

# BAHRAIN

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

## Bahrain will triumph, defeat the Saudi occupation, Al Khalifa terror

The crisis in Bahrain has now become more complicated following the Saudi occupation that started on 14<sup>th</sup> March. The Saudi tanks and armoured vehicles crossed the causeway between the two countries and started a reign of terror against the peaceful citizens. The situation has thus been transformed from a domestic uprising to achieved modern statehood to that of liberation from foreign occupation. What is making the situation more intriguing is the what appears to be an American and British complicity in the Saudi crimes. Both Washington and London have refused to acknowledge the facts and their failure to condemn it or take steps to bring it to the attention of the United Nations Security Council. Many objective observers have expressed their dismay at this lack of sensitivity and neutrality when dealing with the Middle Eastern revolutions. While the West is intervening in Libya to support the rebels against the Gaddafi regime, the opposite is happening in Bahrain. Instead of supporting the legitimate demands of Bahrainis, Western powers have sided with the Saudi occupiers and Al Khalifa killers. Despite the ongoing carnage inflicted against the people, and the rising numbers of martyrs, silence has become the order of the day. In the face of this state aggression against the natives is silence an option? How could people with human conscience allow the state's army, police forces and security to wage this relentless war against the natives? Why the religious affiliation of those natives is allowed to be used as an excuse for the war that is now becoming genocide?

The events of the past few weeks have proven without any reasonable doubt that the aim of the Saudi and Al Khalifa occupiers is to obliterate the Shia Muslims of Bahrain at any cost. Their systematic attacks on the leading religious and political figures either physically or in the media, the destruction of the places of worship and symbols, the throttling of the Shia through summary dismissals, the instant termination of scholarships of Shia Muslim students at outside universities and the continued terrorist attacks by hooded thugs wielding axes and swords against Shia Muslims in almost all regions of the

country.

The people had anticipated a rational approach by the Al Khalifa to implement political reforms similar to other governments. Instead, the Al Khalifa have undertaken draconian measures to realise the physical change of the demographic composition. In doing so, they are supported not only by the Saudis who have deployed their forces and occupied the country, but by the Americans and the British who have attempted to present political arguments to defend the occupation and the other draconian measures taken by the regime. It is rumoured that the Saudis had promised to shoulder the bills of the Western military campaign against the Gaddafi regime in return for Western support to what they are doing in Bahrain. This explains in part the reluctance of USA and UK to take any stand either in support of the people's demands or against the Saudi occupation. Some of their leaders including Hillary Clinton have justified it arguing that it is legitimate for the Al Khalifa to defend themselves by these measures. This is despite the fact that the Bahraini revolution has been the most peaceful of Arab revolts. The people have not resorted to any kind of violence. Prior to 14<sup>th</sup> February when the revolution started, some protests included tyre burning, but not a single tyre has been burnt during the four weeks of demonstrations.

The attack on Bahrain by Saudi forces on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> March came as a surprise to everyone. According to the GCC charter, any member country is entitled to call for military help if it faces outside aggression. There has been no outside aggression form anywhere this time. The Saudi forces were invited to wreak havoc

against the Shia Muslims who are the natives of the islands. The Saudis are known for their scant attention to human rights or the rules of military engagement. Armed with the most sophisticated arms that cost more than US\$100 billion, they have brought havoc, destruction and death to a peaceful community whose only crime is to call for democracy and the rule of law to replace the hereditary dictatorship and the decades of repression by the Al Khalifa clan. The US, UK and the EU are well advised to take a stand against the ongoing carnage which is claiming the lives of innocent Bahrainis. The latest victim has been a boy of 15 years whose crime was to play football when the Saudi and Al Khalifa troops raided his village, Saar, on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March. He paid the ultimate price for this football game. They showered the boys with live bullets, one of which struck him in the head killing him instantly. Sayyed Ahmad Shams has become just another figure added to the long list of martyrs of this joint Saudi-Al Khalifa aggression.

