

BAHRAIN

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

After Gaddafi, Al Khalifa on free fall to dustbin of history

The fall of Gaddafi's regime is yet another victory for the Arab revolutions. This is despite the involvement of NATO forces and the attempts by reactionary Arab regimes to engineer the post-Gaddafi regime. It is yet another message to tyrants and dictators, especially those of the Gulf Cooperation Council that people's will cannot be defeated. While it is regrettable that both the US and Saudi Arabia have are leading the counter revolution's project to ensure that the new regimes do not fall out of step with their policies, the continued public determination to end the status quo is a cause for comfort and relief. Now Bahrain's premier has become the longest serving dictator in the world with forty years experience in repression, corruption and crimes against humanity. His tenure must end now. The Bahrainis have made up their mind that the present dictator and his sons will not be allowed to remain in their posts because they have too much blood on their hands. At least one of the dictator's sons has personally tortured senior figures languishing in jail. Their testimonies are irrefutable despite Bissiouni's attempts to absolve them of responsibility. Several points are of significance here: The first is that Bahraini people have extended their greetings to the people of Libya and urged them to continue their revolution to ensure that they are the new leaders of Libya and no one else. The blood of their martyrs must not go in vain. Other dictators ought to understand that they may hide for a while but they cannot escape people's wrath and fury after decades of repression. The Saudi-American alliance must not be trusted to support democracy and every effort must be made to ensure that it does not spoil the Arab Spring. Gaddafi's rule ended the day he had kidnapped the Lebanese scholar, Sayyed Moosa Al Sadr and his two companions; Sheikh Mohammad Yaqoob and journalist Abbas Badr Eddin at the end of Ramadhan in 1978.

The second is that the end Gaddafi's regime is a testimony to the fact that there will always be an end to every dictator. Divine laws dictate that "Our power cannot be prevented from reaching the criminal people". Bahrain's dictators are now in line for the drama that would end their

rule, having administered every wrongful act against man and nature. They have become absolute despots, imprisoned thousands of people, tortured them, committed horrific crimes including rape, extrajudicial killing and destruction mosque. They have destroyed the natural habitat on land and sea through their evil projects to satisfy their greed. This has resulted in the destruction of more than 80 percent of arable land and trees and the irreversible destruction of the coral reefs around the coasts where the majority of the people live. Their final criminal act has been the invitation of foreign troops to occupy Bahrain and enforce a reign of terror that led to killing of scores of Bahrainis, the detention and horrific torture of more than a thousand Bahrainis and the destruction of more than 35 mosques. They have written off their regime and the fall of Gaddafi is a morale-boosting for those who have braved the onslaught of the Saudi forces of occupation since their unwelcome incursion into our land.

Thirdly, the downfall of Libya's dictator has emboldened the resolve of Bahrain's revolutionaries who continued their protests almost every night during the holy month of Ramadhan. The attempts by the Al Khalifa, Al Saud and the Americans to quell the people's revolt have failed to dislodge Bahrainis from their demands which are repeated in those protests: "People demand regime change" and "Down with Hamad". For the first time the last slogan has become central to all protests, thus no one can save Bahrain's dictator from eventual downfall, in line with Ben Ali, Mubarak and Gaddafi. Attempts are being made to find a face-saving settlement that would keep the Al Khalifa in their place within a complicated regional plan involving Syria and Yemen. The Bahrainis have made it loud and clear that this time they would not be intimidated into a situation where they would be obliged to accept any settlement short of the removal of this hereditary dictatorship from the scene. They are adamant on exercising their right to self-determination at any cost and are ready to continue their revolution whatever it takes. They have suffered enormous crimes at the hands of the Al Khalifa and they can foresee no chance of any further co-habitation

with this criminal clan.

