

BAHRAIN

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

The word must act to indict the regime of torture

The facts are clear now, following the publication of the report by the Al-Khalifa formed and financed investigation commission. Despite being a tool in the hands of the ruling family of Bahrain the meager findings are enough to indict the regime and hold it responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. After three months of investigation, often influenced by the regime's secret services, the commission, headed by the Egyptian-born veteran human rights activist found that the Al Khalifa had used "systematic torture" against political prisoners and "excessive force" against protesters. The commission did not specifically blame the dictator, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for issuing the orders to implement the shoot-to-kill policy, or name those involved in inflicting torture on the detainees. It also failed to determine that the imposition of the martial law under the name "National Security Law" had been unwarranted, unnecessary and fruitless. Despite its overt criticism of the Al Khalifa system in the field of human rights and public liberties, it failed to recommend the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners. According to reports from inside jails, the prominent figures, including Hassan Mushaime, Abdul Wahab Hussain, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, Ibrahim Sharif, Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad, Sheikh Mohammad Ali Al Mahfoodh have been told by Bissioni himself who had visited them in jail that they were prisoners of conscience but that they would not be released immediately. What should the international community do, now that some significant facts have been unveiled by a semi-official commission? Most of those facts have been known for years but the Western allies of the regime have chosen not to listen to the pleas by the Bahraini people who were being throttled by the regime. Systematic torture has been an official policy since the disgraced British colonial officer, Ian Henderson, had institutionalized it soon after he had taken office in 1966. Successive reports by prominent human rights bodies such as Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International and others have unearthed mountains of evidence indicting the regime of torture crimes against Bahrainis. In 1997 HRW pub-

lished a well-documented report titled "Routine abuse, routine denial" in which it presented its findings after investigating personal testimonies of former detainees during the uprising that had started in 1994. Last year it published another report titled "Torture Redux" detailing human rights abuses by the regime. It documented the testimonies of twenty political prisoners who had talked about their torture experience in 2007. Despite countless recommendations by those bodies that the regime ceased the use of torture and other inhumane treatment, none of those to whom the recommendations had been addressed responded with practical steps. The USA, UK and others failed to take those points with enough seriousness for fear or reprisals by the Saudi regime, the main backers of the Al Khalifa hereditary dictatorship. Bahraini activists, both human rights and political, have endeavoured to present their case to the international community and urged the various human rights bodies to take a stand but to their calls have been largely unheeded.

This time the situation is different. For the first time in recent history, the people have come out en-masse to protest against the Al Khalifa regime, undeterred by its brutality and viciousness. The barrier of fear had been broken soon after the Saudis had attacked and occupied Bahrain. To those citizens, to live under the Saudi regime meant that life and death have become equal; thus death is seen as an escape from a life of misery and extreme viciousness. They thus became undeterred by the regime's tools of death; most of which have been blunted. Their cries for help were allowed to pass largely unheeded. On the contrary, Western allies of the Al Khalifa have granted it a new lease of life at the expense of people's safety and prosperity. Both the American and British foreign secretaries had supported the Saudi occupation of Bahrain arguing that the Al Khalifa regime had the right to seek help in order to be able to stand up for a serious challenge emanating from Iran. After laborious investigations, those claims have been proven to be without a shred of evidence. What can be proven with confidence is that Bahrain had been invaded and occupied by an outside force without being in a position to fear foreign

invasion by Iran. The revolution had been called for and implemented by Bahrainis who had been motivated by several facts; First their continued victimization by the regime, second, the ongoing and promising Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt at the time and third, their inability to share a life with the Saudi occupation.

Now is the time for the international community to enter the stage with determination to see through the implementation of the recommendations of the Bissioni findings. Among the first steps that must be taken is issuing a writ against Bahrain's dictator; Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, his son; Nasser and uncle; the prime minister. This is in line with their stands in the case of Libya and Syria. Here there is a report that has been sponsored by the regime and whose findings have cornered senior members of those regimes. Unless the international community speaks out loud and clear that tyranny and dictatorship do not work, change in the Middle East will be a slow-moving process that will often be derailed. The world must give no refuge to tyrants and dictators. Instead, they should make an example of those who continue to violate human rights or engage in torture of any kind. The rulers of Bahrain must be among the first to be indicted for their role in human rights violations and their violent suppression of any freedom move to achieve a degree of civility. Dispatching a fact-finding mission is a priority that must be adopted and put into practice. If the regime refuses, it will further alienate itself. It thus becomes an embattled regime harvesting the harsh realities of what they had sowed. Agreement by the regime to allow an independent investigation commission, indicates a new beginning that will enable a smooth transition to democracy, years after members of old regime had promised democracy and human rights era. If nothing is forthcoming in response to such changes their allies ought to become more serious in opposing them and calling for their removal. The stage is set for the world to react favourably to the commission's recommendation with an eye for real democracy, free from tribal prejudices or unauthenticated traditions that have divided the people and led to wars and discord.

