

BAHRAIN

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

Al Khalifa issue their own death verdicts

It is now widely accepted that the military court that issued life sentences against scores of revolutionary leaders has in fact decreed the execution of the Al Saud and Al Khalifa occupation, repression and dictatorship. Despite the relentless efforts by the counter revolutionary forces, the Bahraini revolution has renewed its determination to pursue the goals of the people until the regime is toppled. Even Washington and London could not openly support the verdicts of the military court and they both talked of their "concerns" about them. These shallow and shy expressions may not lead to a change of direction by the Al Saud or Al Khalifa but they indicate the moral embarrassment of those powers that have hitherto refrained from condemning the inhumane actions and policies of the repression of both. On 23rd June the military court whose Al Khalifa judge is also the executioner, issued the life sentences against eight of the popular leaders of the revolution including Mr Hassan Mushaime, Abdul Wahab Hussain and Dr Abdul Jalil Al Signace. These verdicts have followed earlier death sentences against two Bahrainis falsely accused of crimes they had not committed. These sentences have made the cause of the revolution more legitimate as the regime has failed to heed the calls for reforms.

Last Summer more than 500 Bahrainis were arrested by the Al Khalifa, tortured, abused and severely humiliated. More than 60 others were kidnapped by members of the Death Squads and tortured until they reached the brink of death. When the Bahraini youth decided to launch their revolution on 14th February, the situation in the country, the emotions of the people and the extent of injustice and repression were instrumental in galvanizing the public opinion in favour of the revolution. It was the first time in recent decades that such a situation has developed. Thus when the revolution started the extent of popular support and participation surpassed any expectation. The Al Khalifa, their backers in Tel Aviv, Washington and London and their GCC partners were so alarmed that they hurried to call for Saudi military support. It was one of the rare episodes in regional politics. Although the military intervention by Saudi

Arabia may have suppressed the revolution, it has enraged the free world to the extent that no one could present a viable defence of this crime. The situation became more embarrassing when the Saudis started to commit serious war crimes and crimes against humanity. The use of Apache helicopters against unarmed civilians, the destruction of Shia mosques, the setting up of checkpoints at every corner of the capital and the arrest and torture of scores of doctors and nurses has had the opposite effect both on the political discourse surrounding the revolution and the morale of the Bahrainis who had to choose between life of subjugation under occupation and tribal repression or dignified death through martyrdom. It is clear that the people have opted to continue the struggle until the Al Khalifa regime has been defeated.

The Bahrainis have been heartened by the unequivocal support from the freedom-loving people of the world. Apart from the support from the counter revolutionary forces led by Saudi Arabia, the Al Khalifa have received little support from international human rights bodies, media or civil society institutions. The international media has been outraged by the extent of repression, dictatorship and the cruelty of Saudi occupation. When the organizers of Formula 1 race bowed under political and economic pressures to hold the race next October in Bahrain, the world was so outraged that within few days of the decision, the decision was revoked with utmost humiliation to the Al Khalifa. They had sought to achieve morale-boosting on the international stage after months of international rebuke. But the blood of the martyrs has denied them the opportunity. In addition, the continued efforts by regional and international bodies to pursue the Al Saud and Al Khalifa criminals in international courts has become a source of agitation to the senior members of both clans whose day of reckoning is not far away. Furthermore, the resilience of the people of Bahrain in facing up to the military and political onslaught by GCC countries who are empowered by the ever-mounting petrodollars has greatly destroyed the morale of the occupiers and forces of repression. The situation has been polarized against the expectations of those who had planned

