

# BAHRAIN

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

## New year; time that Al Khalifa criminals are brought to justice

Between hope and despair the new year has been welcomed by the people of Bahrain amidst one of the worst political and moral crisis in modern history. With hundreds of Bahrainis being abused day and night in incarceration, the country is unlikely to return to normality without a serious fundamental change in its political system. The present dictator has missed the opportunity to win the hearts and minds of the people especially after he ordered an all-out attack on the native Shia population. With scholars, academics, professionals and ordinary citizens behind bars, subjected to horrific treatment, documented and authenticated by international human rights bodies, the natives are unlikely to forgive the Al Khalifa for their crimes. The repeated ill-treatment of those Bahrainis means that the opportunity to co-habit with the present regime has passed and the world is urged to support Bahrainis in their quest to free themselves from this antiquated regime. For decades they have been resilient as they faced one attack after another, with many of them paying the ultimate price for their lenient approach to the relations with the Al Khalifa who have abused their stay on the land. For centuries Bahrainis had enjoyed a relative peace in their own land, before the present rulers invaded their land, displaced their ancestors, destroyed their habitat and enslaved their generations. The latest aggression has solidified public opinion against this occupation, dictatorship and hereditary dictatorship.

The past four months have been among the worst in the 200 years history of the Al Khalifa occupation. In addition to the systematic torture of detainees, the ruling family is now intent on proving the guilt of innocent Bahrainis, not through factual evidence but by repeated abuse and torture. Five successive court sessions became a circus in which the wills of the torturers and victims were tested. In each of these sessions, Bahrainis complained of fresh torture only to be returned to their cells for more abuse. The Al Khalifa thought they had crushed the will of these hostages and guaranteed their submission to the wills of the torturers. So they brought them to a court, manipulated and directed by the Al Khalifa. They had instructed one of their stooges, Ibrahim Al Zayed to be "firm" but he failed from the first test. In the first session on 28th October 2010, they complained in one voice of the severe torture they had endured in ten weeks of incarceration

in solitary confinement without any visit either by relatives or lawyers. When a visit to Jaffar Al Hasabi, a UK national, was allowed in October he was conned by the torturers that if he spoke of good treatment he would be released. That was one of most outrageous attack on truth and among the dirtiest tricks against an official of a sovereign state. UK ought to have complained at this gross injustice, humiliation and deception. But it is now clear that UK officials have ignored all pleas to intervene on behalf of a UK citizen. When the Foreign Secretary wanted the release of four British bankers stranded by the Al Khalifa authorities for their role in banking irregularities in Dubai, a phone call to the Al Khalifa crown prince was enough to secure their release. Jaffar Al Hasabi was treated in a different way. Despite appearing five times at the court and complaining openly of torture, no action has hitherto been taken by the UK officials.

Now the situation has fundamentally changed. The team of lawyers who had volunteered to defend the 25 victims falsely accused of sedition and terrorism had insisted that no court proceedings could take place before investigating torture claims by the hostages. Furthermore, they insisted on new investigation of the group under the court jurisdiction in the presence of lawyers. The Al Khalifa-appointed lawyer has firm orders from the royal court not to accede to these demands. He went as far appointing new lawyers to replace the patriotic team. When the victims openly refused the appointed lawyers, they were subjected to more torture and abuse. In the past few weeks, one syringe was used to extract blood from all the hostages! This is one of the most outrageous crimes intended to spread diseases through intentional infection. The official doctors are complicit in this crime, alongside any lawyer who insisted on "defending" detainees despite their rejection. It is astonishing that silence by UK and US officials has replaced responsible and humane stands expected from the world's leading powers. Apart from shielding these dictators, what other human or political cause is served by this silence? For how long would the Western interests be served by protecting torturers and abusers of basic human rights? Almost all international human rights bodies have documented abuses by the Al Khalifa against the native Bahrainis including rape,

beating, hanging from hands and feet in what is known the falaqa position, intensive use of electric shocks on sensitive parts of the body, deprivation of sleep and mental and psychological forms of torture. Who is responsible for this drastic deterioration of human values and moral standards? Both UK and USA officials are reminded of their duties to speak out against these crimes lest they be considered complicit in crimes against humanity.