The word must act to indict the regime of torture

The United State and Britain have been urged to take an immediate action to indict Bahrain's ruler after a report he had financed found his regime guilty of excessive use of force, torture and sexual assaults on prisoners. The two countries are the main allies of the Al Khalifa ruling family and can use political weight to convince Moreno Ocampo to start proceedings against Bahrain's dictator, his son, Nasser and his uncle the prime minister, as they had done in the case of Libya and Sudan. The report was published yesterday by the head of the government-formed and financed commission headed by Cherif Bissiouni, who, in the past, had only headed independent and impartial investigation missions. The commission that included senior human rights figures like Nigel Rodley, the former UN Special Rapporteur on torture, has been accused of acting on orders of the royal court; especially after its chairman issued several statements in support of the dictator. Its findings have fallen short of giving the whole truth especially after they had been "sexed up" by various actors in an attempt to shift the blame away from its main financier, the ruler and his immedi-

ate entourage.

Despite highlighting the excessive use of force, systematic torture including beating, electric shocks, deprivation of sleep, sexual assault and hanging from hands and feet, the report did not apportion the blame on the main people in power. According to international laws and conventions, those who are in a position to order, stop or know of the use of torture or issue orders to kill are guilty of crimes against humanity. The report was described by opposition figures as a "great disappointment", "economic with the truth", "too little too late". Mr Bissiouni was said to have acted as a "lawyer" defending the regime while admitting some of its crimes and not as an independent investigator or a neutral judge. While admitting that Iran had no role in fomenting the revolution, he also absolved the Saudi invading troops of responsibility of any crime despite irrefutable evidence suggesting otherwise. The report also failed to lay the basis of any prosecution of torturers or killers and did not call for the immediate release of the Bahrainis who are being held in torture chambers for expressing their peaceful expression of opinion.

The report was issued on the day that another martyr was killed. Abdul Nabi Kadhém, 44, from Aali Town was fatally wounded when his car was intentionally hit by fast-moving police vehicle, forcing him to collide with a standing wall of a building. People were outraged by this crime to the extent that they shrugged off any suggestion that the Bissiouni report would make any difference to the dictatorial rule of the Al Khalifa. Last Saturday 19th November, another young Bahraini boy was intentionally and fatally hit by a police car on the pavement in Sitra. The vehicle ran him over more than once, according to eyewitnesses and prevented anyone approaching the crime site, using tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse the crowds. On the final day of his mourning, force was used excessively against those who had attended his grave for final farewell. Several people were injured by rubber bullets and shotguns. One boy from Sitra, Abdulla Hussain, is still fighting for his life after inhaling excessive amounts of chemical and tear gases used by security forces.

Meanwhile the country has been plunged into more revolutionary demonstrations

Preparing for Phase 2 of revolution in anticipation of royal commission's partisan investigation

As preparations for phase 2 of Bahraini's revolution get underway, the regime has embarked on a new wave of terror against the people; arresting activists and abusing jailed leaders. The "sexed up" report by Charif Bissiouni, the head of the Al Khalifa-controlled commission supposedly investigating abuses of the regime is expected to exonerate the dictator and his notorious son, Nasser, of wrong doing despite enormous evidence confirming their undisputed crimes. Last week, ESPN, the American sports channel broadcast a special investigative programme on the abuse of Bahraini athletes. It quoted an earlier statement by Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa on Bahrain's official TV channel saying: "Anyone who calls for the regime's downfall will have the roof of his house falling on him". Scores of Bahrainis were subsequently killed when his father ordered the shooting of peaceful demonstrators. Sources close to Bissiouni's highly discredited commission confirmed that none of the top-ranking Al Khalifa officials will be indicted by the report. Its aim is now clear; to whitewash the regime's crimes and offer new life lines for the Al Khalifa regime whose downfall has been the central demand of the revolution. The preparations include daily protests in various parts of the country by youth ea-

ger to undertake more challenges in combating the vicious Saudi atrocities and Al Khalifa dictatorship. Several protests were held in towns and villages including Al Dair, Karraha, Duraz, Karzakkan, Bouri and Sitra. It is clear that the anticipated report by Bissiouni's commission has not deterred the regime from continuing its atrocious policies against Bahrainis. Instead of heeding the calls for reform and openness it has embarked on more evil plans. Last week it announced that it had uncovered a "plot" and a "terrorist cell" whose aim is to bring down the regime. Its alleged five members were planning to visit travel to Iran for military training in order to carry out sabotage acts in 'Bahrain. Two of them were handed by the Qatari authorities. According to informed sources, including their families, they have been subjected to horrific torture before being forced to sign false confessions. The Bissiouni group has failed to investigate these allegations although they had been notified by human rights activists. Many other Bahrainis have recently been detained. Among them is a teacher at Sheikh Abdul Aziz School. Abdullah Al Bazzaz was seized by the ruler's henchmen yesterday.