the occupation and the subsequent crackdown against the Pearl Square that became a monument of pride and humanity. There is a dire need for the world to stand with the Arab revolutions and ensure their success. The dictatorial regimes have created enormous hardship and miseries to their own people and fostered suitable conditions for extremism and terrorism. The Arab people need to be supported in their struggle to realize their dignified living within an environment of freedom and respect of human rights. The continued defence of the despotic regimes is dangerous, inhumane and immoral. The state machineries have become tools in the hands of these dictators to repress their people. Under them, armies, security services, judiciary and legislatures have ceased to be forces for the good of people. They lost their neutrality and became tools of the worst kinds of repression. Unless the state, its tools, arms and various bodies become independent of the rulers, people will always be victimised, marginalized and repressed. The Al Saud and Al Khalifa, for example rule with a mentality of total possession of the state assets, the land and the people. They are used for internal repression, not to uphold the rule of law. They are adamant to remain outside the realm of modernity, modern statehood, civilized concepts regulating the issues of public rights and responsibilities and the basic concept of pluralistic governance. Under these hereditary dictatorships, the state is run by different concepts of loyalty, hypocrisy and servitude. Washington and London have a lot to answer for if the Arab Spring revolutions are left to their fate to be suppressed by those heartless dynasties. Despite these anxieties, the 14th February youth are determined to see their revolution achieve its goals at any cost. Their central slogan "The people want the downfall of the regime" remains pivotal to their strategy. They are ready to pay with their blood the necessary price of freedom, democracy and dignity. The world must heed their call for moral support in defence of these values, without which the world will remain unsafe to everyone. Dictatorship provides fertile grounds for the Al Qa'ida style atrocities. Does the world want this?

International anger as leaders of revolution jailed for life by military court

The ruling Al Khalifa family took revenge from its opponents yesterday by issuing life sentences against eight of the leading figures. A military court presided by a senior member of the ruling family read out the ruling in the presence of several envoys representing the USA and Europe. It remains to be seen whether these countries will issue condemnation of this show trial that had been condemned by international human rights bodies including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. It was one of the most blatant moves by the embattled regime fighting for survival and legitimacy. The sentencing of those innocent men has deprived it of both. Political and human rights figures have stressed that legitimacy cannot be achieved by military means or military courts. With no impartial human rights observers and with the presiding judge appointed by the military, there has been unanimous verdict among human rights bodies against its fairness or neutrality. When the executioner becomes the judge, the whole notion of justice becomes irrelevant.

Bahrainis have been infuriated by the verdicts which are considered political decisions by the Al Khalifa. With marks of severe torture visible on the faces of some of the victims and the assertion by all of them that they had been subjected to most horrific wounds as a result, the regime became the accused in the eyes of the world. The defiance of the political leaders upon hearing the sentences surprised those present at the court. Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain shouted with no fear in his heart: "The struggle will continue against this dictatorship", while Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja and his daughter, Zainab, were set upon by members of the Death Squads present at the court as they started chanting anti-regime slogans. The summary attacks by those thugs became an embarrassment of the regime as members of the US and European countries were stunned by those vicious attacks on liberty, freedom and justice.

One of the positive outcome of those trials has been the ending of any talk of reconciliation with the Al Khalifa. The wedge between them and the people has now become unbridgeable. No free Bahraini is in the mood to participate in helping the defunct regime from its quagmire. The 1st July proposed "dialogue" has now become redundant for three main reasons. The first is the harsh sentences of the leaders of the revolution whose consent will determine the success or failure of any dialogue. The second is the continuing attack on the people's demonstrations and rights. The third is the transformation of the "dialogue" into a public meeting for the people, and not a serious discussion of the future of the regime and

the relations with the people. The ruling family has abandoned any intention for reforms and attempted to deceive the world with the talk of dialogue as being a public debate about various issues in which more than 300 of the registered societies would take place. That is not the political dialogue; it is yet another bluff.

The people have now reacted with utmost rage especially after the sentencing of the leaders. Over the past few days many demonstrations were held in towns and villages such as Duraz, Bani Jamra, Sanabis, Sitra, Karzakkan and elsewhere. They

were also outraged by the killing of Mr Hassan Al Sitri, 70, who was killed by members of the Death Squads on Monday 20th June. He was kidnapped in the early hours of the morning, and was hit with hard instrument, possibly a sword on his head and what appears to be an axe on his neck and back. His family was ordered to bury him in a hurry before any investigation was conducted. He is the fourth Bahraini to be killed by the regime since the martial law was lifted on 1st June.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
23rd June 2011

Two martyrs as Formula 1 urged to boycott Aakhalifa

Two Bahrainis were martyred today and yesterday as a result of the barbarity of the Al Khalifa. This morning the martyrdom of Salman Abu Idris, 63, was confirmed, two and a half months after he had been shot in the head with a live bullet. He has remained in critical condition ever since as the Al Khalifa and Saudi occupiers continued to unleash their terror on Bahrainis.

