

# BAHRAIN

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

## Support People's revolutions; don't be on the wrong side of history

It was a momentous month by any standard. The Bahraini revolution erupted and has continuously made headway in the right direction, aiming at bring the Al Khalifa reign of terror and dictatorship to an end. In the process at least seven martyrs have fallen and more than 500 injured. The regime has lost its legitimacy with hundreds of thousands taking to the streets demanding its downfall. This is almost unanimous and is clearly evident in the non-stop chanting at the Pearl Roundabout in Central Manama. More courageous steps are being considered including the liberation of important landmarks. The years of frustration have led to an unprecedented mass movement unseen in the history of Bahrain. People have now become physically and psychologically detached from their near and distant past when co-existence with the Al Khalifa occupiers was considered a necessity. The circumstances in the country have fundamentally changed for good. The public mood is for the total removal of the regime at any cost. The use of force by the ruling family has only exacerbated the situation and made people more resolute in their demands. They started calling for limited reforms but after blood was shed by the ruling family people became deeply committed to its removal. The revolution has all along been peaceful with none of the violent acts (though very limited) that had happened in Tunisia and Egypt. Demonstrators faced the Al Khalifa killers with their bare chests and achieved the moral high ground that has forced the allies of the regime to rebuke it for its crimes that resulted in death and injury.

Where do we go from here? Several facts ought to be mentioned. The first is that the ruler, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has become the symbol of hate for committing several crimes; the first is the deception he had committed when in 2001 he gave assurances that he would abide by the country's only legitimate constitution. Instead of abiding by that promise he imposed his own set of rules a year later. Second; he sheltered torturers with a royal decree (Law 56/2002) thus leaving room for future torture. Third, Hamad ordered the major crackdown against Bahraini activists and in August last year hundreds of Bahrainis, some of whom children not

more than ten years of age were rounded up and subjected to an unprecedented cruelty and viciousness. Then he ordered the trial of 23 leading figures that became a fiasco with the court room becoming a theatre for the victims to lay bare their horrific wounds and expression of their deep anger and frustration. With these acts the ruler could not have helped the cause of the revolution more. Forth, the regime failed to act in time before the revolution erupted on 14th February. The youth had announced their intention to mark the tenth anniversary of Hamad's charter with a Day of Rage, giving the regime plenty of time to undertake some reforms. None was forthcoming whatsoever. The Al Khalifa could have forestalled the planned event with some positive steps such as the release of the prisoners, the suspension of their constitution and shura council with both chambers and the investigation of the crimes of torture. But he helped to galvanise a situation that would prove vital for the success of the revolt. Fifth, he ordered the immoral attacks on the demonstrators on the Day of Rage. The blood of the first martyr, Ali Abdul Hadi Mushaime became the much-needed fuel for the eruption of the long-awaited revolution that is now sweeping the country. It is now clear that the regime has lost the initiative and proven itself incapable of acting in good time to avoid further solidification of people's resolve and demands. The steps it has taken so far has been received with disgust, disappointment and disgust, thus adding more fuel to those calling for a regime change. The killing of unarmed civilians while they were protesting, taking part in the funeral of martyrs or sleeping at the Pearl Square has turned the situation totally against the Al Khalifa. They are now fighting for the survival of their regime which is unlikely to be achieved. The steps it has taken are considered too little too late. The release of some of the prisoners is only a small step that is interpreted as a necessary one especially after the public fiasco at the court rooms where Al Khalifa were presented to the world as vicious, inhumane and stupid gangs. Furthermore, the dismissal of four ministers was a pity step that received no

applause from any quarter. Those who have attempted to limit the demands to the sacking of the government have been left dumbfounded by these mean steps that only consolidate the feelings that the Al Khalifa are not fit to rule because they have repeatedly failed to gauge the mood of the country. Those who have all along wanted to appease the government are now challenged by the youth who have succeeded in mobilising the street to call for the overthrow the regime.