Bahrainis are human beings and belong to the human race. They have a homeland that they had inherited from their ancestors. It is under occupation by ruthless dictators who have consistently defied the basic values of human decency and failed to observe their obligations under international laws and conventions. They have failed to protect the natives, adopted illegal means to subjugate them, institutionalised torture to subdue their leading figures, imposed deviant judicial system in which the judge is the enemy and exploited the country's wealth to buy favours and entice others either to be complicit in their crimes against the natives or adopt silence. Bahrainis deserve to be treated with decency, humanity and morality. Failure to observe the basic moral stands by defending the powerless jailed victims or taking actions against torturers is tantamount to complicity in these crimes. Three figures are prominent in those crimes. The ruler has adopted silent genocide by "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" (Article 2.c) of the UN Convention on Genocide. The former and present heads of the National Security Agency (present and former Ambassadors to UK, respectively) have adopted torture to subdue victims and force them to sign false confessions. All are guilty of crimes against humanity. The UK and US officials are fully aware of these facts. Dossiers, testimonies and international documents are available in abundance to confirm these allegations. It is now hoped that the new year will witness new dynamism in bringing those criminals to justice for the injuries, pains and humiliation they had inflicted on Bahrainis. Support of good-wishers is of paramount importance. We aspire to see a world free from crimes against humanity whether committed at times of war or peace. Bahrainis deserve to live in peace in their own homeland free from the Al Khalifa occupation.

---

## The sham of justice in Bahrain: Judge imposes new lawyers rejected by defendants

An independent observer at today's "trial" of 25 Bahrainis accused by the Al Khalifa ruling family of sedition and plots to overthrow their regime said: "I have never seen in my life a worse example of contempt of justice as I saw in today's court session". The fifth court appearance had promised to be a dramatic one after the defence team decided at the last session on 9<sup>th</sup> December not to present any defence unless the Al-Khalifa appointed judge agreed to two demands: an independent investigation into allegations of torture and re-investigation of the detainees by the court in the presence of their lawyers. The judge refused those demands, so the lawyers withdrew from the session. The ruling family appointed a new team of lawyers, but at today's court hearing the detainees refused to accept them and insisted on the original team. It is now known that in the two weeks separating the two court sessions, enormous pressure was exercised on the detainees to accept the new team, including the use of torture. Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad, a Swedish national, was so badly tortured that he looked pale and unable to speak or stand at today's court appearance. Yet the judge brushed aside all complaints of torture and insisted on adopting the confessions made under duress as basis for indictment. The judge adjourned the trial for two more weeks until 6<sup>th</sup> January 2011 and insisted that

the new team start their defence despite the rejection by detainees. It is now clear that the judge has a ready-made case and verdict that he would announce regardless of the detainees or their lawyers said.

What is more painful is the total silence by the US, UK and French embassies whose representatives have attended all court hearings and witnessed the wheeling and dealing of the judge. International observers who attended those sessions expressed outrage at how these show trials are lacking the basic standards of fairness and justice. What is also disturbing is the silence of the UK Foreign Office at the officially-sanctioned torture and injustice being meted against a UK citizen. The FCO has repeatedly justified its lack of action to defend Mr Al Hasabi on the grounds that he holds dual nationality. It has ignored calls from various corners to help this British national although he told them, through his family, that he had been severely tortured and continues to be ill-treated. The FCO appears to ignore the fact that violations of human rights invalidates borders and diplomacy as impediments to offer help to victims of torture anywhere in the world. Mr Al Hasabi is totally innocent and is being persecuted for his peaceful and legal activities he had undertaken in UK not in Bahrain.

Meanwhile the public outrage amongst Bahrainis has continued. Last night Bahraini youth protested in their usual peaceful ways in several towns; Al Dair, Al

Ma'amir, Karbabad and Karzakkan. In Karbabad, tyres were burnt in the street and slogans were painted on walls including that says: "Our protests will continue until our demands are met". In Al Dair town tyres were also burnt near Hajji Ahmad grocery as police vehicles took position at the main entrance to the town. They fired several shots and hurried to put down the flames. In sitra, religious ceremonies were held on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> December and were overshadowed by the presence of slogans and images of political detainees and their ill-treatment. Slogans were raised calling for an end to the black era imposed by the Al Khalifa.