Yesterday a young Bahraini woman was martyred when she was hit with excessive amounts of tear gas. Zainab Al Tajir (Hajja Umm Saeed) was exposed to this lethal chemical weapon in Sanabis as the town was attacked by the Saudi-Al Khalifa forces in a futile attempt to stop the protest of Bahrainis against the occupation, repression and dictatorship. Today, her body was buried in a massive funeral attended by hundreds of people, outraged by the continuing suppression of public protest.

These two martyrs have been added to more than 30 others who had been killed by the joint Saudi-Al Khalifa forces. The people have only become more blunt in their defiance of this unholy alliance and are more determined to rid the country of this evil. Fear has now disappeared from the hearts and minds of the Bahrainis.

The 14th February Youth had called for a massive return to the protests on 1st June when the martial law was due to be lifted. Despite the Al Khalifa violence against Bahrainis, the people's determination and zeal have never diminished. They responded positively to the call and demonstrations were held in many towns and villages. Manama has remained under siege to prevent the takeover of the Pearl Square which had been the birthplace of the largest ever revolution in Bahrain's history.

This morning the funeral procession of the woman martyr was attacked by the regime's Death Squads and scores of people were injured, some severely. The injured were taken to makeshift clinics organized by the people as the main Salmaniya hospital remains under the Saudi-Al Khalifa occupiers. The funeral procession was

both massive and impressive with people chanting anti-regime slogans and calling for an end to the Al Khalifa rule. Following the attack on the funeral procession the people of Sitra went on a spontaneous demonstration in support of Sanabis people who were attacked by the Thugs of the regime. Several demonstrations were held in the past two days in: Dair, Bani Jamra, Karzakkan, Sitra, Musalla and other places. More injuries were reported. Meanwhile a secret battle is being waged between the people and the oppressive Al Khalifa family. The Al Khalifa have bribed several officials of Formula 1 race to encourage them to bring back the game to Bahrain. Despite initial approval by Bernie Ecclestone, F1's chief, the final decision would be taken tomorrow. Several former and present champions have called for a boycott of Bahrain, arguing that it would be unethical to race in a country whose human rights activists are jailed and demonstrators killed. Several world renowned newspapers have championed the cause of boycotting the regime. Today, The Times, The Independent, The Guardian, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and the Los Angeles Times have all reported on the ongoing battles between those calling for a boycott and those promoting a return to Bahrain. Damon Hill, a former driving champion has urged Bernie Ecclestone not to reschedule Bahrain Grand Prix. He has been joined by several notable voices against Ecclestone's decision to hold the race in Bahrain. An online petition has also been launched in order to put pressure on Ecclestone's. More than 400,000 have signed it so far, and it will be handed to the organizers of and participants in the event. It was one of the rare international stands in support of the people of Bahrain. More than one quarter of the employees at the Bahrain Formula 1 track have been arrested and are enduring horrific torture for taking part in anti-regime peaceful protests.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
3rd June 2011

‘We are doctors. It is our duty. And this makes us criminals’

Hugh Tomlinson, June 10 2011

New allegations of torture have been levelled at the Bahraini security services by medical staff put on trial for treating the wounded during antigovernment protests. The detainees have been beaten with sticks and rubber hoses, deprived of sleep and forced to sign papers while blindfolded, according to relatives. Amnesty International has received allegations that detainees were beaten with wooden boards studded with nails.

One of the defendants described being hooded and made to stand for several hours in a cold room during repeated interrogations. “Then they gave me some papers. I never saw them, I just signed everything they told me to. What choice did I have?” the doctor, who did not want to be identified, said.

At least 32 people have been killed since protests against the ruling Al-Khalifa family broke out in February.

The doctor spoke of the bitterness and despair among the detainees at facing charges for assisting the wounded. “We are doctors. If a man is brought to us who has been shot, we treat him. It is our duty. And this makes us criminals,” the defendant said.

