuries. It is now clear that they had not anticipated the all-out attack by international human rights bodies against the use of torture. First came the condemnation of the arbitrary detention of hundreds of Bahrainis, followed by targeting torture as a state tool to subdue its opponents, and finally the calls by the most prominent human rights bodies, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International to form inquiries into the disturbing allegations of massive use of torture. The lawyers have been instrumental in relaying the news of torture to the outside world.

When six families were allowed to visit their sons in torture chambers for the first time since their detention, they saw what they had not expected. Their sons had been tortured to the extent that Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace had lost the hearing in one of his ears after he had been severely beaten. He has lost at least 15 kilos in weight and has gone on hunger strike in protest at the torture ordered by the royal court and administered under the direction of Khalifa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, the president of NSA. The other families have reported seeing moving skeletons of their beloved ones. They feared for their lives as they were kept under constant watch by six torturers present at these "family visits". They were strictly forbidden to speak with the detainees about the

treatment they had received at the hands of the torturers. From these facts, several outcomes could be deduced. First the detainees are prisoners of conscience, and their detention is an infringement on their basic rights. They must be released immediately, and any delay is a criminal act. Second; that torture is not only ceased but torturers be identified and brought to justice. Failure to do so is tantamount to collusion in this heinous act and merits punishment according to international law. Third; the failure of the regime's play what had been poor in planning and execution must not be used to justify further acts of revenge against those who have acted collectively to expose the facts and prevent further injustice against the innocent Bahrainis who are languishing in Al Khalifa's torture chambers. Forth; the international community is duty-bound to offer support to the people of Bahrain as they continue their struggle to achieve the right of self-determination and decide their own destiny. Lastly; the British Government must show willingness to act to protect its own citizens in the face of the onslaught by a barbaric regime which has no legitimacy to continue its occupation of the land of the Bahrainis or commit crimes against humanity. The case of Jaffar Al Hasabi, a British citizen who had been detained and tortured has been brushed aside despite countless calls to the FCO and the British Embassy in Bahrain to seek his immediate release.

This black chapter of Bahrain's history must come to an end with the assistance of the international community. Groups or individuals who have committed the crime of genocide or crimes against humanity must be brought to justice. The international resolve to end these evil practices must not be compromised by economic interests. The value of mankind must not perish in the race to gain arms deals and economic favours. The rights of life and human dignity are too valuable to be sacrificed. Failure to protect the life and welfare of a British citizen in these circumstances will be seen as rewarding torturers, despots and hereditary dictatorship, something that is alien to the culture and tradition of Britain.

Concern rises for the tortured British citizen, as genocide intensifies

Concern has risen in recent days for the safety of Jaffar Al Hasabi, a UK national held in Bahrain since 16th August, tortured and held incommunicado. The only visit he has so far received is one last Thursday by a British Embassy official in the presence of one of the torturers. Mr Al Hasabi was apparently forced to say that he was well treated in return for his release the following day. Nothing has since been heard about him, while the British officials are anxious not to antagonize the regime. Despite his family's repeated pleas to the FCO, their calls have fallen on deaf ears.

In line with the policy of exterminating the Shia presence in Bahrain, the ruler has ordered the withdrawal of Bahraini nationality from Ayatullah Sheikh Hussain Najati, a senior cleric who has refused to join the bandwagon of the hereditary dictatorship. Sheikh Najati, born and bred in the country has led a cautious line in the ongoing crisis, and, with six other senior clerics, he signed an open letter to the ruler calling for restraint and dialogue. The response came swift and harsh. The nationalities of all family members were revoked by the stroke of the pen of the tribal sheikh. No due process of law has been followed in revoking the nationality of this family, as the country is ruled not by law but by decrees from the ruler. More than 150,000 foreigners have been granted Bahraini nationality by the ruler himself, thus making Bahrain the only country in the world whose ruler gives himself the right to engi-

neer the demographic composition.

Several international experts in demography and international conventions relating it have confirmed that what is happening to the Shia is tantamount to genocide. They justified that assertion by arguing that if a community is made smaller over a period of time, as a result of policies directed against its well-being, including discrimination, denial of housing, education, health care, employment... etc, those actions are considered part of policy of genocide in accordance with article 3 of the UN Convention on Genocide. A team of international experts are now leading a campaign to indict Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa as the main architect of genocide against the majority Shia population in Bahrain. This is in addition to other campaigns several senior officials who are supervising the use of torture on detainees. There are now several testimonies by victims against those who have, in the past few years, tortured them. These testimonies are supported by irrefutable material evidence.

