

BAHRAIN

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

Washington, London: Stop taking the wrong side of history

The direct intervention by UK against the Bahraini revolution is repugnant and will not save the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. It stands against the British norms and values purporting to promote values of democracy, human rights and tolerance. The revolution has been one of the most peaceful within the Arab Spring and the demands of its people are not different from those of other places. None of the other dictators who have been removed was worse than Bahrain's dictator. None of them committed the most heinous crimes like destroying of mosques, instigating sectarianism, intensifying repression after the incept of the revolution or used chemical gases against the people, often firing them inside inhabited homes. None of those dictators allowed his son to torture prisoners despite their corruption. Yet the UK government found it acceptable first to send John Yates to take part in repressing the people, then dispatching a whole team of police experts from Scotland Yard to ensure that the regime did not collapse. The presence of these police officers has not made the Alkhalifa more responsive to international demands to stop repression, introduce reforms or respect human rights. It is now a year since John Yates was sent to Bahrain, and if anything, more people were killed and torture continues to be administered at a wider scale. It seems that the only advice Yates and his American colleague, John Yates, had given the regime is not to torture Bahraini prisoners in official jails but in undisclosed locations. Last month The Times newspaper published two lengthy reports about such practice. It confirmed that torture is now administered in staples and secret locations to avoid detection and to help the regime to claim that torture was not being administered in jails.

It is unfortunate that the UK, with its long democratic history should adopt these unfriendly policies towards Bahraini people. It is more disturbing that the UK should involve its police forces to help a regime accused by its own investigation commission that had been headed by Charif Bissioni in "systematic torture" and "extra-judicial" killings. The Instead of taking firm and principled stands against these heinous crimes, London has ignored

the long-held British values and allowed one of the most sadistic torturers to lead Bahrain's Olympic team, ignoring the pleas by noble people like Lord Avebury not to grant him a visa. Nasser Alkhalifa, the son of the dictator, has been directly implicated in torturing the jailed leaders of the opposition. At least two of them have openly testified at the Alkhalifa appeal court that they had been tortured by Nasser. After their open testimony their lives are now in great jeopardy as the regime, with the help of other police forces, seeks to destroy all evidence that may incriminate members of the ruling Alkhalifa junta. Both the US and UK governments have now abandoned any form of pressure on Bahrain's dictatorship to introduce real reforms. They are now more convinced that the regime rejects to undertake real reforms that guarantee the rights of the people either to determine their own destiny or form their elected government. Washington and London have apparently decided to put principles aside and support the regime as it is. Both have opted for what they would consider real politique and accepted to prop up an absolute tribal hereditary dictatorship.

The situation has thus transformed into a war of wills between the pro-democracy people who are continuing their revolution and the forces of tyranny, torture and corruption. The political societies have now resigned themselves to the fact that the political process which they had imposed on the country in the past decade had been fruitless and that the political activism has reached a dead end. They have seen how the Alkhalifa junta had struck off the Islamic Action Society with a stroke of a pen by the dictator and how he imprisoned its leaders. They have also realised that continuing to act within the regime's own laws and rules have led them to another dead end. They can no longer demonstrate or congregate outside their own headquarters. After targeting senior leaders such as Sheikh Ali Salman, the President of the AlWefaq Society and attempting to kill him, they have also realised that their leaders have no immunity from being killed by regime's forces led by John Timony and John Yates. This has helped solidify the national stand.

On the other side, the youth have become more resilient to the regime's repression, imprisonment, mass punishment and killings. Since the beginning of Ramadhan, the 14th February youth have intensified their civil resistance campaign and affirmed the presence of their revolution. The daily protests have continued unabated against a persistent campaign of repression that observes no bounds in its use of chemical gases, rubber bullets, shotguns and tear gases. Whole houses have been destroyed, ransacked or attacked by police with intense use of chemical gases. The continuous attempts to silence the people have been a failure. The deafening chants of "People want regime change" and "Down with Hamad" have become the main themes of the daily demonstrations. The youth are gradually becoming more resolute to defeat the hereditary dictatorship than ever. The US and UK are gambling on a losing side that has lost all purpose for its existence. International bodies have become under intense pressures not to highlight the plight of Bahrainis or the excesses and unviability of the Alkhalifa junta. The EU Commission, the Human Rights Council and the UN Security Council, have all been subjected to intensive pressures not to challenge the regime or support the opposition. These policies are oppressive, unjust, inhumane and inconclusive. Both London and Washington are well-advised to start distancing themselves from a crumbling regime that has lost any will for reform or conformity to international standards of democracy, human rights or establishing modern civil society. The involvement of big powers in supporting the Alkhalifa junta will be a historic mistake by these powers, as the people will not forget those who support them and those who help the dictatorial regime to crush them. People of these countries must exert pressures on their governments to refrain from this heinous policy. The struggle thus continues in Bahrain between the will of the pro-democracy revolution and the Western-supported hereditary dictatorial military junta. It is a struggle between the right and the wrong, democracy and dictator-

