

BAHRAIN

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

End of Alkhalifa regime is near; don't panic

The unilateral decision by the Alkhalifa to return their ambassador to Tehran is yet another serious setback to the regime's strategy to combat the revolution. After the Saudi occupation of Bahrain the argument the two despotic clans presented to the world was that the Iranian interference in Bahrain had prompted the invasion. Eighteen months later, Tehran has not changed its stands and policies supporting the struggle of Bahraini people and demanding the withdrawal of the Saudi troops. It is the Alkhalifa (who must have received Saudi approval) who conceded defeat in the political argument. The Islamic Republic added salt to the Alkhalifa wounds by saying that it would not send its ambassador back to Manama until Alkhalifa stopped their oppression of Bahraini people. It was one of the most comprehensive defeats of any regime. While Iran refused to send any of its politicians or diplomats to Manama the Alkhalifa dispatched their hawkish (yet one of the most stupid politicians Bahrain has ever had) foreign minister to the Iranian capital to plea for an Iranian intervention to find a way out for his defeated clan. As this diplomatic drama was unfolding, the people continued their revolution risking their lives but holding their heads high. With unrelenting determination, daily protests have not abated; men and women of all ages and backgrounds have lined the streets of their towns and villages, chanting anti-regime slogans and calling for the end of Alkhalifa junta. The world is on the verge of late awakening with regards to Bahrain's revolutionary drama that has continued to claim more lives as state terrorism took a leap forwards. The killing of 16-years old Hussam Al Haddad on 17th August marked a significant turning point in favour of the people's struggle. It proved to the people for the final time that co-habitation with the ruling clan had become impossible and that the only way to spare the blood of Bahrainis would be to cut off all links with it. People are now more determined than ever to uproot the hereditary dictatorship at any cost. They are aware of the British and American support to the regime, but are undeterred. They have clarity of purpose, determination enhanced by sour experience under the Alkhalifa junta and a noble cause that no one can deny them. Today, Bahrainis have never been clearer in what they need

to do and achieve. What is not on their mind is any suggestion of future co-habitation with those who had oppressed them for decades and are determined to wipe them out from the earth surface .

When the people demonstrated on 14th February last year they may have been flirting with ideas like equality, rule of law, political participation, respect of human rights. They may have not had the idea of total regime change. The Alkhalifa could have dealt with the peaceful demonstrations in a totally different way. But the subsequent treatment of the native population had irreversibly transformed people's perceptions, views of their future and their relationship with the Alkhalifa who had occupied their land for the past two centuries. Systematic torture, collective punishment, destruction of mosques, identity-based persecution policies and targeting of professionals for serious persecution such as the medics, athletes, teachers and artists and mass sackings have transformed public opinion decisively along the line of total and fundamental regime change. The ruling clan has spared no effort in uprooting the natives. It is now widely acknowledged that they have failed this time, but, given another chance, they would try again. Next time, the natives will be annihilated in a sectarian war that could end their presence. The Alkhalifa have already adopted sectarianism as a weapon against the natives. It was only blunted by the determination of the revolutionaries to push through with their political and ideological agenda. No power on earth can now deter the native Bahrainis from pursuing their goal.

The past twelve months have been a testing period for both; native Bahrainis and Alkhalifa clan and their supporters. For Bahrainis they have lost everything; their martyrs; the five thousand detainees, the leaders who have been treated with utmost contempt for any level of decency; their human values; their political, civil and economic rights and their identity. There is nothing more to lose. Their strategy is to stay their foot, be patient, persevere in their struggle and not to be fooled, once again, into believing that the Alkhalifa regime could ever be reformed. The ruling clan is now facing the most serious challenge to their rule for more than two centuries. Their crimes over the past twenty months they have created many enemies, lost the

race to the hearts and minds of people everywhere, angered almost every independent human rights body and embarrassed their own allies. They may now rush to short-term solutions, with promises of reform, some prisoner releases and perhaps cosmetic changes to their political structure. They may even dismiss the most antiquated prime minister in the world, notorious for introducing torture as a weapon against opponents. For the people these are not the aims they have been fighting for and for which they have given more than one hundred martyrs. Bahraini people today cannot be easily deceived with hollow promises and cosmetic changes. They have been through all this before, and have no stomach for any more of it.