The return of Mr Hassan Mushaime, one of the most charismatic figures of the anti-regime opposition gave a new momentum to the calls for a regime change. The release of his colleagues whose detention six months ago and subsequent torture laid down the foundation for the revolution has solidified the opposition demands and provided a viable political leadership in conjunction with the youth movement. The myth of Saudi or other intervention is unlikely to deter the popular revolution which has so far been the most peaceful and orderly one. The royal family commands a sizeable military machine that is capable of wiping out the people without the need for the Saudi arms. This is in addition to the fact that the Saudi monarchy has to fend off the threats from its own people especially as more regimes fall in Libya and Yemen. Jordan and Morocco are not immune to regime change to complete the cycle of the much anticipated reshaping of the politics of the Middle East. Instead of meddling in Bahrain, the Saudi are better advised to mind their own business and defend their regime with real changes before it becomes too late. The changes needed are deep-rooted including transformation into a constitutional monarch before the masses send them to the dustbin of history. The West has been caught off guards by these gigantic changes and is likely to loose if it continues supporting oppressive regimes especially those moulded on the Saudi absolute monarchical rule. While those who support the people's revolutions will share in the reaping of the fruits of change, those who prop up those dictatorships, despots and autocratic regimes will be on "the wrong side of history".

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## A new history unfolds as Bahraini rise against tyranny

Today the Bahraini people have begun their revolt against dictatorship and tyranny after decades of oppression unparalleled in the region. Shortly after dawn the first protest erupted at the town of Nuwaidrat, led by the prominent leader, Abdul Wahab Hussain. It was severely attacked and many injuries were reported as shotguns were used against peaceful protesters. Since he "inherited" the throne from his father who died in 199, the present dictator, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has leashed a reign of terror, deception, expropriation of land and money and repression at unprecedented scales. Last year he purchased the Four Seasons Hotel in Park Lane, London for a reported price of one billion dollars (600 million Pounds Sterling). He occupies one whole island (Umm Al Na'ssan) which is of similar size to Muharraq which is occupied by more than 200,000 people. He occupies other islands including the Hwar islands which were repossessed ten years ago after a lengthy and costly write with Qatar at the Hague. In recent years he has become more repressive, ordering the attention of more than 500 people in the past six months alone, including more than 100 children under 18. His Death Squads are responsible for the abduction of more than 50 young Bahrainis since August who were subjected to severe torture before being dumped in remote areas for dead.

The torture methods against the detainees include rape, electric shocks, hanging from hands and feet, beating on all parts of body and deprivation of sleep. Last week Amnesty International issued a damning report on the deteriorating human rights in the country. The 32-page report, Crackdown in Bahrain: Human Rights at the Crossroads, focuses on the arrest, detention and trial of 23 political opposition activists, as well as allegations that they were tortured in custody. The government has failed to open independent investigations into any of the reports of torture and has actively prevented reporting of the alleged abuses. Last year two similar reports were published. In February 2010 Human Rights Watch issued a 70 pages report titled "Torture Redux" in which testimonies of 20 former detainees detailed their predicament in the underground cells of the National Security Agency (NSA) in 2007. Those torture chambers were run by the present Ambassador to UK, Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa whose is watching us now from his room at the first floor opposite (30 Belgrave Square). The Islamic Commission of Human Rights issued another report in September titled "Broken Promises" which dealt with various details of human rights abuses.

The regime that is throttling our country and people is long past its end date. It lost its legitimacy ten years ago when the dictator

repealed the people's constitution drafted and approved in 1973. It was replaced by a set of rules tailor-made to suit the hereditary dictatorship of the Al Khalifa and suppress the demands and aspirations of the people. A mouthpiece shura council was formed half of whose members were elected. Its function is to offer mere advice to the ruling family with not binding power.

Bahrainis have now given up any hope of reforming a system based on tribalism and loyalty to an antiquated regime which has failed to bring even one of the torturers to justice or one of the major thieves of public funds to account. Thus they have decided to bring about a fundamental change in Bahrain that would give the people the right to determine their destiny, write their own constitution and rid Bahrain of this inherently corrupt regime. The generation of Facebook, Twitter and internet have decided to say their world today and that world would be final. The Al Khalifa regime must go now. They have missed the chance to reform and their destiny has now been sealed to the dustbin of history in line with those of Iraq, Tunisia and Egypt. The voice of the people must be heard. It is here to make a change; it will triumph.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
14th February 2011

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## People's revolution heralds new history