Repression intensifies as Revolution re-invigorated

Since the beginning of the holy month of Ramadhan the Bahraini Revolution has escalated dramatically. At least 25 demonstrations have taken place every day and night with one clear message: The people want regime change. Chanting like "Down with Hamad" has become the standard slogan uttered by the men and women participating in those protests. The regime's brutality has also not diminished. The use of chemical gases has intensified dramatically in the past three weeks. While the zeal of the people has intensified, the regime's repression knows no bounds. Makeshift clinics in towns and villages have offered first aid to the victims who fear for their life to go to the main hospital at Salmaniya which is run by the military. Many observers believe that the situation has reached the point of no-return. The Alkhalifa regime is doomed as the people unanimously refuse to accept to be ruled by tribal hereditary dictatorship. Neither side is in a mood to compromise or engage in any form of dialogue. The hostilities have become so entrenched in the public domain that it is hard to imagine any kind of reconciliation between the two sides. The Alkhalifa have lost the opportunity to retain any degree of power. They have reduced their choices to one; crushing the people to the ground with no compromise. On 23rd July Amnesty International called on the Alkhalifa to release all political prisoners: Bahrain must release all prisoners of conscience immediately and without

conditions, Amnesty, ahead of appeals in the cases of a prominent human rights activist and a group of medical workers. Yet the regime deferred the case of Nabeel Rajab for another session in September. "The charade of justice has gone on too long in Bahrain, and all prisoners of conscience must be set free immediately and unconditionally before these appeals take place," said Hassiba Hadj Sahrroui, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Programme Director. "All convictions against them should be quashed." Nine months ago the Bissiouni report also recommended that these prisoners be released. None of the serious recommendations of the report has been implemented. In another development, Bahraini Pro-democracy activists received the malware in Washington, London and Manama, the capital of Bahrain, the Persian Gulf kingdom that has been gripped by tension since a crackdown on protests last year. Researchers believe they've identified copies of FinFisher, (a spyware sold by U.K.-based Gamma Group) based on an examination of malicious software e-mailed to Bahraini activists, they say. Their research, which is being published today by the University of Toronto Munk School of Global Affairs' Citizen Lab, is based on five different e-mails obtained by Bloomberg News from people targeted by the malware. On Monday 23rd July The Times newspaper published a one page article about Bahrain titled "Police 'dodge security clean-up

by torturing detainees at secret sites" highlighting the tactics adopted by the regime in its repression of activists.

The detainees whose number now exceeds 1200 are now facing severe crackdown. At the Dry Dock Prison detainees have been attacked at the middle of the night as a means of intimidation and repression. The cooling system has been switched off intermittently and the detainees have been subjected to more torture and beating.

Iran has demanded that the Revolution in Bahrain be listed on the agenda of an emergency meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation called for by Saudi Arabia next week. This is a serious moral challenge to the Saudis whose forces are still occupying Bahrain and which is deeply involved in supporting the armed militias fighting in Syria. The discussion must not be confined to the events of one particular country. The Saudis are reported to have used extensive torture against a prominent scholar, Sheikh Nimr Al Nimr, who was arrested two weeks ago. Demonstrations have erupted in several towns of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia with more injuries and arrests.

As the London Olympics have been bogged down by the attendance of a notorious torturer, Nasser bin Hamad Alkhalifa, around 140 buses have carried an advert about the serious human rights crisis for everyone to read. It has shaken the regime to its core as people in the streets in London were shocked by those images.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement
27th July 2012**