The group of 47 doctors, nurses and paramedics will be sentenced by a military court in Bahrain on Monday. They face charges that include working to topple the Bahraini monarchy, inciting hatred against the regime and assaulting patients, resulting in their death. If convicted they face lengthy jail terms.

“Our sentences are already fixed. This is not a trial. Our lawyers say that there is

nothing they can do and we are not allowed to speak in court. We are being punished because we witnessed the regime’s crimes first hand,” the doctor said.

The Bahraini Government has faced several allegations of torturing prisoners since it sent in troops to break-up the protests in March. Hundreds have been rounded up for supporting the unrest, including opposition politicians, medics, lawyers, journalists and two members of the national football team.

The trial is particularly damaging at a time when the regime is trying to restore its tarnished reputation among its Western allies. The Crown Prince, Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa, was in Washington this week on the final leg of a month-long charm offensive, but his trip has been dogged by reports of the continued repression.

When news of the trial broke the Prince’s audience with President Obama was scaled down to a “drop by”, and a meeting with Hillary Clinton, the US Secretary of State, did not include a joint press conference. The Prince, a moderate voice within the Bahraini regime, is to lead a renewed effort at dialogue with the opposition from July.

On Wednesday the Prince emphasised his respect for universal rights and commitment to reform but underlined the challenges to be overcome. “There is no defined path to democratic reform, which by its very nature will mean which ever path is taken it will always be imperfect to some,” the Prince said.

Many opposition activists have dismissed talk of reconciliation without the release of all political prisoners and an independent investigation into the torture allegations.

The military court has sentenced dozens for

taking part in the protests, with hundreds more awaiting trial. Two men were sentenced to death behind closed doors for the alleged murder of two policemen and at least 2,000 have been sacked from their jobs. Most of the doctors on trial worked at Salmaniya hospital in central Manama. When the regime launched its first attacks in February the hospital became a rallying point for those taking refuge from the violence.

The international press was given almost unlimited access to the hospital. Doctors and patients gave interviews on the wards and images of the dead and wounded were beamed around the world. When the army launched its final assault in March Salmaniya was seized and staff were held captive for several days. Medics have since described soldiers patrolling the wards, dragging wounded protesters from their beds and beating them.

There has also been a smear campaign that claimed doctors soaked patients with blood before parading them in front of cameras, and that an Iranian television station was broadcasting live from the wards. The Government has accused Tehran of financing the protests.

An investigation by The Times in March found evidence of systematic human rights violations against medical staff by the security forces. Medics were shot, beaten and fired at with live rounds from a helicopter when they attempted to retrieve injured protesters.

One hospital was attacked with shotguns and teargas in a driveby shooting as staff received the wounded.

Bahrain trials smack of persecution—U.N. rights chief

By Stephanie Nebehay

GENEVA (Reuters) - Trials in Bahrain, at which eight prominent Shi’ite Muslim activists and opposition leaders were sentenced to life in prison, bear the marks of “political persecution,” the U.N. human rights office said on Friday.

Navi Pillay, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is writing to King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa to press her concerns at the harsh sentences laid down on very broad charges, her spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said.

“There are serious concerns that the due process rights of the defendants, many of whom are well-known human rights defenders, were not respected, and the trials appear to bear the marks of political persecution,” Shamdasani told a news briefing in Geneva.

Bahrain sentenced eight prominent Shi’ite Muslim activists and opposition leaders to life in prison on Wednesday on charges of plotting a coup during protests in the Sunni-ruled Gulf island kingdom earlier this year.

In all, 21 defendants, six of them tried in absentia, were charged with plotting to overthrow the government by force in collusion with a “terrorist organisation” working for a foreign country. They can appeal the sentences.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the U.S. State Department have also voiced alarm at the harsh sentences. The U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain. The protests, crushed in March, demanded a constitutional monarchy and an end to what protesters described as sectarian discrimination.

A Bahrain military court last week postponed the trial of 48 doctors arrested during the crackdown on dissent, after their lawyers said they had been tortured in custody. “We understand that the trial of these medical professionals is to be held next week,” Pillay’s spokeswoman said.