Fourthly, the dictator has now ordered the re-instatement of military courts to deal with the Bahraini prisoners. This appears to be a Saudi decision to bolster their presence after what they see as a psychological and moral defeat of their forces in the face of determined peaceful protests that has exposed their cruelty and barbarity. It is clear that the regime does no longer believe in the mission of the Bissiouni royal commission after it had been swamped by the testimonies of the victims of the Al Khalifa and Al Saud crimes. The commission has lost its credibility after its chairman, Charif Bissiouni, issued statements praising the dictators and absolving them of responsibility for the crimes committed against Bahrainis before the investigation had been completed. The military trials have added more nails to the coffins of this defunct commission which has lived up to the reputation of some of its members. The testimonies of most of the victims have been damning to an extent that none of those members had experienced before. They have confirmed the existence in practice of sadistic torture beyond anyone's comprehension or expectation.

Finally, the regime has insulted Bahrainis one more time by threatening the most senior cleric. Sheikh Isa Qassim was sent a letter by the Al Khalifa "minister of justice" with implicit threats for his refusal to sanction the Al Khalifa crimes. The people reacted in outrage against a regime that has not given an inch in terms of reforms, despite the American and British assertion that it would do so. It is now time that these powers refrained from their continued support to a fledgling dictatorship that has no real prospects of survival except by committing more crimes. Any more political, moral or military support will make these powers complicit in the genocide of the majority native population of this troubled country. It is time that common sense prevailed and a line drawn between the world powers and this hereditary dictatorship. The Saudi occupation of Bahrain must be unreservedly condemned and the Al Khalifa dictatorship be left on its own on its free fall to the dustbin of history. That is the end of tyranny, occupation and political moral decadence.

Independence Day remembered as royal commission nears collapse

Tension is rising in the country on the eve of Imam Ali's martyrdom. The regime's armed militias (Death Squads) have threatened to attack the religious procession in Muharraq tonight and tomorrow night. These squads are responsible for the abduction, torture and killing hundreds of Bahrainis in the past twelve months. Their actions have only solidified the will of the people to oppose the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship. When the 14th February youth declared the revolution these Death Squads were granted extra weapons and powers to attack humans and properties. Bahrainis have appealed to the international community to intervene to stop these thugs before the situation gets worse. Bahrainis will not allow themselves to be intimidated.

Last night demonstrations erupted in most areas amid massive attacks by the regime's forces. Bahrainis have celebrated 40 years of independence from the British rule in their own ways. They wanted to tell the world that the struggle of the people had contributed to the independence and that the 150 years British rule was abruptly ended. The message is that regardless of the duration of the oc-

cupation, it has to end one day. The Al Khalifa rule is also bound by this fact; it has to end one day. It is not eternal; it is a temporary arrangement that is now doomed due to the excesses of the regime. The people of Dair took to the streets, breaking the siege by the regime's forces. They marched bare-chested near the main entrance to the town until they were mercilessly attacked by the aggressors who used tear and chemical gases, rubber bullets and shotguns. The Al Khalifa forces also attacked people's properties and cars. The people of Sitra marched on 17th August near the main road before they were attacked by the regime's forces. Moving images show clearly the intensity of the confrontations that had taken place near the police station and the National Bank building. Similar scenes were reported at Mhazza, wadyan, Sfala, El Ekr and Ma'amir. On the same day another demonstration in Dair was attacked near Martyr Zakaria Al Ashiri's Square. All kinds of repressive measures were used against the demonstrations that have continued in most areas of Bahrain to mark the Independence Day which the regime has refused to recognize. Many casualties

were reported and the images of these indicate intentional attacks to suppress the voice of dissent and revenge from those who defy the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship.

Meanwhile it has been reported that Jalila Al Salman, the teacher who began a hunger strike last week has been transferred to hospital after her health deteriorated on Wednesday. She was joined by Dr Rola Al Saffar who is also behind bars for treating the injured in March. Medics have remained in detention ever since as the international community failed to force the regime to release them.