As the security situation worsens, political detainees in various prisons are engaging in strikes to end their ill-treatment and torture. Yesterday, the detainees in Al Khamis notorious prison started a hunger strike in protest at their ill-treatment and illegal detention. The detainees at Al Nu'aim detention centre expressed their solidarity with their colleagues at Al Khamis and went on hunger strike. To make a stronger point, the families of the detainees protested at the main gate of the Dry Dock prison after they had been prevented from visiting their loved ones for here consecutive weeks. The ban was enforced as punishment to the detainees who refused to be represented in court by Al-Khalifa appointed lawyers.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
23 December 2010

---

## Intrigues, corruption exposed in court

As the political intrigues by the ruling family started to unfold the situation is taking sharp turn to the worse following the ruler's confessions that political naturalization had been taking place and would continue. In the past few days several programmes were presented by the BBC including yesterdays' Crossing Continents on Radio4

The first slap on the brutal regime's face came when the second court drama in a week turned sour due to unexpected confessions by the person said to be the victim of Molotov attack falsely alleged to have been carried out by some Bahraini youth on 25<sup>th</sup> August. Mohannad Abu Zaitoun, the managing editor of the ruling family's mouthpiece "Al Watan" testified in the court that the defendants who had been accused of attacking him were not the same height or built as the ones who had carried out the attack. It was a devastating blow to the National Security Agency (NSA) led by Khalifa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, the former ambassador to UK. The two young Bahrainis; Jaffar Ahmad Nasser, 27 and Hassan Ali Mahdi, 21, were arrested on 29<sup>th</sup>

August and subjected to horrific kinds of torture to sign false confessions that they had carried out the attack. Moreover, the alleged attack was designed to make a case against opposition figures accused of sedition and adoption of violence. The "judge" was so embarrassed by the assertions by the victim of the attack that the attackers were of larger built, an indication that they belong to the notorious NSA which has operating Death Squads for sometime. The collapse of the case led to the release of the prisoners who had suffered four months of torture and abuse.

While this case may have raised the hope that the foundations of the allegations against the Bahraini prisoners of conscience by the ruling family may have been demolished, it is feared that the regime may resort to harsher treatment of the detainees to confess to crimes they had not committed. This is particularly relevant to the 25 people languishing in secret cells beneath the NSA headquarters and subjected to unprecedented forms of torture and abuse including rape. Last week's court drama that led to the refusal of the lawyers to present defence of the case after their

demands for an impartial inquiry into torture and re-interrogation of the suspects under the court supervision, has led to intensification of torture against the detainees. This week's scheduled family visits were cancelled as the victims are subjected to more pressure to accept government-appointed lawyers to replace the present team after their challenge to the court.

Meanwhile the Ashura processions have become platforms from which calls to free the detainees were made. The families of the detainees held a protest in Sananbis yesterday alongside the religious procession. They demanded the immediate release of their loved ones who are incarcerated for their expression of opinion and pro-democracy stands and activism. The atmosphere was further complicated when the authorities arrested an elderly Bahraini for raising the pictures of the detainees and calling for their immediate release. On 15<sup>th</sup> December, Mr Mohammad Hassan Jawad, 63, was detained and taken to an unknown destination. He had been detained repeatedly over the past two decades for his courageous stands against tyranny and dictatorship.

*Continued on Page 3*

# Bahrain blogger 'tortured' in jail with Shia opposition

BBC Radio 4, 16th December 2010

Bahraini Blogger's wife on her detained husband:

"He's a writer, he's a journalist, he's a blogger. Ali does not belong to any political party. He just writes his opinion." Jenan Al Oraibi's dark eyes flash beneath her black hijab. She is speaking of her husband Ali Abdulemam, known as the Bahraini Blogger.

We are talking in the home of her friends in a village close to Manama, the capital city of this Gulf island kingdom, which projects itself as an Arab state that is open to investment, progressive about change and moving confidently toward democracy. "Ali has a free pen. That is exactly his crime. He has a free pen," she says bluntly.

Ali Abdulemam is 32 years old. He worked as an IT specialist for the Bahraini airline Gulf Air. In his spare time he blogged.

But he was sacked from the airline after he was arrested in September and accused of being part of a terror organisation. He was charged with spreading false information and linked to a group of Bahraini oppositionists who had been arrested in August.

## Terror charge

All of the men charged are Shia. Some are academics, one is a dentist, another a geologist, several are clerics.

Like Mr Abdulemam, they have frequently voiced their criticism of a government they consider undemocratic and discriminatory toward Shia, who are Bahrain's majority population.

The ruling Al Khalifa family are Sunni Muslims.

The men were initially charged with plotting the overthrow of the government, but the charges were subsequently reduced to financing and leading a terror cell. It's not the first time that Ali Abdulemam has been in trouble with the government because of his blog. In 2005 he was briefly jailed.

On his release he continued his criticism of the Al Khalifa government on issues like the detention of opposition leaders, the treatment of prisoners in jail and the suppression of free speech.

