

BAHRAIN

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The sooner they go the better for everyone

The future of Bahrain's revolution has never looked brighter. With regional and international development going against the grains of dictatorial regimes, and with former dictators such as Mubarak, Gaddafi, Ali Abdulla Saleh and Zain Al Abideen bin Ali thrown in the dustbins of history, Bahrain's dictators are beginning to ponder what the near future is sparing for them. Despite assurances from Washington and London of their "unwavering" support, the people's power has proven to be more formidable than that of tyrants or foreign aggressors. History is ripe with stories with tyrants unable to withstand the onslaught of their people despite being supported by the West. There is a limit to what foreign powers can do to save their tyrannical allies. The Shah of Iran had to flee the country in the face of a popular revolution led by a strong leader. The West failed to keep Mubarak in his position despite pleas from Saudi Arabia. It was also unable to save Ali Abdulla Saleh of Yemen or Ben Ali of Tunis. Once people are mobilised for a just and noble cause, their collective response transforms to an unstoppable tsunami that would uproot tyranny and dictatorships. There is always the worry that the Western intervention will undermine the popular efforts to force political changes, but such intervention has not always worked, and that the West had to move backwards otherwise it will confront revolutionaries.

The past month has seen several significant developments including the victory of Mohammad Morsi for the post of President in Egypt. He is the first elected president in the largest Arab country and is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. The scene of jubilation at Tahrir Square when his victory was announced sent waves of shiver in the spine of the ruling dictators in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other countries. It is the beginning of serious nightmares in Arab capitals that have hitherto remained immune to revolutionary fervour. However, events can spread rapidly from one place to another. For Egypt to become under an Islamist president is testimony to the changing times and the doomsday scenario of the discredited Arab dictatorships. Their downfall has become a serious possibility that would become another political tsunami. The Alkhalifa regime has adopted every possible cunning method

not to implement any serious reform of their political system. This has come at a cost. The seemingly moderate political societies that had been registered with the regime's departments have been unable to justify their "moderate" approach to the political crisis. The regime has not given away any concession that would help its political allies to use as a means of pressure against the more "extreme" elements of the opposition. Instead, the Alkhalifa have escalated their state-terrorism against the main political society. Alwefaq leader, Sheikh Ali Salman, was brutally attacked by the regime's forces on Friday 22nd June. Other senior members of the opposition were also targeted with shotguns and tear gas canisters.

The events of the past 18 months have established one undeniable fact. If left alone the hereditary dictatorship is incapable of putting its house in order, let alone undertaking serious reforms programme to satisfy the opposition and with them the people. Dictators often overlook the potential of those opposition groups and would thus miss out when the situation becomes tense. Furthermore, the blanket attacks on every demonstration in the country and the carpet-gassing of towns and villages have caused more polarisation of public opinion. Revolutionary youth have gained the upper hand as the tyrants insisted on dealing with what is essentially a political problem with an iron-fist policy that has spared no one from state terrorism and violence. Bahrain is now on the verge of collapse as gap between the people and the Alkhalifa rulers has become unbridgeable with any means. Each side has lost trust in the other with a net result of total separation between the two; morally, ethically, religiously and politically. Bahrainis have learnt an important and strategic lesson; hold your position and stop talking to the regime. This policy of constructive wait-and-see will deny the Alkhalifa any political legitimacy and will provide breathing space for the active elements as the next step is considered. As long as the people are willing to sacrifice, the end of their enemy cannot be far away. People's potential is far greater than that of any tyrant. For Bahrainis time is on their side. They have given so much sacrifice that they are not ready for any compromise with a regime that has proven to be real enemy of the people. The kill-

ings, torture, genocidal policies and absolute authoritarianism are but few manifestations of its enmity towards the native Bahrainis (Shia and Sunni).