Bahrain urged to allow peaceful protest

The Bahraini authorities must allow people to exercise peacefully their right to freedom of expression, association and assembly, Amnesty International said today after the country's Chief of Public Security announced the ban on a gathering organized by an opposition group planned for today. The Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society was denied permission to hold the gathering called Our Demands are Legitimate in the northern town of Jablat Hibshi this evening. In the past few weeks the Bahrain government has banned all other rallies and gatherings organized by the opposition groups. Previous rallies organized by opposition groups and not authorized by the government have been met with the excessive use of force against protesters by security forces. "Despite recent promises of reform and the guarantee of basic human rights, the authorities continue to violate the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and have publicly announced that any gathering today would be illegal," said Hassiba Hadj Sahrroui, Amnesty International's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Programme Director. Talking about today's ban the Chief of Public Security Major-General Tariq Al Hassan said that Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society had submitted a request to the Directorate

of the Northern Governorate Police to hold a rally in Jablat Hibshi on Thursday. He said that after reviewing the security plans and the law on public assemblies, it was decided not to grant permission for rally.

He added that the location and timing of the proposed rally would have meant that traffic would have been hindered and public would have been exposed to risks, without specifying the risks. The Chief of Public Security also clarified that it was illegal to take part in the rally and legal action would be taken against violators.

"Instead of continuing to arbitrarily deny the right to peaceful assembly on the grounds that traffic might be disturbed, the authorities must offer alternatives to allow political societies and the general population to peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly," said Hassiba Hadj Sahrroui. A gathering organized by the five main opposition political groups on 22 June went ahead despite being banned by the government. The gathering was attacked by security forces and several people were wounded including the al-Wefaq Secretary General and other party members. In the same gathering on 22 June, a young man, Ali al-Mowali, was wounded after a tear gas canister hit his head causing severe injuries. He

was immediately transferred to intensive care where he has remained until now. On 9 July he reportedly underwent an operation.

Other Bahraini human rights groups reported dozens of arrests of protesters in June. Several of those arrested were accused of taking part in an illegal gathering. Dozens more have reportedly been injured as a result of excessive use of force during protests in the past weeks.

"The fact that a peaceful protest has not been granted an official permit does not justify arbitrary arrest or the unnecessary use of disproportionate force by police against protesters. The Bahraini authorities should act immediately to ensure that this does not happen and that the law on gathering is brought in line with international law," said Hassiba Hadj Sahrroui. During the review of Bahrain at the 13th session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group before the Human Rights Council in Geneva last May, Bahrain received 25 recommendations to amend national legislation, including to amend Law 32 of 2006 on associations and gatherings and bring it in line with international standards. Several states put forward recommendations calling on the Bahraini government to allow the exercise of freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Bahrain deports US filmmaker Jen Marlowe

US filmmaker who tried to document Bahrain protests deported for lying about her reason for visiting, but says it was "necessary" to have a cover story.

By Leah Hyslop, 17 Jul 2012

A US filmmaker who was trying to capture footage of the anti-government protests in Bahrain has been deported for immigration fraud. In a statement released on Saturday, Bahrain's Information Affairs Authority (IAA) said that Seattle-based Jen Marlowe had lied to immigration officials about her reason for visiting.

"Upon arrival, she told immigration officials she came to help a friend who had recently had a baby, but investigation showed the names and addresses she gave were fabricated," the statement

Leaked documents show Bahrain attempting to gain seat on UN Human Rights Council

World must reject Bahrain's application. IHRC has exclusively obtained leaked documents that show that Bahrain is attempting to gain a seat on the UN Human Rights Advisory Council. The bid is being backed by the chair of the Organisation of Islamic Countries, Pakistan and, disgracefully, Human Rights organisations within Bahrain.

IHRC finds it deplorable that a country such as Bahrain which has severe Human Rights abuses, is involved in the subjugation of peaceful protestors by force and that has stifled democracy in its own country should have the audacity to try and apply for a seat at the UN Human Rights Advisory Council. The Bahraini leadership has nothing it can teach the world when it comes to Human Rights.

The reasoning behind this bid can only be to clean up Bahrain's image on human rights and to make sure Bahrain has a voice within the Human Rights Council diverting attention away from its own violations.

The uprising in Bahrain, though rooted in years of anti-regime protests and opposition, began on 14th February 2011. Troops representing Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have violently suppressed demonstrators since 14th March 2011. There have been 79 killed and hundreds injured in the uprising.

Raza Kazim, IHRC Spokesperson, said "This is disgraceful that such a country with an appalling human rights record should be on the Human Rights Advisory Council. We ask the UN and other countries around the world to reject Bahrain's application."

read. "While in Bahrain, she [had] been shooting a documentary film that requires a proper visa permitting one to work in the kingdom."