Within a week of the launching of the people's revolution in Bahrain, the number of martyrs has reached eight, all murdered in cold blood by the riot police and soldiers. Since the first peaceful demonstration at sunrise on Monday 14th February (Bahrain's Day of Rage) led by Abdul Wahab Hussain was mercilessly crushed by the riot police, the situation has escalated and the first martyr fell. Ali Abdul Hadi Mushaime was killed after being hit with shotguns. That killing broke the fear barrier and thousands of Bahrainis participated in his funeral the following day. Once again the arrogant Al Khalifa junta reacted with stupidity (according to Richard Beeston of The Times newspaper) by shooting on the funeral procession and killing the second martyr; Fadhel Matrook. His procession the following day started a new phase in the protest. First came the dictator, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa live on air to give his condolences to the martyrs families and form an inquiry led by one of the regime's cronies, Jawad Al Urrayedh. The people were so furious that they decided to march to "Pearl Square" in Central Manama to turn it into the revolution's hotbed. Within few hours their numbers swelled to more than 50 000. The Al Khalifa regime committed its ultimate crime when it attacked the demonstrators while they were asleep. At around 3 am on Thursday morning the riot police launched their bloodiest attack on Pearl

Square, killing and maiming hundreds of people, many of them women and children. More people were martyred: Ali Khudhayyer, Ali Al Mo'men and Mahmood Abu Taki. The people were terrified but many were composed despite the bloody attack. They rushed to the Salmaniyah Hospital where some of the injured and dead were taken. It was a day that would never be forgotten. The ruling family issued orders to the hospital staff not to treat the injured who were already in hospital or ferry those whose bodies were scattered at the Square and on the roads. Instead of heeding these inhumane orders, Bahraini doctors and nurses went on protest against the Health Minister, Faisal Al Hamar who has now become one of the hated figures of the regime for his continued refusal to treat the victims. They also made their own makeshift clinic to treat the injured. The Al Khalifa committed further crimes. They attacked the clinic, beat up the specialist doctor, Sadiq Al Ekri to unconsciousness. More atrocities were committed that day. Those attending the casualties were shot. Mr Abdul Hassan was shot with a teargas gun at blank range blowing off his head. He died instantly. A policeman was heard shouting at the killer policeman, Don't kill him Thawwadi, Don't kill him Thawwadi. The family of Thawwadi is a known pro-Al Khalifa family. Now the exact identity of the killer is being sought so that he is pursued for war crimes. On Friday, the people attempted to march back to the Pearl Square at the end of the

funeral of the first martyr. Despite their peaceful nature they were viciously attacked by the army whose tanks and armoured carriers had been deployed along the streets of the capital. They were not deterred by the live ammunition round fired on them by the soldiers. It was yet another turning point in the struggle for freedom. The live images shown of the attack forced some western governments to announce their indignation of the behavior of the embattled Al Khalifa. Both France and Britain announced the suspension of export of lethal and crowd control weapons to Bahrain. It was yet another international sanction against the brutal regime.

Now the scene is set for more bloodshed by an increasingly isolated regime as the people become more emboldened to continue their demand that was raised from the beginning of the revolution; the downfall of the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship. They have not been deterred by the threats coming from the Saudi dictators whose fate hangs in the balance after decades of dictatorship and suppression. These developments have now hardened the resolve of Bahrainis. The Al Wefaq society announced their withdrawal from the Al Khalifa shura council and calls are being made to try the ruler and his clique for genocide and war crimes. It is a history which is now unfolding in Bahrain. The time for real change has come and the days of the Al Khalifa are numbered.

19th February 2011

## Bullets and tear gas in Bahrain

By Al Jazeera's Sara Hassan I walked surreptitiously into the Manama souq after the taxi driver I had just befriended agreed to pick me up from the same spot in exactly one hour. The area was teeming with police, one guarding the main entrance with a tear gas gun strapped securely across his shoulder. It would be just a few hours later that I would feel the effects of that notorious weapon myself.

I had flown to Bahrain to meet a friend for a couple of days to attend Mawlid an-Nabi celebrations, the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, in a country that actually recognised it as a national holiday. What made this year special was that it coincided with my own. But I was aware of the fact that protests were planned for the 14th of February, not unlike the recent ones in Tunisia and Egypt that had forced both respective leaders from power through popular uprisings.

Whether or not the Bahrainis intended to topple their own government, they were definitely calling for major reforms in the way it operates. All the people I spoke to said they wanted economic reforms, better employment opportunities, and an end to discrimination of the nation's majority Shia population governed by a Sunni minority.

My taxi driver, Ali, narrated to me his attempt to find a decent job as we drove to the souq. He said his potential bosses had outright asked each person's sect, separated the two groups, and given the jobs to the Sunni applicants.