Protests supporting Bahraini people have continued around the world. In Brussels,

a protest was held outside the European Parliament on Wednesday that called for an immediate action by the European countries to support the people's demands for the right of self-determination. Tens of supporters attended the protest which was closely followed by MEPs and other politicians. In London, a protest was held on 16th November at the Saudi Embassy. It called for the withdrawal of Saudi army and the end of attacks on Bahrainis whether by Saudi or Al Khalifa troops.

Meanwhile concerns are rising for the safety of women prisoners, some of whom have been behind bars for more than seven months. Their crime is taking part in anti-regime demonstrations. Among are: Fadheela Al Mubarak; sentenced to 18 months and has been in prison since March and Reema Hilal; sentenced to six months. Ten women have been in jail since they took part in a protest at the City Centre Mall in September; The Duhaïm sisters; Munira, Huda and Zainab, their cousin, Ibtisam Abdul Aziz, Aqila Mohammad Al Maqabi, Ashwaq Al Maqabi, Fatima Abdul Jalil Al Jishi, Zainab Salman Abdulla, Khadeeja Abdul Nasser and Layla Abdullah Kadhém. Another Bahraini woman, Fahiyya Abd Ali Hayat has been detained for 45 days for sheltering other protesters.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
18th November 2011

2nd Phase of revolution expected with Bissiouni's report

In a step that could alter the balance of power in the country, the 14th February Youth have called for a massive flare up of revolutionary zeal on 23rd February, the day on which the highly politicized report by Charif Bissiouni will be released. According to internal sources, the report has been "sexed up" after American intervention. It is now thought that it would absolve the dictator and his notorious son, Nasser, of any responsibility in the killing or torture of Bahrainis. Up to 50 people were killed as a direct result of brutality of the security forces, while at least two detainees have given testimonies that Nasser had personally administered torture on them. The sources have reported that the commission which had been set up and financed by the dictator, found mountains of evidence to implicate senior Al Khalifa figures in serious war crimes and crimes against humanity, but the Americans intervened to stop the indictment of those criminals in exchange for superficial political and human rights concessions. Leaders of the revolution have rejected the commission from the start and have repeated their calls for an independent international commission to investigate the Al Khalifa crimes.

The Al Khalifa regime has now been emboldened by the open American support of its absolute dictatorship. Today, a young girl, Ashwaq Al Maqabi, 20, was kidnapped from her hospital bed where she is being treated for acute form of Sickle Cell disease. On 23rd September she was arrested and tortured from the City Centre Shopping Mall as she joined other women in protest against the Saudi occupation and Al Khalifa repression and dictatorship. No word has yet been heard of her whereabouts and there are serious concerns for her well-being. In the past, Saudi and Al Khalifa forces had assaulted and abused female prisoners with impunity. The dictator had provided this impunity by his notorious Law 56 that he had decreed in 2002. Many women are being held at torture chambers, some of them for months. Fadheela Al Mubarak has been behind bars since 27th March, ten days after the Saudis invaded and occupied the country. She was subjected to severe torture. Her plight has been ignored by Hillary Clinton who last week raised the stakes in Bahrain by calling for dialogue. She stopped short of condemning the regime for its atrocities or calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners. Today, many Bahrainis took to the streets raising the slogan "Release our women" and disrupted the traffic in several main roads.

Meanwhile, many pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia have been arrested

today on suspicion of taking part in anti-regime chanting in Mecca. Thousands of Arab and Muslim protesters were heard chanting "Down with Hamad" in reference to Bahrain's dictator.