But nothing prepared his wife Jenan for what happened on 4 September. "He got a phone call from the public prosecutor's office, asking him for a meeting. So he went." And that, she says, is the last she saw or heard from her husband for four weeks.

"We were not able to know anything about Ali, no phone calls, nothing." For several weeks after his arrest Mr Abdulemam, like the others, was denied access to lawyers and to his family.

His final blog before he was taken into custody was a call to support the detainees. "The last thing he wrote was for those prisoners, defending them and now he is one of them," his wife says.

"The 23 detainees are all victims. They are all good people who have good jobs in this society. They are all innocent. My husband is innocent.

"They warned them, 'if you speak of any mistreatment, any torture, we will torture you even more'. But they are really brave, they are heroes, they decided to stand up and say exactly what happened to them."

## 'No mistreatment'

At the first hearing on 28 October, most of the defendants alleged that they were tortured in order to extract confessions, a charge the authorities deny..

In a written response to a request from the BBC to comment on the allegations, the government stated: "Standard procedures are applied fairly to all detainees in custody in line with the law. Their rights are being protected and no mistreatment has occurred."

Saeed Boumedouha of Amnesty International attended the first hearing as an observer, and confirms that when given the opportunity to speak, most of the defendants said they were tortured.

"Amnesty International remains very concerned about these allegations and we are

continuing to press for an independent investigation," Mr Boumedouha said.

Jenan is the mother of nine-month-old twin girls and a five-year-old boy. Since her husband lost his job, she is the breadwinner. But she feels under threat too.

"During his interrogation, they threatened my husband that I would lose my job as well," she says.

When we visited her we were closely followed by plain clothed security officers in unmarked cars.

I asked her if she was concerned about repercussions because she had agreed to talk to the BBC.

"Definitely I am worried," she said. "I am worried for my children. I am worried for myself. But I will be more worried if I don't do anything."

The next hearing in the trial is set for 23 December.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12000292>



## CPJ 's letter to minister of justice

December 7, 2010

The Committee to Protect Journalists, a New York-based nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to defending press freedom worldwide, is deeply concerned about the ongoing detention and trial of prominent Bahraini bloggers Ali Abdel Imam and Abdeljalil Alsingace. We're outraged by allegations of torture made by the two bloggers, along with those made by 23 activists and opposition figures. We call on your government to ensure that the bloggers are not abused while in custody and are granted all their rights—including access to counsel and family visits. We also call on you to instruct the proper authorities to revoke all the restrictions imposed on the coverage of the case ahead of the next court session scheduled for December 9.

We are concerned that these bloggers could well be punished for the mere expression of opinions that the government finds distasteful, and we ask that you intervene to ensure that they receive a fair trial. Bahrain's Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, vowed on October 27 that his government was "keen to promote Bahrain's image to be in harmony with the landmark political, economic, and social strides." The ordeal of these detained bloggers stands in direct opposition to that declaration.

*Joel Simon, Executive Director*

## Intrigue, corruption cont from P 2

The Dublin-based Front Line issued a statement calling for his immediate release stating that: "Front Line believes that Mr Mohammed Hassan Mohammed Jawad has been arrested because of his legitimate and peaceful activities in the defence of human rights, in particular his work with regard to the human rights of the detainees. Front Line is deeply concerned for the physical and psychological integrity of human rights defender Mohammed Hassan Mohammed Jawad while in detention".

The Ashura drama continued over the past ten days with mouse and cat games between Bahrainis and security forces. In continuation of the regime's attacks against the majority Shia Muslim natives, the black shrouds and flags erected along the path of the processions were removed in several places. This provocation was met with insistence by the Bahraini youth to put them back in line with traditions of the natives that go back hundreds of years. There was a feeling of outrage at this attack on the religious freedom and practices of the Shia Muslims who are the natives of Bahrain.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**

17<sup>th</sup> December 2010



# Proceedings of the annual seminar on Bahrain at House of Lords

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2010

The annual seminar on Martyr's anniversary was held today at the House of Lords, chaired by Lord Avebury, and addressed by human rights activists including a Bahraini lawyer.

Lord Avebury, the Vice-Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group started the debate saying that this seminar is being held as human rights defenders in Bahrain are attached and jailed and voices of freedom silenced. The recent trials of the innocent detainees have taken a dramatic turn when the lawyers withdrew last year. We must remember that Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace was one of the regular participants in this seminar and he was with us this time last year. He is jailed because he objected to abuse of fellow citizens. Despite the lawyers' demands for investigation of torture claims the judge refused to investigate. If the court now appoints new lawyers this is against international covenants as defendants have the right to choose their lawyers.. Thus a stalemate is possible.