As for the people of Bahrain their aim is clear and their means are peaceful. They will not accept a return to the status quo that had prevailed prior to 14<sup>th</sup> February. Whatever the cost, they will continue their peaceful and civilised struggle until they achieve a democratic regime that represents their aspiration. They have always called for a system based on a "one man one vote" principle. That remains the aim although the joint evil of the Al Saud-Al Khalifa alliance will commit any crime to prevent such an eventuality. They are racing against time to stop the tide of revolutions taking hold in the Arab world. Freedom-loving people must ensure that they do not achieve that goal. The Spring of Arab revolutions has blossomed in several countries; the flowers of freedom in Bahrain will continue to blossom. The question is: How long will the world wait before it acts, and whether silence is still an option? Those whose stand can make a difference are urged to speak out, lest our collective humanity is buried with the bodies of those innocent young men and women who are killed simply because they made a stand.



## More martyrs as demonstrators defy martial law and Saudi occupation

Despite the Saudi occupation, the Al Khalifa-imposed martial law and curfew Bahraini people went out today in peaceful demonstrations in several areas. At least one person has been added to the ever-growing list of martyrs. Hajji Isa Mohammad Ali, 70, from Ma'amir was martyred when his house was attacked by riot police, Death Squads and security forces. The cause of his death has not been confirmed, although the attackers used extensive tear gas and chemical agents. Live ammunition was also retrieved from the area.

This is the latest addition to the martyrs whose numbers are not known as more than 110 people are accounted for. At least 23 people are known to have been killed by the Al Khalifa since the beginning of the revolution 40 days ago. Yesterday, two new martyrs were discovered. Hani Abdul Aziz Shararah, 33 was buried by mourners who came from many areas. He had been fatally injured by the Al Khalifa troops in a building near his home town few days earlier. He was hit at close range with a shot gun, causing his knees to be shattered. Chunks of flesh were seen at the scene. He was taken to hospital and died few days later. Many people had been taken away by the Death Squads on 15<sup>th</sup>



March, many of whom have yet to be released or confirmed dead. This crime has prompted Human Rights Watch to issue a public statement calling on the Al Khalifa to investigate these extra-judicial killings and bring those responsible for them to justice. These are considered war crimes that cannot be ignored or undermined.

A second martyr yesterday was Aziz Juma Ayyad, 33, from Al Hajar town. His family was contacted by the Al Khalifa authorities and told of his death. He is one of the rare Bahraini Shia working in low level jobs at the ministry of defence. Since he went to his job ten days ago they had heard nothing from or about him. They called his employers to inquire they were told that he was not allowed to have his mobile with him so he could not contact them. In the early hours of yesterday the family was surprised by the caller from the ministry of defence who told them that their son was at the military hospital and that he was tired. Two hours later they were called and told that their son had died. His body has not yet been handed to his family and may not be handed at all as all the indications are that he had been brutally murdered possibly for refusing to shoot at the demonstrators.

The first woman of the revolution

passed away on 21<sup>st</sup> March, few days after she was shot by soldiers using live ammunition. Her body was snatched by the foreign forces immediately after the shooting. Passers by saw her bullet-riddled, blood-stained car abandoned near a check point. Her family kept ringing her for many hours before realizing that she had already been dead. Her funeral on Tuesday was emotionally-charged and was attended by thousands of mourners. Anti-regime slogans were raised and feelings of rage were dominated the procession. Meanwhile there are increasing concerns for the safety and well-being of the prisoners who have been snatched in the past few weeks. Nothing has been heard of them and no family visits have been allowed. Brief calls were made yesterday by some of the senior figures after international rage became clear and pressures were faced by the US administration for siding with the regime. No lawyers have been allowed to see them. The Al Khalifa foreign minister said that they are accused of three "crimes"; not responding positively to the crown prince's call for meaningless dialogue, contacting the outside world and sedition. Most of them were only released recently after six months in incarceration. Infact their original detention had prepared the ground for the ongoing revolution. Their present detention is thus likely to maintain the momentum of the people as they seek to replace the Al Khalifa with a new political system.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
25<sup>th</sup> March 2011