In a separate development the discredited royal commission, headed by Charif Bissiouni to whitewash the dictator and his sons from any wrong doing has shown signs of serious cracks in its membership. The head of the local committee supervising the investigation, Kamran Chaudry, has resigned for "personal reasons" and left the country. The resignation came after it became clear that Bissiouni has sold out to the dictators and betrayed the trust of some of his victims.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
19th August 2011

Massive protests on Independence Day, Bissiouni's mission doomed

The past few days have witnessed dramatic escalation in demonstrations and protests in most towns and villages. Yesterday Bahrainis held a big rally in Sitra to mark the 40th anniversary of the country's independence from Britain. On 14th August 1971 the British signed the document granting Bahrain full independence following decades of struggle by Bahrainis that eventually led to a UN fact finding mission in 1970 to evaluate what the Bahrainis wanted. The mission confirmed to the UN General Assembly that the people wanted full independence and a new government in which they would be full partners. Bahrain became independent on 15th August only to enter into the black era headed by the notorious dictator, Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa who would stay at the helm of power until today. It has been one of the bleakest period of Bahrain's history with thousands of Bahrainis detained, tortured or killed. Despite the independence, British legacy has survived through Ian Henderson, the notorious torture architect, the unwavering British support to the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship and clandestine security and military support from both USA and UK to this murderous regime.

At Sitra's festival yesterday, the people power was exhibited through the speeches, poems, slogans and dedication to the cause of freedom and liberation. The day before (Saturday 13th August), several demonstrations and protests took place in

several places. There was a big protest at Dair town in which men and women participated. They were attacked by the regime's Death Squads and mercenary forces and the skirmishes continued during the night. The aggressors used excessive amounts of tear gas and chemical weapons against the unarmed civilians and there were several casualties. The people were entrenched near the Zakariya Al Ashiri roundabout and would not be dislocated by the aggressors. A similar protest took place at Sitra, Al Ekr and elsewhere. The night before there were demonstrations in many places, led by the peoples' night march in Sanabis. It was one of the most memorable encounters between the people and the mercenaries. It continued throughout the night, but it was a testimony to the bravery of the Bahrainis and the cowardice of the Al Khalifa forces who targeted women and children inside their homes with tear gas and chemical weapons.

Meanwhile, calls have been made to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to dispatch its long-awaited fact-finding mission to investigate the Al Khalifa crimes against Bahrainis. This has followed the disastrous failure and the near-collapse of the Bissiouni royal commission which had been formed and financed by the dictator. Mr Charif Bissiouni gave his commission the kiss of death when he pre-empted its finding by absolving the regime of responsibility for the

crimes committed against Bahrainis. More seriously, Bissiouni has been accused of passing information from the victims to the dictator that led to immediate revenge from those who have been languishing in jail for months under torture. The commission has failed to stop torture and sought to flatter the regime by not asking for the immediate repeal of the notorious Decree Law 56 that is at the source of the ongoing torture and abuse. Mr Bissiouni had earlier praise the dictator and his son of being "democratic" and "against torture" while the attacks on peaceful demonstrations continued unabated.

Among the most dramatic cases that had been presented to Bissiouni's doomed commission are two testimonies by senior figures who had been severely tortured since their arrest in mid-March. Both have accused Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the dictator's son, of personally administering torture on them. These are among the most damaging to both the dictator and his newly-recruited ally. To stop torture immediately, Bissiouni has to order the immediate arrest and trial of this torturer, a step that is unlikely to be taken by the commission which is financed by the despot himself. This makes it a priority for Navi Pillay to request the immediate dispatch of her mission to Bahrain.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th August 2011

HR Report Details Violence Against Health Care Workers

When antigovernment protesters marched in February and March of this year on the streets of Manama, the capital of Bahrain, peacefully calling for political and economic reforms, a brutal response by the country's security services followed.

The majority of the injured and dead were brought to Salmaniya Hospital in Manama. Rather than being a safe haven for the wounded, however, this facility, the largest modern medical facility in the country, was declared by the government to be a stronghold of opposition protesters. Security forces occupied the building. According to human rights organizations such as Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), patients were beaten and abused. Physicians, nurses, and other health care workers who treated the civilian protesters were systematically abducted, detained, and interrogated, and many now are facing trial for allegedly using the hospital as a base to try to overthrow the royal government.