Meanwhile, the political tension is at its peak, as detentions, raids on houses, illegal use of chemical and tear gas against demonstrators have continued. Two children have become the youngest ever to be detained. Mohammad Ali is aged 10 years when he was arrested on 31st August. The other is Ayman Jaffar, 11. Both are from the town of Dair. They were maltreated during their detention.

In Geneva human rights activists, Bahraini

and non-Bahraini, have been in action to bring the dire human rights situation in the country to the attention of the international community. On 21st August a seminar was held at the UN headquarters, and was attended by journalists and diplomats. Maryam Al Khawaja and Nabeel Rajab (through satellite link) of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights presented an up-to-date account of the deteriorating condition of human rights. There were expressions of sympathy and support for the victims of torture, especially those activists who are imprisoned for their activity in Geneva before. Another seminar was held in Geneva yesterday by The Cairo Centre for Human Rights in conjunction with three bodies; Human Rights Watch (HRW), The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and the Bahrain Youth Human Rights Society. The title was "Bahrain Crisis: the torture redux and the cruel attack on human rights defenders". Among the speakers were: Joe Stork from HRW. Maryam Al Khawaja talked on behalf of BCHR. Layla Dashti, also a BCHR member presented her talk by satellite link because she was barred from leaving the country by the repressive regime. The participants presented cases of arbitrary detention and torture. The seminar called for international intervention to stop these abuses and enable the people to enjoy a degree of freedom, something they have missed under the tyranny of the Al Khalifa.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
23rd September 2010

More attacks by Death Squads as US contradicts Al Khalifa claims

The escalation of repression by the ruling family is leading the country to a gloomy future. As more attacks on liberties and public freedoms continued, so did the protests, the anger and the fear. Yesterday, the house of a young man, Imad was raided by scores of Death Squads members, creating fear among the women and children. Few days ago Imad was abducted by these shadowy, by heavily armed militias operating under the command of the royal court, taken to a secret location, beaten up until he fell unconscious.

This time the punches were designed to inflict maximum pain but no visible marks. He was then dumped in the street fighting for his life. More than 30 people have now been subjected to this "summary justice" which has now become an icon of the Al Khalifa "democracy". They are now raising the stakes by targeting the majority of the native population who have rejected to be coned into a hopeless political venture designed to maintain the police state mentality and protect the ever-expanding dominance by the Al Khalifa family.

On Monday 13th September, the UN Human Rights Commissioner, Navi Pillay, mentioned Bahrain by name when she spoke about the attacks on human rights defenders. She was opening the current session by the Human Rights Council. It

was a serious blow to the efforts of the ruling family to enhance its reputation worldwide.

At the same meeting, the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies (CIHRS) delivered a speech in which it denounced the recent attacks on activists in Bahrain. The statement said: "A full-blown human rights crisis has developed over the past two months in Bahrain. On September 4, 2010 Bahrain Television (a government-led TV channel) aired a 31-minute broadcast during which the names of 22 Bahraini individuals, who had been added to a list of suspected terrorists and accused of being involved in an underground terrorist organization, were displayed. This list included the most prominent Bahraini human rights defenders, bloggers and activists. Many of these human rights defenders are in prison and face charges of terrorism.

This aggressive crack down on human rights defenders began on August 3, 2010 with the arrest of Dr. Abdul-Jalil Al-Singace. He was arrested upon his return from London, after participating in a seminar in the British House of Lords about the deteriorating human rights situation in the Kingdom of Bahrain. In the proceeding days Abdul-Ghani Al-Khanjjar, Dr. Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahlawi, and Jaffar Al-Hisabi were also arrested. All are prominent human rights defenders.

The list of those who have been imprisoned or subject to forms of intimidation is too long

to list here but have also included Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. Mr. Rajab has been living in eminent threat of imprisonment and torture after being accused of terrorism for his engagement at UN human rights mechanisms including this Council in March of this year. This Council, and its member states should no longer remain silent on the critical situation in Bahrain ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections in the kingdom."