However, "this is not a sectarian fight," clarified Nabeel Rajab, the vice president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. "An end to discrimination of Shias is only one of the many reforms we are asking for. We are asking for better rights for all Bahrainis. It is not a Shia-Sunni dispute."

As I walked around the souq, I bought a few things to blend in as a tourist and to have a shopping bag in which to hide my massive camera. I took one quick photo

of half a dozen police officers sitting around the inside of the souq's main gate, and immediately hopped into a nearby shop for cover. There I asked the owner about the protests. He assured me there was nothing to worry about, not understanding my subtle hints at trying to get more information, rather than inquiring about my own safety. It turned out that a few skirmishes had broken out the night before between protesters and police. As I walked back to the main gate and sat on a bench to wait for the taxi, I came up with a plan. Steering clear of the police officers, I went up to a security guard and asked him if I could photograph the entrance of the souq, praying that my halo wouldn't slip to the side as I strained a touristy smile. He gave me the green light at which the police officer with the tear gas gun immediately slid behind a nearby van, sensing that my intentions were not quite as innocent. I used the opportunity to take a dozen pictures of the front of the souq and snap a few photos of the police vans in between, each packed to maximum capacity with officers waiting for anything to happen.

Ali then drove me around the city during which time I captured many more scenes, with him advising when to snap and when to hide the camera.

A couple of hours later, I met up with Rajab and other protesters and activists in Bani Jamrah. By the time I arrived, the group which included women and children, had finished marching and was milling about in front of neatly lined houses. Some held flags, others tried to walk to the roundabout that lie ahead, myself included, but none were actively demonstrating. This, however, did not stop the police from firing tear gas rounds at us. The first couple of times I choked a bit and my eyes burned, and I was given onions and rags dipped in vinegar to lessen the effects of the tear gas.

As we attempted to walk towards the roundabout a second time, the police shot rubber bullets in our direction without warning. The cylindrical objects came fly-

ing at us from medium range about 15 at a time. We ducked to the side just in time so as not to get hit. We then decided to stay where we were.

The children showed me tear gas canisters and rubber bullet casings strewn across the ground. As we chatted, with women and children still present, one of the police officers approached us without warning and fired several tear gas rounds in the spot where we stood before running back. Not expecting the sudden attack, I held my breath and tried to run back in the house. The entrance seemed too far away and one of the young women motioned for me to follow her in the opposite direction as I was forced to inhale large amounts of tear gas as we tried to stumble away. For the next 10 minutes, I tried to heave in as much fresh air as I could into my lungs, my stomach trying to vomit, and my eyes stinging severely.

I was taken into a house where the women gave me onions and poured rose water on my face to reduce the stinging. One woman shouted, "They will kill us! They will kill us! And nobody outside knows what is happening to us. Nobody sees what is happening here."

I was then driven around the city again, this time with Rajab and Said Yousif, a Public Relations Officer also at the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. Yousif related that the government had given 1,000 Dinars (\$2,650) to each Bahraini family several days ago as a gift to appease disgruntled citizens. Yousif explained that the move was taken as an insult. "We want rights, not [conciliatory] gifts," he said. "We want an end to discrimination, an end to torture, the release of political prisoners." He said the country has a lot of money, but none of it is seen by average citizens.

We drove to another neighborhood nearby where a group of youth was experiencing similar tear gas attacks. At one point after the police fired some rounds and ran away, the young men sarcastically called after them, "Come! Come!" Basically saying, kill us for holding peaceful protests. As we drove further we saw black

*Continued on Page 4*



**Ali Abdul Hadi Mushaime**, 22, 14th February 2011, from Daih, **Fadhel Matrook**, 27, 15th February 2011, from Al Mahooz, **Mahmood Makki Ali Abu Taki**, 17th February 2011, from Sitra, **Ali Mansoor Khodhair**, 17th February 2011, from Sitra, **Isa Abdul Hassan**, 17th February 2011, from **Ali Al Mo'min**, 18th February 2011, from Sitra **Redha Mohammad Hassan Bu Hamid**, 21st February 2011 from Al Malikiya

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## © *Amnesty International*: Bahrain protest deaths point to excessive police force Over 10,000 people joined the funeral procession for 'Ali 'Abdulahdi Mushaima'

15 February 2011

Amnesty International has condemned the heavy-handed tactics used by Bahrain's riot police earlier today after the second death in two days of protests calling for political reform in the tiny Gulf state.