Human rights organizations allege that health care workers in Bahrain who treated civilian protesters who were injured during antigovernment demonstrations were abducted, detained, interrogated, and beaten by police. (Photo credit: Hasan Jamali/AP Images)

Several human rights organizations such as PHR and Doctors Without Borders have reported abuses against patients and health care workers. Richard Sollom, MA, MPH, deputy director at PHR and forensic pathologist Nizam Peerwain, MD, chief medical examiner, Tarrant County, Texas, carried out medical evaluations of torture survivors and spoke with people who witnessed physician abductions. They described their findings in a report released by PHR in April, *Do No Harm: A Call for Bahrain to End Systematic Attacks on Doctors and Patients* (https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_Reports/bahrain-22April_4-45pm.pdf). The report also documents the use of medical transport for military purposes, the destruction of medical facilities and medical records, and the obstruction of medical care and treatment.

When reports about the injured protesters hit the international media, Sollom said, the Bahraini government put its own spin on the information, claiming that physicians were instigating political unrest, fomenting violence, turning the hospital into a political headquarters, and depriving thousands of people of treatment.

Many of the physicians targeted are the country's leading medical specialists, physicians with 20 to 30 years of experience and impeccable medical credentials, said Sollom. "It strains credulity to believe that these physicians would suddenly, out of the blue, start deliberately harming patients rather than helping them, as Bahrain's government has alleged," he said.

At press time, dozens of physicians, nurses, and paramedics who were arrested for treating protesters were on trial before a military court. The government's use of a military trial for these cases calls into

question whether the rights of the accused can be adequately protected. Families of the defendants have reported to PHR and other human rights organizations that the defendants have been tortured and forced to sign false confessions in detention.

Sollom noted that he and other human rights observers speculate that the Bahraini government has systematically targeted physicians and other health care professionals because these caregivers, who treated protesters taken to the hospital, have firsthand evidence of the excessive force used by the government security forces. "This is one of the most egregious sets of violations of medical neutrality and breaches of international law that I've seen personally and we as an organization have seen in decades," said Sollom. Medical neutrality refers to the ethical duty of medical professionals to care for and treat those in need without regard to race, religion, or political affiliation and to have a neutral and safe space provided by the state to carry out their work. It is important for those in the medical community in the United States and other countries to fully appreciate what is happening in Bahrain and to speak out against the violation of medical principles, said Susanna Sirkin, MEd, deputy director at PHR. Imagine reporting for work in the midst of a crisis, she said, trying to deal with large numbers of injured people pouring into your hospital, only to be charged with outrageous allegations, denied access to lawyers, or whisked away from your family and kept in prison for months to face trial and possibly a life sentence.

The response from the international health care community has been quite powerful, with many nations and health care associations calling for Bahrain to respect medical neutrality and either to throw out the charges against the physicians and nurses on trial or, at the very least, to ensure a fair trial.

These Bahraini health care professionals are relying on the international medical response to save their lives, said Sirkin.

The World Medical Association (WMA) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) issued a joint statement in June calling on Bahraini authorities to ensure fair trials for health care workers. Mukesh Haikerwal, AO, professor in the School of Medicine at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia, and chair of the council of the WMA, said the WMA is asking all its member associations to issue similar condemnations of this treatment, not as a political statement but in support of the human rights of health care professionals.

"In a civilized society, health care professionals have a very important role in the healing and recovery of a nation in trouble," said Haikerwal. "While personally I don't think these men and women ever should have come to trial in the first place, we need to stand back and call for a fair and open trial," he said. "The neutrality and independence of these professionals should be respected. This could happen anywhere, to any of our compatriots doing humanitarian work, and they must be protected."

Haikerwal said that at the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May, Bahrain's Acting Minister of Health, Fatima Al-Beloushi, EdD, EdM, MA, gave a spirited defense of the regime. "She basically denied that there were any abuses, a patently false assertion," he said.

David Benton, CEO of the ICN, met with Al-Beloushi at the assembly and said that she told him that the Bahraini government was surprised and concerned about the level of international interest in the situation. International pressure may be having some effect, he said, given that Bahrain has allowed a few international observers to attend the trials.