In a crushing defeat to the Al Khalifa's crackdown against Bahrainis, the Americans have refuted the allegations of a plot to topple the regime. In his daily press briefing on 15th September, Philip J. Crowley, the US Dept of State said: We are in touch with Bahraini authorities and have expressed our concern. At the same time, we have confidence as Bahrain evolves that you don't have to make a choice between security and democracy, and that this is the message that we're sending to the government". When asked: "Do you have any reason to believe the government's claim that these opposition figures were trying to sort of arrange a coup against the royal family?" His answer was: "I don't know that we're aware of any information along those lines"

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17 September 2010

UK Embassy refuses to see jailed UK national for “diplomatic” reasons

As repression intensifies, the message of defiance has become clearer and more determined. With more solid evidence of severe torture against Bahraini prisoners, the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship has now decided to face not only the pro-democracy movement but the world opinion and international human rights bodies. Here are more recent developments:

1- While local media has been taken over by the Al Khalifa-led torture machine controlled by Khalifa bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the former Ambassador in London, international media has taken different views of the situation in Bahrain. The BBC issued a long report by Bill Lau detailing the harrowing ordeals of the detainees and the lack of action by the Bahrain-based UK diplomats to determine of a UK national, Jaffar Al Hasabi who has not been seen by his family since his abduction by the Death Squads upon his return to Bahrain on 16th August. On 8th August, The Guardian published an excellent piece by Ian Black who had attended a Press Conference on the situation in Bahrain at the House of Lords. The Financial Times, the Wall Street Journal and several news agencies covered the events in Bahrain with a reasonable degree of impartiality.

2- The human rights bodies have protested to the Al Khalifa regime for their ill-treatment of Bahrainis. Two days ago, Human Rights Watch demanded an immediate investigation into the use of torture and challenged the ruling family to undertake this step in line with its obligations under international law especially the Convention Against Torture (CAT).

3- Meanwhile some sources have suggested that the UK Ambassador does not want Jaffar Al Hassabi, the detained UK national, to be seen by any Embassy official because his horrific injuries would compel the Embassy to take action against the torturers, something the Embassy does not want to undertake!

4- The news from Bahrain have confirmed that Khalifa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa has continued to torture the Bahrainis with more severity. Two days ago, the renowned blogger, Ali Abdul Emam was taken to the Prosecution Office in a secret way. His lawyer confirmed horrific injuries having been inflicted on him. Many international bloggers and activists of freedom of expression have condemned his arrest. The Al Khalifa, emboldened by the American Ambassador's personal undertaking to defend their repressive regime whatever crimes it committed against Bahrainis, have now given little attention to international condemnation. Two days ago Sayyed Aqeel Al Mousawi was taken to the prosecutor's office for interrogation. His condition was described as appalling. He could not speak and was breathing with difficulty. He denied the allegations fabricated against him by moving his head.

5- Ahmad Jawad Al Fardan's house was confiscated by the Al Khalifa. After 13

years waiting for a humble house from the Ministry of Housing, he was given one last year. He was subsequently arrested and tortured beyond recognition. When the workers his family had hired yesterday went to renovate the house, the keys they had did not work. After inquiries by the family, they were told that the Al Khalifa had confiscated the house. This is in line with their policy of starving Shia Bahrainis. Almost all those who are employed by government institutions have been summarily sacked even before their guilt has been established. Starving the Shia is one of the top objectives being

implemented by the ruler and his lieutenant; Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, the minister of the royal court.

Lawyers have also said that they had been informed by the Prosecutor's office that nine other detainees had been secretly brought for interrogation. The officials claim that they had serious injuries because “they had attempted to escape and were captured by the police”. It is clear that their torture has been so extensive that lawyers were not allowed to see them.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
10th September 2010

Calls for immediate investigation of torture as British national tortured

As the extent of the human rights violations continues in Bahrain, more international calls were made in the past few days for an immediate end to the torture practices being adopted by the ruling family against the innocent detainees. Jaffar Al Hasabi, a UK national, has been severely tortured as was witnessed by his lawyer yesterday. He was hung from his hands, beaten on all parts of his body and deprived of sleep. He has been skinned off near his wrists. He lost the feeling in both hands and feet. He was arrested on his return with his family from Mashhad in Iran where he had gone for pilgrimage. In the past week, the regime's mouthpieces have published names of photos of innocent Bahrainis, being targeted by the Death Squads for arrest and torture. The practice has been denounced even by those who are operating within the Al Khalifa rules and regulations. Al Wefaq Society issued a statement describing this as “a violation of the honour and rights of those individuals”. Anyone who questions the legitimacy of the imposed Al Khalifa constitution and repressive laws, protest against the, or calls for a new constitution based on the will and participation of Bahraini people is termed “terrorist”. Prominent personalities, including scholars and lawyers have condemned these practices. Semi-independent newspapers have called for an immediate halt to what they termed the “inquisition courts” that is turning the situation in the country decades back.