The dictator has become outrageous in alienating the people even those who had worked within the political system. Last month Islamic Action Society was threatened by the regime's justice minister with closure in an attempt to blackmail its leaders into submission to the Alkhalifa policies. Alwefaq Society was also targeted for revenge. Its leader, Sheikh Ali Salman was hit with a rubber bullet as he attended a demonstration while another opposition figure was injured. Some of the mosques that had been re-built after being demolished by the Alkhalifa and Alsaud forces have also been vandalised and demolished. The Alkhalifa war against Bahrainis has taken political, human and religious dimensions. These heinous crimes are in addition to the detention of human rights activists including Nabeel Rajab, Zainab Al Khawaja who were taken into custody and released. These acts add up to make it impossible for any noble citizen to live with the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. Both Washington and London have urged the regime and the political opposition to engage in dialogue. The Alkhalifa have never before engaged in dialogue with the people because they never acknowledged the existence of those people. Everytime the societies accepted to take part in dialogue the regime would turn it into a Shia-Sunni debate to affirm its claim that the problem in the country is sectarian. It is thus a futile exercise to link the solution of the political crisis to dialogue because that will not happen. Last month the dictator rejected the idea of mediation by outside powers, because any mediation will expose the Alkhalifa agenda that has never accepted the idea of reform, change or political pluralism and participation. The revolutionaries have long ago reached the conclusion that the regime had to go because it is easier to reach the sky than to modernise a regime bent on revenge, dictatorship and despotism. The longer their departure is delayed by forces of counter-revolution, the more bloody that end will become. Wisdom dictates that friends and allies of Alkhalifa act now to make their departure from the political scene less dramatic or bloody.

Campaign to arrest dictator's torturer son as repression intensifies

The arrest, torture and abuse of a young female University student by the men of John Timoney and John Yates has shaken the country to the core. Zahra Al Shaikh, 21, from Karbabad, was arrested for taking part in an anti-regime peaceful protest. She was subjected to horrific treatment, stripped and indecent images of her were taken by the security forces. She is accused of anti-regime activities and is threatened with a long term prison sentence. Bahrainis were horrified by treatment of this young Bahraini girl and have vowed not to accept Alkhalifa rule and to resist it at any cost.

As the Alkhalifa regime intensified its crackdown against Bahrainis, Mohammad Al Buflasa has been arrested and taken to the torture chambers. Mr Al Buflasa is a young Bahraini who was the first to be imprisoned after the Revolution following a speech at the Pearl Roundabout in February 2011. He remained behind bars for ten months before being released. He comes from Sunni background and his participation in the people's revolution has angered the Alkhalifa who have been trying to present a sectarian argument to explain the Revolution. Several NGOs have issued statements demanding Al Buflasa's immediate release, but, to date, Mohammad is still in incarceration at the Alkhalifa torture dungeons.

One of the Alkhalifa courts has issued ruling against re-building the mosques that had been destroyed by the Al Khalifa/Al Saud joint forces. The Alkhalifa's ministry of Justice has considered their rebuilding at

the hands of the citizens as illegal. Thus a new War of the Mosques has developed and more Shia mosques may be targeted for demolition. The Bissioni report was critical of destroying religious symbols of the native inhabitants.

The death of Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz has led to a political mayhem in Saudi Arabia which fears of political vacuum after his demise. While Bahrainis have not expressed any sign of sorrow arguing that Nayef had been responsible for the invasion of Bahrain by the Saudi troops, the general mood is against continuing attacks on Bahrainis by Saudi and Alkhalifa forces. The Saudi role in Bahrain has been disastrous and had led to many deaths and injuries.

The situation in the prisons has been described as becoming harsher following the threats by the dictator against Bahrainis. Kumail AlManami, a 30 years old young Bahraini is languishing in underground dungeons of the Alkhalifa jails. His family has confirmed that his health is deteriorating and he is gradually losing his eye sight. Since his arrest on 31st March 2009, Mr Manami has been subjected to continuous torture, held in solitary confinement and denied access to day light except for one hour each day. Several other Bahrainis have been languishing in Alkhalifa torture dungeons for years as Washington and London supplied the regime with men of torture and repression. This is one of the underpinning causes of the ongoing Revolution that has become impossible to defeat or contain. Native Bahrainis (Shia and Sunni) are

determined to rid the country of minority rule (confined to Alkhalifa members who occupy more than half the cabinet posts).

Meanwhile the campaign against allowing Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the notorious torturer who is also the son of Bahrain's dictator has started in earnest. On 14th June the Liberal Democrat MP Dan Rogerson (representing North Cornwall) asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to the human rights records of members of the Bahraini government who plan to visit the UK during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Alistair Burt (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Afghanistan/South Asia, counter terrorism/proliferation, North America, Middle East and North Africa), Foreign and Commonwealth Office; North East Bedfordshire, Conservative) said: The Government has been clear that regardless of the country concerned where there is independent, reliable and credible evidence that an individual has committed human rights abuses, the individual will not normally be permitted to enter the UK.