## Bahrain must free detained opposition activists

18 March 2011

Amnesty International is calling for the immediate release of eight prominent Bahraini opposition activists arrested following a violent dispersal of demonstrators in Manama. The eight activists, mainly leading members of Shi'a opposition groups prominent in the ongoing protests for reform, were arrested yesterday in armed raids on their homes by a joint force of Bahraini and Saudi Arabian security forces. The security forces did not produce arrest warrants and the authorities have not revealed where the detainees have been taken, or allowed them access to lawyers or their families.

On Wednesday, the day before the arrests, at least six people were killed in Manama when Bahraini security forces, backed by Saudi Arabian troops, forcibly dispersed protestors who had set up camp at the city's Pearl Roundabout. At least one member of the security forces was killed but the majority were protestors.

"The Bahraini authorities' increasing use of violence and intimidation against peaceful protestors and activists is totally unacceptable" said Malcolm Smart, Amnesty

International's Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

"The authorities appear to be intent on shifting the blame to these opposition leaders for the violence meted out by the security forces. Instead, they should be conducting an immediate independent investigation into their forces use of excessive force, and bringing to justice those responsible for the serious abuses that we have seen in recent weeks."

A relative of Shi'a opposition activist Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace told Amnesty International that security forces smashed in the door of the house yesterday morning, stormed in and seized Dr al-Singace from his bedroom. A computer and mobile phone were also taken. The family was not given a reason for his arrest, and not told where he was taken.

The other activists arrested were Hassan Mshaima, a prominent colleague of Dr al-Singace in al-Haq, a Shi'a opposition political association; Ibrahim Sharif, secretary general of the secularist opposition group Wa'ad; 'Abdel-Wahab Hussain, president of al-Wafa' Islamic Movement; Shi'a opposition activists Sa'eed al-Nuri, 'Abdel-Hadi al-Mukhodher and Hassan al-Haddad; and Dr

'Ali al-'Ekri, a physician and one of the protest organisers.

Dr 'Ali al-'Ekri works at al-Salmaniya hospital in Manama, which is currently surrounded by troops reportedly making access to the hospital difficult.

"These eight detainees are all prisoners of conscience and should be immediately and unconditionally released" said Malcolm Smart. Amnesty International has grave fears for the detainees' safety, as several of them have previously alleged torture and mistreatment when they were previously detained in 2010.

Dr al-Singace, Sa'eed al-Nuri, 'Abdel Hadi al-Mukhodher and Hassan al-Haddad were held from August 2010 until the end of February 2011 when they were released on the orders of the King as a response to popular calls for reform.

Hassan Mshaima had only recently returned from exile to Bahrain.

The arrests follow rising tension and violence in Bahrain. This week at least nine people have been killed in clashes between protestors and Bahraini and Saudi Arabian security forces. Security forces have been deployed in many parts of Manama, especially in predominantly Shi'a neighbourhoods and villages close to the capital.



## Press Conference: The Saudi invasion and the suppression of the revolution

A Press Conference was held on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March at the House of Lords. It was addressed by several speakers with images and video clips. Lord Avebury who chaired the meeting said that the moves for democracy in the Arab world are moving forward despite the repression of the regimes. There is severe crackdown in Libya and the end of Yemen's Ali Saleh is fast approaching. But the United States is refusing to help Bahrain which is supported by Saudi Arabia. The leaders of the opposition have been arrested and more than 100 people are missing. The regime has impounded the medical records and turned back a Kuwaiti medical team. Nabeel Rajab was arrested by 25 thugs who also attacked Al Wasat newspaper on 15<sup>th</sup> march. The Bar Human Rights Committee expressed concerns at the imposition of Martial Law and the use of excessive force against demonstrators. It is now clear that the moment of change has arrived. It is a tsunami of people's power that is unstoppable. We should promote regime change as the only way forward. I deplore the invitation for the Saudis to intervene which will have serious implications. Then Yousuf Al Khoei spoke on the developments in Bahrain. He we have urged Bahrainis to use democratic means to deal with people's demands. I visited Bahrain last year and met both the interior and foreign ministers. Some factions of government are unwilling to introduce change. The use of foreign forces to suppress the people cannot win. The adoption of sectar-