There are many special procedures that may be invoked to deal with the situation in Bahrain. The Special Rapporteur on Torture says that he has not receive complaints about ill-treatment or requests to visit Bahrain. We need to collect evidence and supply it to the UN procedures to make info readily available. Hillary Clinton has been to Bahrain recently to attend a regional conference and was approached about the human rights violation in that country. I am also aware that Nabeel Rajab had been detained and his computer tampered with. This is an attack on human rights defenders, and this shows that what is happening is not random attacks on individuals. Extracting confessions under torture is a criminal act and must be stopped. It is clear that the regime is intent on crushing peaceful opposition. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, in her address on the International Human Rights Day stressed the need to protect human rights defenders. We need to step up international campaign especially with EU, and work to mobilize Mrs Ashton to take up the case of Bahrain. We also need to speak out against the demographic change in Bahrain that is affecting the Shia majority. Four years ago we had Dr Salah Al Bandar in this room to inform us about the extent of the Al Khalifa plan to change the demography. His 240 pages report presented a strong case but the world kept quiet because it did not fit within its interests. Shia are being marginalized in

their native country.

Then Maryan Al Khawaja, of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights delivered a power point presentation of the children target for arrests and human rights violations. She presented the cases of several of them whom she said are victims of physical and psychological abuse by the regime. Ali Abbas Al Furaikh, 17 was kidnapped and tortured. The systematic attacks claimed many victims including the young girl from Dair town, Fatima who subjected to horrific torture. She was hit and thrown on the wall causing her injuries to the face. Miss Al Khawaja presented images of these victims that moved the audience. The torture of detained children includes abduction, beating tear gas, punching and kicking. They are taken to secret centres where abuse often takes place. They are then dropped half naked in many cases for their parents to pick them up. Several children from Arad town were abducted on 15<sup>th</sup> August and abused. Their families protested and complained but no action was taken. Mohammad Ali Hassan and Ayman Jaffar are the youngest aged ten and eleven and charged with crimes they are incapable of committing such as manufacturing explosives. Jihad Aqeel Al Sari was arrested on 19<sup>th</sup> November in revenge against his father who is also in jail. Torture marks were visible on Isa Sarhan, 17. She then delivered a set of recommendations by the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.

Then a skype link was made with Mohammad Al Tajir, one of the team of lawyers defending the Bahrainis. He said that after the arrests that began with Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace's arrest on 13<sup>th</sup> August, we formed a group of activists to defend them. But then more of these activists were arrested. We were denied access to the detainees for two weeks, without knowing where they were being held, despite repeated requests to see them. After two months of their arrest we were allowed to meet them at the court when we insisted to see them in private. We saw clearly marks of severe torture; hanging from hands and feet, beating, electric

shocks etc. When they described to the court their torture ordeal, their testimonies were not recorded in the court proceedings. The basic requirements of a fair trial did not exist. Despite our requests between 28<sup>th</sup> October and 25<sup>th</sup> November we made our position clear; insisting on investigation of torture claims and re-interrogation of the defendants under the court jurisdiction and in our presence. None of these demands were met. Thus we failed to get any guarantee of a fair trial. The direct physical torture may have stopped, but other forms of torture persisted. They would not let them go to toilet for long periods or forcing them to stand for more than six hours, keeping them in total seclusion from what is happening outside. They were even prevented from hugging their loved ones when they were allowed the brief family visits that are becoming torturous to all of them. These visits would often last less than ten minutes in the presence of the torturers themselves who would prevent them from mentioning anything about their ordeals. They are not allowed to speak to each other even in passageways. They are scattered in various jails and each two or three are intermingled with prisoners of crimes. They are forced to do things that would break their wills and demoralize them such as forcing them to kiss the pictures of some officials. This mistreatment has made us unable to defend our clients in accordance with international laws. Anyone who talked in court about torture was subsequently subjected to more severe torture. The judge is in a hurry to issue his verdicts and sentences regardless of the court proceedings. He has refused to investigate torture claims or order a re-investigation under the court supervision. He has failed event to enforce the decisions he had made in the first session. We found no other way but to withdraw our defence.

Among the speakers was Professor Rodney Shakespeare, the Chairman of Arraign; a newly-formed international committee to pursue crimes against humanity in Bahrain.