On 21st June The Guardian newspaper published an article titled: "Britain urged to ban royal head of Bahrain Olympic committee" in which it said: Son of Bahrain's king set to visit London 2012 despite being accused of violating athletes". There is now a campaign to arrest the Alkhalifa torturer upon his arrival in London.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
22nd June 2012

Two martyrs as medics jailed again, children tortured and injured

Two people have been martyred as a result of using chemical gases against peaceful demonstrators. Maryam Nasir Abdullah, 80, was martyred last Saturday on 9th June. Last night excessive use of violence by regime's forces caused many injuries. Shotguns were used against peaceful protesters in at least fifteen towns who were calling for regime change. The injured were treated at makeshift clinics run by volunteer doctors and nurses because the main hospitals are run by the military. Anyone who seeks treatment there will certainly be arrested.

The human rights world has been shocked by the Alkhalifa decision to continue the incarceration of the doctors and medics on trumpeted charges. Yesterday Alkhalifa rulers issued their verdict to jail Dr Ali Al Ekri to five years, Dr Ibrahim Al Demstani to three and Dr Ghassan Dhaif to one year. Several others were sentenced to six months although they had spent more than six months in Alkhalifa torture dungeons.

Ahmad Mansoor Al Nahham, 4, was sprayed with shotgun pellets as he clung to his father on Wednesday 13th June. The scene was reminiscent of what had happened to the Palestinian boy, Mohammed Al Durra and his father in 2001 when the Israelis mercilessly sprayed them with bullets as

they sheltered near a wall. The boy is now at the hospital, his body exhibiting horrific wounds caused by indiscriminate shooting by regime's forces on the pair who were not involved in protests. It came shortly after the dictator, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, appeared in his military uniform and threatened the people with more violence and repression. He uttered his threats in a meeting with military personnel to highlight the decision by the Alkhalifa to reject any reform of the antiquated dictatorial political regime.

The world had been dumbfounded when earlier this week the 11-years old Ali Hassan was arrested, tortured and held for a period that would have extended for much longer. His case shocked the world as he pleaded with lawyer: I want to go home. The Alkhalifa were defeated when criticisms came from all corners from the world. Even the visiting British Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East had to concede that the holding the boy was wrong. He was accused of taking part in illegal gathering of more than five people. There was an international outcry against this state terrorism implemented by the dictator and his lieutenants. Ali Hassan was released on Wednesday as the incident became serious embarrassment not to Alkhalifa alone but to their

allies especially the American and British officials.

At another level, the Alkhalifa clique sentenced nine doctors and nurses to jail terms ranging between six months and five years for treating the injured last year. On one hand it was a comprehensive defeat for the ruling family and its backers who had claimed that the medics had planned to overthrow the regime and had stored arms in the hospital. The military court had sentenced them for jail terms of up to fifteen years. On the other hand, sending them back to jail after they had been released is confirmation of the repression of the regime. There has been condemnation of the decision by the Alkhalifa to jail innocent people from almost everywhere. Amnesty International said "today was a dark day for justice" and immediately urged Bahrain to quash the convictions, saying they were obviously "politically motivated" and the accusations against the medical professionals were "completely unfounded." Arrests orders have been issued against four of the defendants - 'Ali 'Esa Mansoor al-'Ekri, Ghassan Ahmad 'Ali Dhaif, Ebrahim 'Abdullah Ebrahim and Sa'eed Mothaher Habib al Samahji.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th June 2012

Detained, tortured 11 years Ali to his lawyer: I want to go home

Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights is back in prison, only days after his release. The reason is his refusal to abandon his right to free speech and expression of opinion. Since his release he has been calling for more peaceful action by the people to continue the revolution and force the much-needed political change. Despite the regime's repression, Mr Rajab has been un-repentant especially with his colleagues and hundreds of other citizens languishing in Al Khalifa torture dungeons. His second arrest will only intensify the struggle and confirm the image of savagery, repression and authoritarianism of one of the West "staunchest" stooges. The prominent lawyer, Mohammad Al Tajir, who was detained and tortured last year has also been targeted by the dictator's security apparatus. They circulated a video of his private life which was secretly filmed as he slept with his wife at their private chalet. This is one of the most despicable act any regime would commit.

Mr Rajab's arrest came at a time when the spirit of revolution is being re-invigorated as the people's leaders addressed the Alkhalifa Appeal Court detailing the horrific torture inflicted on them over the past 15 months. The first session was on 22nd May when Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja and Abdul Wahab Hussain challenged the Alkhalifa judge to order an impartial investigation of the torture they had been subjected to. The graphic description of that torture was hair-raising. It is a curse on the regime and its supporters. The US and UK cannot be absolved of responsibility as they continued their un-wavering support to its Alkhalifa actions. Their expression of "concern" they utter when forced by the developments does not dissociate them from the Alkhalifa crimes. On Tuesday 29th May Mr Hassan Mushaima and Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace addressed the court and delivered damning testimonies of their ordeals at the hands of the Alkhalifa torturers. The international community will be complicit in those crimes if it does not take action to bring senior Alkhalifa figures to justice. Several more testimonies were delivered on Tuesday 5th June by Ibrahim Sharif, a Sunni liberal, Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad and Mohammad Hassan Jawad.