ianism to present the struggle as a fight between the Shia and Sunnis is also doomed as the Bahraini people have always had good relations. The people are now unwilling to compromise. The average British person is baffled by the double standards in dealing Libya and Bahrain. Unless the West puts the rights of the people before the petrodollars, the situation cannot be resolved.

Lord Avebury commented that Hassan Mushaimi who was with us in such conferences has now been unlawfully arrested for the fourth time.

Dr Saeed Shehabi of the Bahrain Freedom Movement spoke about the situation with some details of the brutal suppression of the Bahrainis; the killings; attacks on civilian liberties; the role of the Death Squads wielding swords, axes, steel bars and wooden sticks against Bahrainis. He said such practices could not lead to peace. Instead they have only led to the solidification of the people's demands and that the regime must go. He also confirmed that the resolve of the people has become greater and that no dialogue with the Al Khalifa is now possible. How can we extend our hands to those whose hands are soaked in martyrs blood? The revolution of the people will continue until the hereditary dictatorship is removed.

Jeremy Corbyn, MP, said that he had been following the events in Bahrain since 1986 and he was writing an article to the Guardian about the ongoing crisis. He added: "Some years ago we demanded that Ian Henderson be tried for the torture of Bahrainis, but he is still allowed to settle at his mansion house in

UK. I like also like to pay tribute to Lord Avebury who has worked consistently on the issue of Bahrain. On Saturday I spoke at a large demonstration outside the Bahraini embassy and reiterated my support to the struggle of the Bahraini people. It seems to me that the Western media do not understand Bahrain and would repeat the motto of sectarianism foolishly. I have always said that it is about changing the government and not about sectarian demands. Torture was used extensively against activists who would question the massive expenditure on arms. The double standards by the Western governments are deafening. And now the Saudi invasion speaks volumes." Finally Jaffar Al Hesabi, the UK national who had been arrested for more than six months gave a brief account of his ordeal that included extensive torture. It was a moving account that gave an impression of the underlying causes of people's anger and frustration.



## Bahrain's king as a royal wedding guest? What an dreadful message

*Being 'royal' doesn't stop you being a violent dictator. Why are such people receiving invitations to Prince William's wedding?*



By Graham Smith, guardian.co.uk, Thursday 17 March 2011

I have written a letter to Prince William and Kate Middleton calling on them to remove the king of Bahrain and other vile men from their wedding invitation list. The king, who has reportedly received a personal invitation to the wedding from the Queen, has violently crushed the pro-democracy movement in his country. I reminded the couple of this country's duty to support the oppressed and the democrats over the despots and oppressors, and warned that it would send an "appalling message to the world were any dictators of the Middle East – royal or otherwise – seen enjoying the hospitality of your family and rubbing shoulders with Hollywood stars and politicians at your wedding".

The inclusion of these dictators on a wedding invitation list that excludes democratic leaders from Europe and the

US speaks volumes about the world view of the Windsor family. These are people who favour status over principle and "royalty" over legitimacy.

The relationship between our royal family and those of the Middle East has a long history. It is a very deep and very personal one – as we saw when Prince Charles used his connections with the Qatari princes to pull the plug on the Chelsea barracks developer at the cost of thousands of jobs.