Pillay, a former U.N. war crimes judge, is concerned at the continuing work of the Lower National Safety Court, as the king lifted a state of emergency on June 1, Shamdasani said.

The court has convicted more than 100 people since March this year, mostly for crimes they were accused of committing during the protests, she said. “We understand that in total, up to 1,000 people reportedly remain in prison,” she said.

“We call for an immediate cessation of trials of civilians in the court of national safety and an immediate release of peaceful demonstrators who were arrested in the context of the protest movement in February,” Shamdasani added.

Pillay’s office had cited worrying reports of mistreatment of detainees, including severe beatings of some of the defendants just sentenced, according to her spokeswoman.

Four people previously arrested had died in prison due to injuries resulting from severe torture, she said.

“The government must urgently conduct an independent investigation into these allegations,” Shamdasani said.

Failing a credible independent national investigation, then an international probe should be conducted, she added.

WikiLeaks: Saudi crackdown on Shi'as has echoes in Bahrain

Bahrain 23-06-2011

WASHINGTON, (McClatchy Newspapers): This year's harsh crackdown on Shiite Muslims in Bahrain follows the playbook that Sunni Muslim-ruled Saudi Arabia used against Shiites in its own Eastern Province as recently as two years ago, secret State Department cables show. Some of the officials named in the cables as responsible for the 2009 Eastern Province crackdown now are advising Bahrain's leaders.

Among the topics the cables discuss are the arbitrary arrests of Shiite clerics and residents, the closing of Shiite mosques and the blocking of Shiites from an important religious site in the Muslim holy city of Medina.

The cables provide rare documentation of what human rights officials have long thought is a persistent campaign waged against Shiites in Saudi Arabia by their own government. Saudi Arabia strictly controls access by foreign journalists, and, the cables note, Saudi officials often take steps to discourage coverage of incidents by local news organizations.

The cables, most of them sent from the U.S. consulate in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, express concern that the Saudi actions are likely to fuel a sense of disaffection among Shiites, especially young people, and may make them feel less Saudi, a development that experts warn could fuel sympathy for Shiite-ruled Iran. "Discriminatory measures such as the mosque closings . . . continue to be the modus operandi of elements of the (Saudi Arabian government) in their interactions with the Shia minority sect," said one cable, dated Aug. 15, 2009.

Another cable, sent Sept. 16, 2009, said that "contacts" in the region were concerned that "the discrimination . . . is alienating the Shia community, particularly the youth, and is compromising their sense of Saudi 'national identity.'"

The Saudi Embassy in Washington declined to comment. U.S. officials don't respond to requests for comment about WikiLeaks cables.

In annual human rights reports, the State Department has expressed concern about anti-Shiite actions in Saudi Arabia but it's unclear whether U.S. officials protest the actions in their private meetings with Saudi officials.

The similarity between the actions ascribed to Saudi officials in the cables and what's taken place in Bahrain since Saudi troops arrived there March 15 also is striking. Saudi officials quoted in the cables even cite the same reasons for closing mosques — improper permits and illegal construction — that Bahraini officials used to explain why they've destroyed at least 40 Shiite mosques in the last three months.

According to the Aug. 15, 2009, cable, Saudi officials closed at least five Shiite mosques in the Eastern Province in

2009. At least 20 had been closed since 1998, the Sept. 16, 2009, cable said.

"Several contacts claim that Prince Mohammed bin Fahd (MbF), the wealthy and influential son of the late King Fahd, is behind the mosque closings, noting that the orders came from the provincial governor's office," the Aug. 15 cable said, discussing the closing of mosques in the city of Khobar. "MbF will not lift the ban on Shia mosques in al-Khobar unless his hand is forced by the King." Another cable, dated March 25, 2009, singled out Saudi Interior Minister Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz al Saud as "ultimately behind many of the abuses and discrimination of the Shi'a."