"Until recently Bahrain has been one of the peaceful countries in the region, a gateway of sorts to the area and one visited regularly by tourists," said Benton. Continued scrutiny could affect the economy, providing more leverage to address the situation, he said.

In May, Bahrain's King Hamad lifted the 2-month state of emergency. But while a number of physicians have been released and some of the missing have reappeared, this does not mean that Bahrain has been responsive to all the requests, appeals, and demands of the international community, said PHR's Sirkin. The US government has exerted some pressure on its long-term ally, which is home to the US Navy's Fifth Fleet. In early June, President Obama met with Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, who, while not in charge, is considered a progressive member of the royal family who is in favor of a national dialogue to resolve the crisis in his country.

Bahraini security forces occupied the Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama, Bahrain, the largest modern medical facility in the country, where many of those injured in antigovernment protests were brought. (Photo credit: Physicians for Human Rights) The American Medical Association recently provided a sample letter for US physicians to use to write to Bahraini officials and urge for the fair treatment of the health care professionals detained in Bahrain (<http://tinyurl.com/69v45yh>).

PHR's Sollom noted that his organization is in touch with contacts in Bahrain who report that medical professionals are still being targeted. PHR continues to name people who have been targeted because the appearance of their names in the media provides them some protection. A list of names can be found at the PHR Web site.

Sollom returned from Libya in June and is preparing a report on violations of medical neutrality there as well as war crimes in general. He pointed out that although in Bahrain, there's been a systematic attack on health professionals as individuals, in Libya attacks are focusing on hospitals and medical transport, but not on individual health care workers.

"But there are indiscriminate attacks on civilians that are war crimes, and we've documented allegations of rape in Libya, torture, mass disappearances, and detention,

Calls for international role in support of Bahrain's revolution

A seminar on Bahrain's independence was held at the House of Lords at the invitation of Lord Avebury on Tuesday 23rd August 2011. Several people took part in it including two former prisoners from Bahrain who addressed the seminar by Skype.

Here is a brief of the proceedings.

Lord Avebury: I have been corresponding with our ministers for years. In 1993 Bahrain's minister of interior was referring to a human rights committee as terrorist body. We know that Ian Henderson had been engaged in torture for years before. Today, the Al Khalifa assume absolute power; they arrest, abuse, torture and other violations. They added two more practices; systematic dismissal and recruitment of mercenaries. To protect himself the king appointed a committee to investigate the abuses that took place in February and March. It is a mistake to accept investigation by royal commission. Proper investigation should be held by an international commission sent by Navi Pillay. There is a common perception that the royal commission is susceptible to influence. Bissiouni has already exonerated the king, his sons and the military prosecutor. He is reported to have said that there were no signs of torture. Bissiouni knows that there are torture methods that leave no marks. He may have been misquoted but he is naïve to speak to the local media in the way he did. There was a demonstration at the commission's office. I must emphasise that the commission must be given space to operate. It is my hope that grievances of victims are addressed. The regime is still holding senior figures such as Hassan Mushaime, Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, Abdul Jalil Al Singace and others, some of whom had been with us before. Trade unions are also behind bars. More than 2600 people have been dismissed from their jobs and the number is likely to be over 3000. This means that at least 15000 people are destitute. Bissiouni has given the impression that these will be reinstated. The military court has been reconvened and more trials will be held in October while demonstrations have continued to protest the outrages of the regime. How can Bahrain be excluded from change while other countries are allowed to have regime changes. Our task is to wake up the media to the injustice in the Gulf. Let us mobilise our efforts to achieve this.

Sandrine Tiller of the Doctors Without Borders, the UK office, spoke briefly about the experience of her organization in Bahrain especially the attack last July on their personnel who were treating the injured Bahrainis. We found it difficult to register officially although the ministry of health knew of our presence. Most

important event was on 27th July when our offices were raided violently. The door was smashed and property was taken and one member of our staff arrested. He was subsequently released but is awaiting trial.

Lord Avebury: This is humanitarian work, yet they were raided.