Yet why do they choose these dictators over others? The family connections were never so strong with the houses of Saddam Hussein or Hosni Mubarak, yet in practice the differences are only a matter of degrees. It would seem that if a dictator has the foresight to call himself "king", the Windsor family will seek out his friendship and speak favourably of him in diplomatic circles. Perhaps this is why the "royal" dictators have received a more muted response to their atrocities from the British government. No doubt if Kim Jong-il of North Korea – a monarchy in all but name – were to crown himself King Jong-il he too would discover new friends in Clarence House and Buckingham Palace. He may even get an invitation to Kate and Wills's big day.

I would ask the Windsors to spare a thought for those protesters who have been shot, arrested, tortured and killed. Think of the families whose loved ones have gone missing or who have had the lifeless bodies of their brothers and sons returned to them by the savage security services who prop up these so-called royal families. And my question to the Windsors is a simple one: can you look those people in the eye and justify the invitation you have extended to their oppressors, can you justify your cosy relationships with these brutal men?

The inclusion of these people on the guest list of the royal wedding sends an appalling message to the world, particularly at this time, and it reflects very badly on the Windsor family. It shows the sort of principles and priorities the family has and only adds to the long list of reasons why our shabby and nepotistic monarchy should be abolished in favour of an open, accountable and representative republic.

• The headline and standfirst on this article was changed at 18:58 on 17 March 2011 to make it clear that the author does not think the royal wedding is something that can be disgraced

## The Saudi intervention in Bahrain will fuel sectarianism, not stifle it

*In Bahrain as elsewhere the uprising began in a spirit of hopeful nationalism. But now religious divides are being exploited*

Madeleine Bunting *guardian.co.uk*,  
Sunday 20 March 2011

A man in jeans and a jumper is standing in the road, waving his arms in brave defiance as bullets crackle around him. A few seconds later, he crumples and is loaded, bleeding, into a car to be taken to hospital. It's a few minutes of footage from the streets of Manama in Bahrain and the kind of incident that has become familiar in the last few months of Arab uprisings. But pause a moment, because this image of extraordinary, reckless bravery can become iconic in different ways to its many web audiences. Do we understand all of them?

Westerners see a political activist; some Sunni Muslims see a Shia troublemaker; and Shias across the Muslim world see a martyr. There is no more powerful a mobilising idea in Shia Islam than the martyr. For nearly one and a half thousand years, Shias have revered Ali, the prophet's son-in-law, who was assassinated, and the prophet's grandson, Hussein, who was killed in battle at Karbala; betrayal has become a passionate narrative of identity.

What has filled western observers with optimism is that the spirit of the Arab protesters in recent months has been so unequivocally non-sectarian. Egyptian Muslims and Christians side by side on the streets, Bahraini Shias and Sunnis insisting they were Bahrainis first and foremost, jointly demanding political reform. But as the revolutions grow older, the highly fluid politics shifts, secular national identities can fragment and religious identities gather force; can the latter be contained? Everyone is haunted by Iraq; after the fall of Saddam, Iraqis celebrated "as Iraqis and as Muslims", but what ensued was the deadliest sectarian conflict the region has ever seen. How does peaceful nationalism fail to hold its ground?

The question is emerging in Egypt, the country at the centre of the Arab spring. The recent burning of a church and the rough handling of a demonstration of Coptic Christians in Cairo has set nerves on edge. Christians are anxious about newly confident Islamist groups; their leaders urged them to vote no to constitutional amendments in the referendum at the weekend, while Islamist leaders were urging a yes vote.

But it is, above all, in Bahrain that a popular political reform movement is increasingly being framed in sectarian terms, and as a result takes on entirely different dimensions with repercussions across the region. Bahrain's significance is out of all proportion to its tiny size. An island at the centre of western oil dependency and US military capability – as home of the US Fifth Fleet – Bahrain is bang on the faultline of Is-

lam's deepest and most embittered of divisions between Sunnis and Shias. It is a division that the west has often failed to understand, and it has frequently miscalculated how it is being used and for what purposes – as was very evident in the Iraq war. Could it be doing so again?