Meanwhile, glimpses of the torture inflicted on detainees have come to the limelight leading to an international outcry. Human Rights Watch called for an immediate investigation of the claims of torture. “Bahraini authorities should immediately investigate these allegations of torture and guarantee the physical and psychological well-being of the four men,” said Joe Stork, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “The attorney general has a legal obligation to throw out any coerced confessions and any evidence obtained by ill-treatment, including information that led to the men's indictments.” In addition, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World

Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) “strongly condemns the cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment that Messrs. Abduljalil Al-Sengais and Abdulghani Ali Issa Al-Khanjar were reportedly subjected to, which seems to only aim at sanctioning their human rights activities, and fears for their physical and psychological integrity. Therefore, the Observatory calls upon the Bahraini authorities to take prompt action in order to immediately and unconditionally release them, and to order an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the above-mentioned facts, in order to identify all those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal and apply the penal sanctions provided by the law.

These calls have come in light of the first assertion by some of the detainees that they had been severely tortured. In his first appearance at the Prosecutor's office, accompanied by his lawyer for the first time after two weeks in incarceration said “...I was handcuffed and blindfolded the entire time, they beat me on my fingers with a rigid instrument; they slapped me on my ears and I was pulled by my nipples and ears by tongs, and I was hit with a rigid object on my back and that was to force me to sign papers I had no knowledge what was written on them...”

On the ground, the vicious attacks on Bahrain's Shia community have intensified. In the early hours of Friday 27th August, the Death Squads attacked the several houses in Samaheej town and arrested two Bahraini youth: Habib Isa Habib, 22, and Abdulla yousuf, 17. A similar attack by the foreign-staffed forces at the same time on Sanabis led to the arrest Salman Hassan Zaineddin, 21. Later in the day, Hussain Jaffar, 21, was snatched by these vicious squads. In Tubli, two under-aged children were seized by the heartless forces; Ahmad Salman, 13 and Sayye Nouri, 14. In Malikiyya several people were arrested: Isa Mohammad Hassan, 18, Hassan Mohammad Hassan, Ali Mohammad Bu Hamid, Qassim Ahmad, Marhoun Ali, Mohammad Nooh and Abdulla Hamza.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
2 September 2010

Violent crackdown continues to target human rights defenders

Paris-Geneva, September 8, 2010. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, a joint programme of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), denounces the smear campaign against several human rights defenders and the arbitrary arrest of several other human rights defenders, orchestrated in the context of a broad wave of arrests targeting indiscriminately human rights defenders as well as political and religious activists who criticise the regime in the run-up to parliamentary elections.

On September 1, 2010, the newspaper Al-watan published a long article on an alleged terrorism network, recently uncovered by the Bahraini authorities. Along with the article, Alwatan published pictures of people accused of being part of it or supporting it and notably Mr. Nabeel Rajab, President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and FIDH Deputy Secretary General, and Mr. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Middle East Coordinator at Frontline, who are both accused of providing support to the alleged network. They were accused in the articles of being "active in publishing unjust reports" and Mr. Al-Khawaja was more specifically referred to as being "associated with many international organisations using the work on human rights issues as a cover, but focusing on damaging the image of Bahrain in regard to human rights and claiming the decline in the indicators of freedoms based on undocumented statistics that are not updated with actual situation". On September 3, 2010, Al-Watan published again the names and photos of the two defenders and repeated similar accusations. On September 4, 2010, the national security in co-operation with the Bahrain National News Agency (BNA) published a statement on the alleged terrorist network which mentioned Mr. Rajab as one of the persons officially accused of involvement in said network. The agency removed Mr. Rajab's name and photo from its statement the following day.