Marlowe, who describes herself as a "human rights advocate", told Telegraph Expat she had gone to Bahrain as part of the pro-democracy initiative Witness Bahrain, "to observe, document, and expose what is happening on the ground, and to stand in solidarity with the Bahraini people calling for democracy and respect for human rights".

She admitted fabricating a cover story, but said it was the only way that she could expose what was happening in the country. "There is an alarming pattern of human rights defenders and journalists being denied entry or being granted entry only under very limited conditions and for extremely short periods of time. If the government of Bahrain were not so intent on hiding the reality, it would not have been necessary for me to create a cover story," she said. Bahrain has been caught up in the wave of revolutionary protests sweeping across the Middle East and North Afri-

ca, popularly dubbed the Arab Spring, since February last year.

There have been a number of reported cases of journalists having their access to the country limited, in what some claim is an attempt to stifle coverage of the uprising.

In February, the state denied entry to a number of non-sports reporters from news organisations including Reuters, The Financial Times and CNN during the Bahrain Grand Prix. A Channel 4 news team who entered the country without media visas during the period were deported after being caught filming a demonstration.



AI: prominent bahraini activist imprisoned

Prominent Bahraini human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, was arrested on 9 July at his home to serve the three-month prison sentence imposed on him on that day by the Lower Criminal Court which convicted him of libel. He is a prisoner of conscience. On 9 July, Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, issued its verdict against Nabeel Rajab and sentenced him to three months' imprisonment – 21 days of which he has already served - after convicting him of libel. Nabeel Rajab chose not to attend the hearing. He was arrested at his home by eight masked police officers with an arrest warrant and who were supported by a helicopter about three hours after the verdict was issued. For around six hours his family and lawyers did not know where he had been taken. They were later informed by the police that he was held in al-Jaw prison, in Manama. His lawyer immediately lodged an appeal which is scheduled to be heard on 18 July.

Nabeel Rajab is charged with libel for "publicly vilifying the people of al-Muharraq and questioning their patriotism with disgraceful expressions posted via social networking websites." In one of his tweets dated 2 June 2012 Nabeel Rajab addressed the Prime Minister, Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, following his visit to the area, and wrote: "Khalifa: Leave the al-Muharraq alley ways, their sheikhs and their elderly, everyone knows that you have no popularity there; and if it was not for their need for money they would not have come out to welcome you -

when will you bow out?" He was arrested on 6 June following a complaint by several people from al-Muharraq district and charged with libel on 14 June then released on 27 June.

Nabeel Rajab faces three further court cases. The first relates to a charge for "illegal gathering" and "disturbing public order" for calling for demonstration in Manama against the government on 6 February without prior notification. The next hearing for this case is scheduled for 26 September. Secondly, he is facing a second charge of "illegal gathering" brought against him on 6 June. The next hearing will take place on 16 July. Thirdly, he has appealed his conviction of "insulting a national institution" in his tweets, passed on 28 June by Branch 5 of the Lower Criminal Court. The appeal is due to be heard on 27 November.

Please write immediately in Arabic, English or your own language:

Urging the Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab immediately and unconditionally, as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his rights to freedom of expression;

Calling on them to drop all other charges against Nabeel Rajab and to overturn all convictions which are related solely to his legitimate exercise of his rights to freedom of expression and assembly;

Urging them to respect and protect the right to freedom of expression. and assembly and ensure that all human rights organisations and human rights defenders are able to carry out their work without hindrance;

Doctors go underground to treat protesters in Bahrain

By Phillip Walter Wellman,
Contributor, CSMonitor

(AXcess News) Manama, Bahrain - It is Friday night and Dr. Mohamed is on standby. It's always the busiest day of the week for us, he says as he holds out his cell phone to show a photo he received seconds earlier. The image is of a young man with birdshot embedded in his leg. It is a call for help.

"The government has been using a lot of birdshot on demonstrators lately," he explains, and the wounded come to us for treatment.

Dr. Mohamed, who asked to have his full name withheld, is part of an underground network of medics in Bahrain who provide illegal care for anti-government protesters injured in nightly clashes with security forces. Most of those hurt refuse to go to either public or private hospitals, no matter how grave their wounds, fearing they will be arrested there.

"We still have very severe cases," the doctor says, I've seen amputations in the previous month of limbs and they're not going to the hospital.

The medics say the government is monitoring hospital admissions to track down protesters. It has stationed soldiers at the state-run Salmaniya Medical Complex and, according to activists, sent a letter to private clinics telling them they must report anyone whose injuries appear to be the result of illegal activity, such as unauthorized protesting.