Fadhel 'Ali Matrook was among a crowd of people mourning the death yesterday of 'Ali 'Abdulahdi Mushaima', killed in clashes between protesters and police, when he was shot dead by police earlier today in Bahrain's capital, Manama. Riot police are said to have opened fire on the crowd without warning during the funeral.

"This second killing within two days is both tragic and a very worrying development," said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The Bahrain authorities must thoroughly investigate what occurred, stand down the police involved in these shootings and make clear to the police that the use of excessive force will not be tolerated."

"An independent investigation is also urgently required to establish the facts, particularly whether the level of force used by the police, both yesterday and today, can possibly be justified."

"Eyewitness reports of today's shooting

received by Amnesty International suggest strongly that Fadhel 'Ali Matrook's death was caused by excessive force, in which case the police responsible must be brought to justice."

Over 10,000 people reportedly joined today's funeral procession for 'Ali 'Abdulahdi Mushaima', who died on Monday during clashes with riot police in the village of al-Daih, east of Manama.

Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that police opened fired on the procession of mourners without warning, as they chanted slogans criticizing the government and calling for Bahrain to have a new constitution and a democratically elected government.

"Peaceful protesters were chanting 'Khalifa leave' and within minutes of the procession beginning, we got attacked by the riot police; bullets were showering the peaceful protesters and there was tear gas everywhere. Several wounded are being rushed to the hospital and many are screaming," Maryam Al-Khawaja, from the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, told Amnesty International.

Fadhel Ali Almatrook was shot dead close to al-Salmaniya hospital in Manama. According to the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, more than 20 people required hospital treatment as a result of injuries caused by

the riot police on Monday.

Monday's "Day of Rage" protests in Bahrain, organized on Facebook and Twitter and apparently inspired by unrest in Egypt and Tunisia, took place mainly in Shia villages around Manama.

"Like many in the region, those in Bahrain who feel their dignity has been compromised are demanding change. The authorities must listen to these calls, rather than retaliating with violence," said Malcolm Smart. On Friday, Amnesty International highlighted the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain with its report Crackdown in Bahrain: human rights at the crossroads.

The organization called on the government to ensure proper investigations into allegations of torture and other serious abuses by the security forces.

In August-September 2010, the Bahrain authorities swooped on 23 opposition political activists, detaining them incommunicado for two weeks during which some allege they were tortured.

The authorities have also curtailed freedom of expression, closing critical websites and banning opposition publications. Hundreds of people have been arrested or imprisoned for participating in protests.

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### Bullets and tear gas in Bahrain *Continued from Page 3*

smoke rising among the white plumes of tear gas. Some youth were burning tires in defiance of the police.

As I posted updates of the day's events on Twitter, I made my way to the airport to pick up my friend. As soon as we returned to the hotel, I received an SMS message informing me of the first fatality. Apologizing profusely to my friend for having to put our vacation on hold, I made my way to Sulamaniya Hospital where I saw scores of people following an ambulance carrying the dead body. The men helped me get closer to the vehicle where I snapped photos of the body wrapped in sheets through the window of the ambulance and of family members sobbing in the front seat. The crowd chanted slogans in support of the martyr.

As I followed the body itself from the ambulance to the hospital, I shouted that I was a journalist, and the crowds made way for me. I let the current push me forward towards the hospital's entrance where I made my way to the mortuary and was allowed to take photos of the body riddled with ammunition and still bleeding. I had no time to let the trauma sink in as I made my way back to the hotel to file the photos. More protests ensued that night. The following day, I tried to take my friend to the souq, but as I saw a group

of people running towards us, I pushed her into a nearby shop and closed the door. I told her; "When people run like that, it either means police or tear gas." The store owners closed shop, turned off the lights, and let us wait inside until the situation calmed down. Feeling responsible for her safety, I took her straight back to the hotel. We then discussed the turn of events at a nearby restaurant.

The next morning, as we rode to the airport, we could see people gathering at the Pearl Roundabout to stage a sit-in - a replica of Egypt's Tahrir Square. A couple of days later, those remaining in the roundabout overnight would be tear gassed and shot at with rubber bullets in a surprise attack by police, killing four people and critically injuring scores, a use of force the Bahraini foreign minister would later deny.