A majority of the Bahrain population is Shia and they are governed by a Sunni monarchy with a long history of discrimination. There are very few Shias in the army and police, they suffer disproportionate unemployment and lack access to housing. For years there has been periodic unrest. In recent weeks, as the violent repression by the Sunni monarchy in Bahrain has intensified, the Shias have been radicalised, moving beyond the demand for constitutional reform to one of regime change, and that has cost them their Sunni allies. But the factor that has transformed a delicate situation into an explosive one was the intervention of the Saudi and Gulf Co-operation Council's troops last week in support of the Bahraini king.

The Saudis are using the threat of sectarianism as cover, insisting that urgent action was necessary to prevent what they are, in fact, fuelling. Senior figures in Saudi justified their action in Bahrain as necessary to prevent Shia fitna (chaos), points out the Middle East analyst Mai Yanami. Provoking the fear of Shias meets domestic requirements; it inhibits the cautious Saudi version of the Arab spring – a nervous internet petition movement asking for reforms had been gathering strength.

With violent unrest in Yemen on its southern border and in Bahrain, Saudi government figures are edgy, pouring money into food subsidies and pay rises; they warn that democracy risks "60 years of bloodshed". It's an old trick for repressive regimes to exploit fear that change could unleash unmanageable forces, but for a region that has just witnessed the sectarian violence of Iraq, it doesn't sound like an empty threat.

Highlighting sectarianism serves Saudi well with another constituency – its American allies. There have been plenty of thinly veiled references to Iranian links with their co-religionists in Bahrain; presumably, allegations of "foreign interference" in Bahrain have been poured into American ears to keep them on side. Saudi's treatment of its own nearly 2 million Shia

minority is infamous. Children are taught that Shias are apostates; to some Wahhabi clerics, Shias are worse than infidels.

Religious identities have always crossed the arbitrary, colonial-imposed borders in the Arab world – ideas and people have followed the Shia pilgrimage routes to sites such as Mashhad near the Iranian-Afghan border, and to Najaf and Karbala in Iraq – building strong links and family networks. The Gulf is what Toby Mathiesen, of the School of Oriental and African Studies, calls a transnational space. The internet reinforces this; just as it helped spread the Arab political uprisings, so it can reinforce religious identities. In the last few days there have been demonstrations against Saudi intervention in Bahrain in Shia communities in Iraq, Lebanon, Iran and the crucial Saudi eastern province of Qatif, where most of its Shia live – and where Saudi oil is also concentrated.

For the US, this amounts to a massive headache that makes even Libya look straightforward. Its invasion of Iraq in 2003 inadvertently boosted the reach and influence of Shia Iran in the region; for the first time in centuries the Shias have gained power and there has been much talk of a Shia revival, points out Rosemary Hollis, professor of Middle Eastern studies at City University. This has made Sunnis throughout the Middle East increasingly anxious. Instability in the Gulf risks higher oil prices, and that risks global recession. But the repressive response can only work in the short term, while it makes nonsense of America's narrative of human rights and democracy. Increasingly, the danger is that America – and thus Britain – are on the wrong side, alongside regimes that can no longer secure their interests, and whose brutality blows apart western claims to the moral high ground.

One final point. Britain's intimate relations with the Bahrain royal family now look embarrassing. The island was one of the last outposts of the empire, and close relations have been sustained through military co-operation, commercial links and royal visits. Britain exports weapons and military advisers and imports Bahraini offspring to Sandhurst. The king of Bahrain was on the invitation list for Prince William's wedding and rapid diplomatic manoeuvrings are being deployed to avoid the event being hijacked by pro-democracy demonstrations; reportedly the king has now declined. That still leaves the issue of the Saudi king turning up at Westminster Abbey. Every wedding has its share of necessary but unwelcome guests, but the presence of Middle Eastern despots risks exposing the seediness of British foreign policy.