One of the most damning reports on the Al Saud and Al Khalifa atrocious acts against Bahrainis was broadcast on ESPN athletic channel few days ago. The documentary presented the ordeals of the Bahraini athletes who were targeted by the Saudi occupiers and Al Khalifa torturers for joining the people in their democracy marches. Among them is Alaa Hubail, who was de-

scribed by the report as the best football player Bahrain has ever had. He was arrested, tortured and abused along with other athletes. Nasser, the dictator's son (who is now called Saif Al Islam, in reference to Gaddafi's son) had vowed to take revenge from the athletes who opposed his clan's hereditary dictatorship. Following the airing of the film, calls are now raised to ban him from UK when he heads Bahrain's Olympic team in the summer. Plans are underway to have him indicted.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
10th November 2011

More protests as elderly martyr is buried

An elderly man was martyred this morning after being pursued and hit by members of the Death Squads operated by the royal court. Hajj Ali Hassan, 70, was returning home last night when he was set upon by those heavily-armed killers. There was a protest against the regime near his house at the time. He was spotted by one of his sons as he opened the front door of the family's house. The elderly man was unconscious for a short while with blood coming out of his mouth and head and soaking his clothes. Few minutes later he woke up and was asked: Have you been attacked? He said: Yes. He was immediately transferred to Al Nu'aim Hospital where photos taken by his relatives show him in a bad state with blood on his clothes. He was immediately transferred to Salmaniya Hospital (which is run by the military) where he died a short time later. It is now clear that after the beating he had received, he was so frightened by the scene and the attacks that he went into coma before being transferred to the other hospital. He remained at the Intensive Care Unit for a short while before he passed away. This is yet another tragic case in which a Bahraini citizen was murdered for being at the wrong place at the wrong time, facing the murderous gangs operated by the regime. His son, Sheikh Hussain Al Daihi is a senior figure of Al Wefaq Society. On Tuesday the body of another martyr, Riyadh Abdulla Rashid, 45, had been buried after he had succumbed to wounds inflicted by the regime's forces. He had lost the sight of one eye as a result of beating.

The people's revolution meanwhile has continued unabated with daily activities including escalating public protests in many areas. Yesterday was no exception. In Duraz scores of people went out to the streets raising slogans as: Down with Hamad". Women and children also took part. Their slogans was: "If you become more cruel we will become more determined". Men, women and children joined the protest. The protest was harshly dealt with it. The town of Duraz was attacked by dozens of regime's forces looking to ar-

rest some of the protestors. Similar protests at other towns and villages were similarly attacked. In Samaheej several people were injured by excessive regime's brutality. A similar scene was reported in Daih where mercenaries had attacked the town allegedly looking for the youth who had taken part in earlier protests. In Karbabad a large protest march was held to express solidarity with the jailed leaders and calling for the release of women whose arrest had shaken the people. The town of Dair near the international airport another solidarity protest was launched and was subsequently repressed. At the village of Sfalah in Sitra the youth took to the streets yesterday to protest an earlier attack by mercenary forces on the village.

At another level, while the regime was forced to release a woman detainee, it continued its attacks on civilians and arrested several people in the past three days. At the town of Dair, many houses were raided at dawn yesterday, their contents destroyed and tenants terrorized. The town was almost ran-sacked as the mercenaries continued their arrests and abuses. Around 20 houses were raided and ransacked. At least three young men were taken away: Mohammad Ali Hassan, 19, Ahmad Jaffar Moosa, 34, Sayyed Wa'il Sayed Hashim, 21. They were severely attacked under the pretext.

Meanwhile Bahrainis are preparing the grounds for one of the most deceptive document ever to be produced during the crisis. Charif Bissiouni's investigation commission, set up by the ruler himself and asked to "investigate" the allegations of the people. Mr Bissiouni had earlier, indicated his accommodation of this dictatorial regime and attempt to absolve him and his sons of any involvement in torturing people. Pressures are now mounting to allow an independent international inquiry to examine the recent political history of repression and dictatorship.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
3rd November 2011

Seminar: Time to support regime change and end occupation

A special seminar on Bahrain was held on Tuesday 1st November at the House of Lords, organized by Lord Avebury under the title: Bahrain; Time to support regime change and end occupation. It was addressed by several experts and victims of torture. Lord Avebury. He said that NATO had called and acted for regime change to maintain stability in Libya; What is the difference with Bahrain? We can ask for Saudi Arabia to withdraw its forces so that Bahrainis enjoy peace and freedom. People have no faith in Cherrif Bissioumi's commission after he exonerated the king and prime minister of any crime of what they had done. The deadline for publishing its report has now been extended to 23rd November. When I spoke to Nigel Rodley he told me there had been no deadline, so what is going on behind the scene? We hope it will deal with the things that had happened. Pro-democracy activists have been languishing behind bars for months under the worst possible conditions such as Abdul Wahab Hussain, Hassan Mushaime, Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad, Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace and Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja. Almost all of these people had come to this place and expressed their wish to have a better regime only to be arrested and tortured. Dr Al Singace who had been a good friend had his crutches taken away from him and was forced to crawl to reach the toilet. What an appalling inhumane treatment. At another meeting last night it was asked: What is the one thing that the FCO could easily call for and achieve. In my opinion, FCO could call for the release of the political leaders. Together with other countries, the FCO could call for the 3000 workers to be re-instated and compensated for lost income. The international community could do more. The re-arrest of Jalila Al Salman is a crime. It is clear that the FCO is not robust in its condemnation of the Al Khalifa regime in the same way as Catherine Ashton. We need more robust condemnation from them. Ultimately the people of Bahrain want to change their political system and we have to support them not just for reform but for real transformation.