Unrest in Bahrain has dragged on for nearly a year and a half and the number of victims has grown along with it. Makeshift clinics in living rooms across the country treat patients every day. Doctors have even been teaching members of the community first-aid skills in a bid to keep up with the mounting casualties.

"People are getting hurt all the time," said a young protester who was hit in the face with birdshot and risks losing sight in his left eye. He wanted to remain anonymous for security reasons. "I didn't want to go (to hospital) because I was afraid," he admitted. Nobody is safe in this country.

But the underground medics say homemade emergency rooms can only do so much. According to them, at least four Bahrainis have died because they refused to get adequate treatment at Salmaniya, the only full-service public health facility in the country, and they say if the current situation persists, the death toll will certainly rise.

"This is a really serious issue in Bahrain, which isn't getting the type of media attention that it deserves," says Richard Sollom, dep-

uty director of Physicians for Human Rights. The group has been highly critical of what it calls the militarization of Bahrain's public health system.

According to human rights groups, soldiers interrogate everyone who enters Salmaniya as part of their efforts to identify injured protesters. Once discovered, the groups claim, protesters are sometimes taken to secret locations and tortured. In the eyes of the opposition, Salmaniya is more a military base than a hospital.

Shiite Muslims make up the majority of opposition supporters in Bahrain. In February 2011, fueled by a belief that they are treated like second-class citizens by the ruling Sunni minority, they took to the streets to demand more rights and political reform. The Pearl Roundabout in Manama became the focal point of the demonstrations, but after authorities cordoned off the site, the rallies shifted to Salmaniya, where participants demanded the downfall of the regime and prevented some Sunni patients from getting treatment. A crackdown by security forces ensued, as did growing sectarianism.

A report by the government-appointed Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) later confirmed officers had made unlawful arrests. It also stipulates detainees throughout the country were subjected to torture and other forms of physical and psychological abuse while in custody.

However, Abdul-Aziz al-Khalifa, a spokesman for the Bahrain Information Affairs Authority and member of the large royal family of Bahrain, vehemently denies that torture is still happening and insists soldiers currently stationed at Salmaniya abide by the law.

Nobody will be refused treatment if they go to a hospital, he affirmed, but if an injury is sustained in a manner that one feels they need to call in the police, then they have to do that. That is the norm around the world. That can't be held against us.

Mr. Al-Khalifa says the government is committed to moving beyond the unfortunate events of last year, but implied that increasingly violent behavior by opposi-

tion protesters is holding the country back. According to him, the number of young Shiites attacking police with Molotov cocktails is on the rise and officers have responded by using more birdshot, teargas, and other weapons.

"We are obliged to maintain law and order," says Al Khalifa, who also stresses the rioters must face the consequences of their actions.

With no easing of the situation in sight, many analysts have begun to describe the unrest in Bahrain as a frozen conflict. Jane Kinninmont, a senior research fellow at London-based think tank Chatham House, says the term is an understatement. "The situation is worse than a stalemate - it's a slow deterioration," she says. And that deterioration is being seen in hospital halls as well as in the streets.

"There is this feeling of mistrust between doctors and doctors, doctors and patients - a division between sects and families," says Dr. Nabeel Hameed, who works at Salmaniya. "If you solve the political problem tomorrow, if you solve the economic problem tomorrow you'll have the social problem of sectarianism. That will continue for another 50 years. The problem now is this mistrust between neighbors."

Dr. Hameed is among 28 medics who were arrested at Salmaniya during last year's crackdown after they treated wounded protesters. They are facing misdemeanor charges of joining illegal gatherings and protesting against the government. Their verdicts, which are expected in September, come after nine of their colleagues were sentenced last month to up to five years in jail for assisting the anti-government uprising. All the medics claim they were tortured by authorities and insist the cases against them are politically motivated.

Activists say trying health workers is yet another example of how Bahrain is breaching medical neutrality and insist medical care should be free from political influence. They also argue that if the government is truly committed to reform and reconciliation, it should dismiss the cases and overturn the verdicts already handed down.

Dr. Mohamed agrees. He also says if more effort was put into eliminating fears surrounding public health care in Bahrain, not only would it allow for a growing number of citizens to receive the desperate care they need, but it would also help the nation itself heal. "The government has to separate the medical field from politics," he says. "The hospitals are places for people who are injured to get medical care. It's their right to live."