Among the most senior officials implicated in the torture of the last two victims is Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa. The question is whether the UK Government will reward this torturer by allowing him to lead the Bahraini athletes to the Olympic games in July. There have been international calls not only to ban him from attending the Olympics but

also to arrest him and bring him to justice. Failing to do this will send the wrong message to torturers and human rights abusers. The West will lose any moral grounds for claiming to uphold the rule of law and respect of human rights.

The situation at Bahrain prisons has been deteriorating as prisoners have become more aware of the need to continue their fight for freedom from their torture dungeons. At the Dry Dock prison, scores of detainees have staged hunger strike demanding their immediate release. Several of them have now collapses and transferred to hospital. Instead of releasing them, the Alkhalifa torturers threatened to fabricate new charges against them unless they stopped their action.

Anger has dominated the political and human rights bodies in Bahrain as the dictator and his clique continued to imprison children, torture them and deny them access to studies or examinations. Among the most outrageous of the cases is that of the 11-years old Ali Hassan who was described by the torturers acting under the command of John Timoney and John Yates as a "threat to national security". Yesterday the child pleaded with his lawyer: "I want to go home". Having been tortured by those heartless torturers the boy is disoriented and unaware of the thuggery of the Timoney and Yates men. The people have been outraged by the assertion of the Alkhalifa interior minister,



Rashid Al Khalifa, when he claimed this week that "the police have no orders to torture detainees"! Perhaps the prisoners torture themselves. This thuggery has flourished since Timoney and Yates took command of the security apparatus of the Alkhalifa nine months ago. The pro-democracy tweeter, Peter Clifford remarked: #Bahrain MOI Min says "Torture & Killing not part of country's policy" - Why so many tortured & dead then?

Bahrain Freedom Movement
8th June 2012

Irish university tests Bahrain 'CS gas'

By Lloyd Mudiwa.

Human rights activists in Dublin have claimed the Bahrain regime may have used CS gas up to 10-times more toxic than in normal teargas canisters to quell anti-government protestors, in contravention of some international conventions. Human rights groups claim this resulted in up to 30 deaths and several spontaneous miscarriages. Bahrain's Ministry of the Interior and the Public Prosecution Office has previously denied any deaths or miscarriages linked to teargas dispersal and asserted that such claims were fabricated.

Irish Medical Times, however, understands a leading Dublin university has been analysing some "teargas canister" samples allegedly used by the Bahraini police.

Campaigning Irish Orthopaedic Surgeon Prof Damian McCormack, addressing journalists as part of recent solidarity demonstrations regarding the persecution of medical workers in Bahrain held in Dublin, revealed the ongoing analysis, alleging manufacturer labels had been removed from canisters recovered.



He claimed Bahrain indiscriminately used the choking agent, and Ireland, which was also a signatory of the international agreements, could request an investigation.

"Some 30 people have died from teargas. CS gas is the stuff that killed people during the war [World War 2]. Were Bahrain to go to war today the use of CS would be banned because it is a chemical weapon."

He claimed only a few days previously a 27-year-old woman with sickle cell disease suffered a fatal miscarriage following exposure to the nerve agent.

Tara O'Grady, General Secretary (Ireland) of BRAVO (Bahrain Rehabilitation and

Anti-Violence Organisation), who said results of the analysis would be announced in a few weeks, claimed there had also been a plague of eye injuries due to gun pellets "aimed at head level" with victims denied medical surgery — a charge the Bahraini authorities have also denied.

There were ongoing efforts to bring patients from Bahrain to Dublin for the eye surgery, she said.

lloyd.mudiwa@imt.ie

Britain urged to ban royal head of Bahrain Olympic committee

Ian Black
The Guardian,
Wed 20 Jun 2012

Britain is being urged to deny entry to the head of Bahrain's Olympic committee – the son of the king – on the grounds of alleged involvement in serious human rights violations in the Gulf island state. Prince Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa is claimed to have been "personally engaged" in beating, flogging and kicking pro-democracy protestors during Bahrain's brief chapter in the Arab spring last year.

Documents submitted to David Cameron and William Hague, the foreign secretary, and seen by the Guardian, describe how Sheikh Nasser launched "a punitive campaign to repress Bahraini athletes who had demonstrated their support (for) the peaceful pro-democracy movement. "Following his directives more than 150 professional athletes, coaches and referees were subjected to arbitrary arrests, night raids, detention, abuse and torture by electric cables and other means," said the European Centre for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), a Berlin-based group.