Then Dr Abdul Hamid Dashti, the renowned international lawyer delivered a short speech. He said that it is now eight months since the Bahraini revolution started. I like to highlight this peaceful movement which took place at the same time as other revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, hoping that the world would support it. But that support never came because of double standards, the narrow interests of some countries and the oil money of the Saudis. All attempts are made

to abort it while it is presented in false descriptions. Bahraini people have been denied their basic rights. Yesterday I returned from America after meeting several NGOs and Congressmen. I had meetings with the Washington Institute for the Near East, the National Endowment for Democracy and other bodies. Most of those we met were aware of the Bahraini Revolution more than other, and were dismissive of the false accusations presented by the regime including those of sectarianism, violence or attachment to Iran. They expressed support to the people of Bahrain and against dictatorship, that they had told the regime of the need for reform and are still continuing to do so. They said that President Obama mentioned Bahrain's revolution 19 times and expressed the need for dialogue. The Freed Trade Agreement between USA and Bahrain demands that Bahrain observed its obligations in accordance with international law. Members of both houses of the Congress had tabled strongly-worded resolutions against arms sales to Bahrain and written both the White House and the State Department to put pressure on the regime. Many of them said that what they do is small compared to the sacrifices of the Bahraini people in the face of the Al Khalifa and Saudi aggression. The US is obliged to take practical steps in the near future as the human rights abuses is continuing. These abuses are crimes against humanity according to the international conventions and the International Criminal Court protocols. Both the Al Khalifa and the Saudi regimes are trying to impose new realities on the ground, to establish the occupation, complete the demographic change and continue attacks on the people in order to break their will. Many of those we had met in USA are awaiting 23rd November to see the outcome of Bissioumi's commission. Several other speakers followed. Dr Fouad Al Ibrahim, a Saudi activist and expert presented a paper on the Saudi occupation, highlighting the aims and intentions of the Saudis arguing that their mission was intended to protect the Al Saud regime and end any popular attempt in the region seeking democratic changes. He blasted the Western governments for their silence at this aggression which has failed to silence the people of Bahrain. The few

voices that are now being raised are an indication of the failure of the Saudi occupation to end the revolution.

Tara O'Grady, Coordinator of Irish doctors supporting Bahraini medics spoke with passion about the human crisis in Bahrain and described the actions of the group, their continued pressure on governments and NGOs to exercise pressure on the Al Khalifa regime. She described the lack of legitimacy of the arrest and trial of doctors, dismissing the outrageous charges that the doctors had weapons or planned to overthrow the regime. She expressed outrage at the US attempts to stop the sale of weapons to Syria while ignoring the plight of the Bahraini people. It is becoming more obvious that the international pressure is embarrassing the regime and its allies. Each court scraps the lesser charges as a face-saving step after the fiasco had turned the world opinion against the regime. The US, she said, claims that the weapons are not intended for the police force which is accused of violations. But we are aware that it is not only the police force which is violating people's rights and killing civilians but the military are also involved.

Mohammad Mushaime, the son of the political leader, Hassan Mushaima, gave a brief account of his experience during one full year of detention which began on 13th September 2010. He was held in solitary confinement for several months and with other criminal for more months. He was severely tortured throughout his incarceration. He suffered ailment to his back but was denied proper care or attention. Last month he was arrested again together with his brother in law and severely tortured. Images of their wounds have shocked people and are available on the internet. It was a moving account by a young man who had committed no crime, but happened to be the son of a prominent figure.

Another participant was Mohammad Fakhrawi, the nephew of Martyr Karim Fakhrawi. He described the way his uncle had met his end at the hands of torturers. He had been summoned to appear at a police station and when he went he was arrested. For a week he had endured extreme forms of torture and his cries were heard by other inmates. He was killed brutally and his body was handed to his relatives. His brother was warned against allowing anyone taking pictures of his mutilated body. However the youth stormed the mortuary and taken several photos which are available on the internet. Despite the family's attempts to seek justice not a single torturer has been arrested or reprimanded. Mohammad said that the family would not rest until justice has been achieved.