Mohammad Al Tajir (a lawyer who had defended many prisoners before): I was detained on 15th April when twenty people came to my house, confiscated my computers and other papers. They could not charge me for any offence and my only guilt was defending the defenceless. I gave a speech at the Pearl Roundabout. I was accused of inciting against the regime. My speech was a normal one. I was tortured for three weeks and was held in solitary confinement from 15th April until 9th June. I was taken to the military court on 12th June. I was released 7th August. I am suffering now as a result of the solitary confinement. I felt the experience of what had happened to the others before. Today there has been a decree to refer political cases to the military court once again. All detainees are civilians, yet they are tried by military courts which will start from the beginning. The doctors will be tried tomorrow by the military court. We could not reach Bissiouni despite several attempts. The reason is that he has an agenda that he is pursuing. I was sent to the Grane Prison which is run by the military. My neighbours were Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Singace, Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, Abdul Jalil Al Singace, Hassan Mushaime, and Sheikh Al Miqdad. I met them one week before my release. I heard their cries day and night. Abdul Hadi was severely injured and so was Mohammad Hassan Jawad. I also saw how Mahdi Abu Deeb, the President of the Teachers Association was tortured. I saw Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad repeatedly because he was taken to the military court and had nine cases filed against him. I saw torture marks on his knee and legs. The worst times were when I saw Mr Al Khawaja being tortured. Sheikh Al Miqdad told us that he was tortured by a senior Al Khalifa figure at the Grain prison. We were threatened that we would get an order from "the Sheikh" to be handed to the Saudis. I can confirm that I had seen Yemenis, Pakistanis and Jordanians working with the security forces and torturing people. I was blindfolded for three weeks. I like to thank Pete Wetherby and Joshua Collingulu whose work played a role in our release.

Ayat Al Qurmuzi: (a female poet who had been imprisoned and tortured)

I had no political role before the revolution, but after it started I felt that I was facing a historical challenge when I saw the blood of my people being shed with no mercy. I possess writing ability, so I translated the suffering of my people which had lasted for decades. I expressed that in a poem that I had delivered at the

Pearl Roundabout, in which I expressed those feelings. The poem was the main reason for my arrest and physical and psychological torture. Despite their attempts to break me, I hid my tears from the torturers. The pain was bigger than what the mind can imagine, but from the time they started torturing me I tried not to cry so as to deny them self-gratification. I did not want them to dance on the tunes of my sufferings. I was forced to sign a false confession. The pen was inserted between my fingers while I was at the peak of pain and fear among a herd of wolves with no human feelings. I hang between life and death at that moment so they managed to draw my signature. Pain and terror had dominated my mind and body and I had a strong tendency to cry out, but I resisted it and later I tried to express my feelings on paper with my tears. During my imprisonment a poem titled "My Cell is my Pearl Square" in my name but I had not written it, and I would like to know who had written it as it expressed faithfully my feelings.

My experience has taught me the significance of the word especially in the form of poetry and preaching the truth breaks the tyrants and defeats their dictatorship. Thus they wanted to jail the word in order to silence anyone attempting to describe the suffering of this people.

I will not forget my experience which is still dominating my mind. My experience with Noora Al Khalifa is one that I wish not one to experience again because it was extremely painful. It was an attempt to deny the person his or her humanity. The jailers wanted to break me under their lashes. They deprived me of sleep and used the worst possible unethical language. I did not believe that there was such sadism. They were sadist in the full meaning of the word. After this experience I feel that I have been born again having realized that the word is a mighty weapon in the face of the torturers. Our detainees are prisoners of conscience because they wanted to inform the world of the truth of our suffering. They are subjected to most horrific physical and psychological torture. Finally I like to say that I was imprisoned as an opposition figure and I have emerged from jail as a stronger opponent of the regime.

John Williams Lubbock talked about the need to immediately release all prisoners, because they are all illegally detained. It is important that senior critics are released as the regime cannot engage in dialogue without their participation. This is what President Obama had said before: No dialogue can take place while senior figures remain in jail. The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights will eventually have its voice and the UN. US and allies said they wanted democracy but they did not take practical steps to achieve that in Bahrain. The regime would always term BCHR as a radical body but human rights organisations are not radical in any sense.