The Sept. 16 cable cited yet a third Saudi leader in connection with the crackdown, Prince Badr bin Jalawi, the governor of the Ahsa region, which comprises much of the Eastern Province. Citing a source whose name McClatchy has decided not to publish out of concern for his safety, the cable said that "the Prince's discrimination against the Shia is 'systemic and intentional.'"

Sources also told U.S. diplomats that "Badr is 'extreme' in his discrimination," and that "Prince Badr is 'playing with fire' by harassing al Ahsa's Shia residents."

Naif and bin Fahd have had publicized meetings with Bahraini officials since the crackdown began there. Bahrain is an island nation connected to the Eastern Province mainland by a causeway.

On April 22, bin Fahd traveled to the Bahraini capital of Manama to meet King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa about the Shiite uprising and other matters.

A statement from the Saudi Embassy in Washington said King Hamad lauded "the support that the (Saudi) Kingdom . . . has provided Bahrain against foreign interference and destabilization attempts."

On April 19, when Bahrain's prime minister visited Riyadh to consult about how to address the unrest, a key figure attending was Saudi Interior Minister Naif.

To outsiders, the division between the dominant Sunni sect and minority Shiites can seem incomprehensible. In simplest terms, Shiites believe that the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law Ali was his rightful heir. Since Muhammad's death in A.D. 632, the sects have practiced and interpreted Islam very differently, not unlike the differences between Catholics and Protestants in Christianity, which occasionally have led to war. Those Islamic differences led to a major clash in February 2009 between Saudi security forces and Shiite pilgrims in the Saudi city of Medina, Islam's second holiest city and the burial place of the Prophet Muhammad.

According to a Feb. 24, 2009, cable from the U.S. Embassy in Riyadh, skirmishes between police and as many as 2,000 Shiite pilgrims, most of them women, broke out after the pilgrims were denied entry to the Baqi'a cemetery, which, the cable said, "is the final resting place of many important figures from the early days of Islam, includ-

ing relatives and companions of the Prophet Muhammad."

"The Shi'a venerate these graves, and hold a historical grudge against the Al Saud for the destruction of the tombs that occurred when King Abdulaziz conquered Medina in 1925," the cable said.

The confrontation went on for nearly three hours, according to one version recounted in the cable, and ended when "the security forces used water cannon (and according to one source tear gas) to disperse the women."

The cemetery incident was cited in a March 25, 2009, cable as one of the reasons for rising tensions that contributed to a sit-down demonstration by Shiites on March 19 in Awamiyya, a village known for its radical Shiite politics. After the demonstration, the cable said, Saudi security officials cut off the electricity and swept through the village, arresting dozens of youths, some as young as 12.

Perhaps the most crucial realm in which Shiites are denied equal rights in Saudi Arabia is in their freedom to practice their religion the same way Sunnis can.

The cables show that Shiites struggled to obtain proper building permits for their mosques while Sunnis had it easy. The Sept. 16, 2009, cable noted how a protected source "joked that if 'just one Sunni complains' that he must travel too far to attend mosque the government will approve and fund a new mosque 'tomorrow.' Middle Eastern experts warn of long-term negative consequences to U.S. interests should Saudi and Bahraini repression of Shiites continue.

"My fear, and I think the U.S. fear, is that by cracking down, there is a risk of heightening sectarian feelings and that gives Iran an opportunity to exploit sectarianism. Whereas smart reforms could essentially have the opposite effect of dampening the sectarianism and closing off opportunities for Iran," said Michael Singh, a former director of Middle East affairs on George W. Bush's National Security Council. To the experts, Bahrain increasingly looks like a Saudi province.

"There's a clear sectarian strain that runs through all of this. And Riyadh has not only given the green light to the Bahrainis to crack down, but is probably more than just a passive partner in all of this," said Toby Jones, an assistant professor of Middle East history at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J.

The widening Sunni-Shiite gulf threatens stability in the world's most important oil-exporting nation.

"Frankly, all the crackdown is going to do, if it continues in its current form, it's going to sow the seeds of future radicalism within the Shia community," Jones said. "If the American anxiety is that Iran may play a more influential role, the only thing that the crackdown is doing is guaranteeing the fact that that will be an outcome."

(Kevin G. Hall contributed to this report.)