Mohammed Hassan Jawad described how he and Mohammed Habeebe al-Muqdad were treated by the king's son at Manama Fort prison clinic on April 9 after they had taken part in a demonstration calling for the overthrow of the regime. "He started abusing us, began to flog, beat and kicked us everywhere," Jawad told a dissident newspaper quoted by the ECCHR. "He took a rest and drank water and then resumed the torture by pulling us from our hair and beards. No one else was involved in our torture and hence agony... He ordered the jailers to put our feet up to beat us. The torture continued for almost half a day until dawn." Sheikh Nasser denies the allegations. The government of Bahrain acknowledges that human rights abuses have been committed by the authorities and says they, along with Sheikh Nasser, "unequivocally condemn them". Abuses were investigated by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), appointed by King Hamad to examine the handling of the unrest. The UK government has said in relation to the Olympics that "where there is independent, reliable and credible evidence that an individual has committed human rights abuses, the individual will not normally be permitted to enter the UK."



Bahrain is a sensitive case in the wider context of the Arab spring protests since King Hamad is treated as a valued ally of the west who plays host to the US Fifth Fleet and is close to Saudi Arabia, the regional powerhouse and the Middle East's biggest oil exporter. But his Sunni Al Khalifa dynasty rules over a restive Shia majority which has experienced sharp polarisation since the events of last year, when some 50-60 people were killed. The govern-

ment in Manama has often blamed Iran for fomenting unrest. Britain regularly urges the Bahraini government to implement the findings of the BICI, especially as they relate to human rights. King Hamad was in London for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations earlier this month.

Unlike other more prominent figures, such as the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad or Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Sheikh Nasser is not subject to an EU or UN travel ban, so a committee of officials and ministers from the Foreign Office, Home Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport will decide whether to grant or deny him a visa.

"The irony of welcoming to the London

2012 Olympic Games an individual who is alleged to have led an organised and brutal repression of athletes because they peacefully exercised their internationally recognised right to freedom of expression and association during Bahrain's Arab Spring would be a blow to all athletes around the world, and irreconcilable with the UK commitment to human rights and claimed support to peaceful pro-democracy movements," the ECCHR said. The bid is being supported by Bahraini opposition groups.

"Anyone can make allegations but without evidence they are not valid," said a spokesman for the Bahraini embassy in London. "We are very disappointed with NGOs who are focusing on Bahrain and forgetting about Syria."

The issues of sport and politics in Bahrain met explosively earlier this year over the Formula One Grand Prix, which went ahead despite concerns about ongoing human rights abuses.

Avaaz, the online campaigning group, is also circulating a petition demanding that Sheikh Nasser be denied entry to the UK. The ECCHR campaign is based on the argument that the prince could be held criminally liable according to international human rights law standards. It urged the government to act on this case and ensure it is "not subjected to politically-driven double standards".



Bahrain

Human rights defenders in Bahrain are facing increasing challenges in carrying out their human rights work. The authorities have sought to target independent human rights organisations and restrict their human rights activities. Human Rights defenders have been subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, fabricated judicial proceedings, threats and harassment. Despite provisions for basic rights in Bahraini law and the fact that it has ratified a number of international human rights treaties, the enjoyment of civil and political rights is, in practice, limited.

Law 21/1989, which regulates the establishment and functioning of civil society organisations, restricts freedom of association and is viewed by most human rights defenders as one of the main obstacles hindering the work of non-governmental organisations (NGO's). Registration is often used to hinder the work of human rights defenders. The authorities unreasonably delay registration, which may take up to several years, or refuse it without providing any reasonable grounds. There

are several examples of organisations that have not been granted registration to date, despite having applied up to five years earlier. Members of unregistered organisations and committees are often harassed and their events disrupted on the grounds that the organisation is unregistered. However, during the past two years the Government has also increasingly targeted registered human rights groups. Freedom of expression is severely restricted. Most media outlets are directly or indirectly controlled by the government, and often attack and criticise human rights organisations and their members. In 2008 there was a campaign of defamation in a number of media outlets against human rights defenders who attended a human rights meeting in the United States.

The law prohibits unauthorised public gatherings of more than five persons and public gatherings need to be notified to the Ministry of the Interior twenty four hours previously. There have been reports of the use of excessive force by security forces when dispersing demonstrations. New legislation, under the guise of counter-terrorism, has contributed to infringements of fundamental freedoms and is used to further restrict the activities of human rights defenders