Furthermore, on September, 4, 2010, Mr. Ali Abduleman was summoned to present himself at the NSA Office at 9 pm. Mr. Abduleman, who created in 1999 a news website on Bahrain (www.bahrainonline.org) and a blog, has been active at the international level raising attention to the situation of freedom of expression and the media environment in Bahrain. He was arrested by the Bahraini national security agency (NSA) for allegedly spreading "false news" on his news portal and has been detained incommunicado since then. On September 5, his news website was shut down by the authorities and remains unavailable in Bahrain and from abroad.

According to the information received, within the same context, since August 19,

six other human rights defenders have been arrested and remained detained incommunicado pursuant to the anti-terrorism law: Mr. Suhail Al-Shehabi, member of the Committee of the relatives of detainees and the Committee of the Unemployed, Mr. Ahmed Jawad Al-Fardan, member of the Committee of the relatives of detainees in Karzakan, Mr. Ali Jawad Al-Fardan, member of the Committee of the relatives of detainees in Karzakan, Mr. Salman Najji, member of the Committee of the Unemployed, Mr. Abdul Hadi Al-Saffar, Chairman of the Committee against high prices and actively involved in other associations including the Committee of the relatives of detainees and Mr. Hassan Al-Haddad, member of the Committee of the Unemployed.

The Observatory recalls that Messrs. Abduljalil Al-Sengais, Abdulghani Ali Issa Al-Khanjar, Jaffar Al-Hessabi and Mohammed Saeed, remain in detention under terrorism charges and reiterates its condemnation regarding the acts of severe torture that several of them suffered since detention that some of them have allegedly been tortured during interrogation.

In this context, the Observatory fears that the smear campaign merely aims at discrediting Messrs. Rajab and Al-Khawaja's human rights activities and fears for the moral and physical integrity of all human rights defenders in Bahrain, in particular those who have been arrested since August 15.

The Observatory urges the Bahraini authorities to immediately release Messrs. Abduleman, Abduljalil Al-Sengais, Abdulghani Ali Issa Al-Khanjar, Jaffar Al-Hessabi, Mohammed Saeed, Suhail Al-Shehabi, Ahmed Jawad Al-Fardan, Ali Jawad Al-Fardan, Salman Najji, Abdul Hadi Al-Saffar, and Hassan Al-Haddad, to put an end to any kind of harassment against them and to refrain from hindering activities of promotion and protection of human rights, in line with the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Bahrain.

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Bahrain revokes nationality of leading Shiite scholar

Manama, Bahrain - Bahraini authorities announced on Sunday that they have revoked the nationality of leading Shiite scholar Ayatollah Sheikh Hussain al-Najati, his wife and three children.

The move comes just hours after the authorities in Manama banned another Shiite clergyman, Sheikh Abdul Jaleel al-Miqdad, from delivering Friday prayer sermons for two weeks.

The Directorate of Passport and Immigrations said that the decision to revoke the citizenship of al-Najati and his family was made after a routine review.

'The review showed that he, his wife, and children, had received the Bahraini passports in violation of the laws governing naturalization,' Under-Secretary for Immigration & Passport Affairs Shaikh Rashid bin Khalifa al-Khalifa was quoted in an Interior Ministry statement.

'The revoke was done in accordance with the law and if they desire to acquire Bahraini nationality through the appropriate legal manners they should re-apply for citizenship and that request will be considered in accordance with the laws that apply to such matters.'

Al-Najati, who represents the Iraqi grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in the small Gulf island, is considered one of Bahrain's leading scholars, with a large following, especially among Shiites of Persian decent.



His office declined to comment on the decision. The two-week ban on sermons by al-Miqdad was issued by Bahraini Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, Sheikh Khalid bin Ali al-Khalifa. It goes into effect on Friday.

The minister justified the decision, noting that al-Miqdad's sermons threaten civil peace, represent blatant interference in the work of law enforcement agencies, and show lack of respect for judicial proceedings. They also, he said, violate the ethics of religious discourse.

Both al-Najati and al-Miqdad are considered opposition figures and outspoken critics of the government.

Al-Miqdad is also a close relative of Sheikh Mohammed Habib al-Miqdad, whom the authorities had arrested last month along with 22 other leading Shiite opposition figures as part of an ongoing security crackdown that resulted in the arrest of more than 250 people the government claims to be part of a terrorist attempt to overthrow the government.

Opposition groups and local and international human rights organizations say the claims are unfounded and continue to ex-



press concern over the condition of the detainees and the status of civic freedoms.

Tensions between the nations Shiite majority and Sunni-controlled government have been on the rise in recent weeks.