The situation has thus polarised in a clear manner. People see no future for Bahrain under the Alkhalifa oppressors. This clan has been given many opportunities to rule in accordance with law and modern values. They have repeatedly failed. Their long term strategy is to rid Bahrain of its natives whom they view with hatred, disdain and apprehension. The daily demonstrations by the youth speak out loudly and clearly: We want regime change. And when they shout "Down with Hamad" it signifies the end of the dream of the dictator whose hands are stained with martyrs blood. Policies of empty promises are ill-placed. Appearing to reverse the disastrous policies of the past twenty months is no remedy to the illnesses of the people, their misery and hardship. Mothers and fathers of the martyrs are now leaders of the political movements. They have unanimously said: We want regime change. They have refuted any call for dialogue with whom they consider "murderers and despots". They maintain that Bahrain will be a much better place without the Alkhalifa clan. The rush by the Alkhalifa to Tehran to save their skin is not expected to yield fruits. Their hitmen, torturers and killers have been disheartened by what they see as abandoning the initial claims against Iran and its supposed interference in the affairs of Bahrain. The Alkhalifa total submission to Iran by sending their ambassador unilaterally has only emboldened the revolutionaries into more activism seeking to hasten the downfall of the regime. That appears to be far nearer than many have thought.

Dictator received by Cameroon, detested by exiles as new martyr killed

On 17th August 16-years old Hussam Al Haddad from Muharraq was martyred by regime's forces. He was shot by members of Death Squads which are run and managed by the dictator's palace. He was seriously injured after being shot in the back with a shotgun. Images of his horrific wounds in the back indicate that he was running away from police, not confronting them as they claim. This is extra-judicial killing ordered by the dictator himself. Two days earlier he had addressed the people threatening the adoption of "iron-fist" policy against demonstrators calling for regime change. Within 48 hours of that threat a young man, full of life, was wasted. During the funeral of the martyr on Tuesday, people were attacked by police using chemical and tear gases. More than ten people were arrested and tortured.

Yesterday a handful of Bahraini activists were briefly detained by police as they protested against the dictator as he met British PM, David Cameron. Outside Downing Street the activists ran towards the official car carrying the dictator who had spent about 40 minutes with Mr Cameron. They shouted slogans against Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa who was summoned by London for a strong rebuke at his failure to implement any meaningful reform. The whole world has now realised it is dealing with a regime that is so detached from the idea of reform that it could not be trusted to

implement its promises of constitutional changes. Bahrainis have not stopped their daily and nightly demonstrations. Day in day out they have organised themselves into a formidable force that has challenged the collective onslaught by the regime's forces. Meanwhile Amnesty International called on the British Prime Minister, David Cameron to "make it crystal clear that the UK will not stand idly by while Bahrain proceeds to lock up its dissidents". It said reforms in recent months had been a "facade". Human Rights Watch has accused Bahrain's police of continuing to beat and torture detainees, including minors. UK Government has all along supported the corrupt Alkhalifa family unreservedly. It has failed to condemn outright its crimes of torture and extra-judicial killings even after the publication of the Bissioni report, and refused to meet representatives of the 14th February Revolution. In addition to sending John Yates, the disgraced former Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner who was forced to resign his post following the phone-hacking scandal a Scotland Yard team had been dispatched to Bahrain. Since they arrived ten weeks ago, repression has intensified.

Yesterday the Government of Bahrain was reported to have spent or allocated at least US\$ 32.5 million for the services of eighteen different London and Washington DC based companies, to improve its image in the Western media, since the start of pro-

democracy protests last February. This is according to a new project called *PR Watch* <<http://bahrainwatch.org/PR>> launched on Thursday by research and activist group *Bahrain Watch*. The ongoing goal of *PR Watch* is to monitor and document the activities of each public relations company working for Alkhalifa family. Some staff of these companies were present at a special seminar held on Thursday at the House of Lords and chaired by Lord Avebury. The annual seminar which had been held over the past 15 years to mark the Independence Day, was addressed by Lawyer Mohammad Al Tajir, human rights activist Yousuf Al Mahafdhah, Hussain Abdulla of the US-based Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain and Professor Rodney Shakespeare. A torture victim, Sayyed Ahmad Al Wadaei highlighted the torture inflicted on him in his detention last year.

Also yesterday, Frontline Club, which is one of the main bastion for London-based journalists held a special seminar on Bahrain chaired by Brian Whittaker, of The Guardian. It was addressed by Mohammad Al Tajir, Marc-Owen Jones, a researcher at Durham University and Carla Ferstman of Redress. Various aspects of Bahraini Revolution were debated. The failure of the Alkhalifa regime to undertake real reform was highlighted. Special images were displayed.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
24th August 2012

Alkhalifa humiliated into unconditional submission to Iran

One of most outrageous and humiliating initiatives by the Alkhalifa ruling clan is its decision to unilaterally send its ambassador to Tehran. The unexplained decision came almost twenty months of propaganda bombardment of Iran for allegedly instigating the protests in Bahrain. Three phases have now emerged of Alkhalifa approach to the Islamic Republic. The first lasted one month after the start of the 14th February Revolution. Alkhalifa officials went out of their way to absolve Iran of any role. The second phase lasted 19 months starting the day the Saudis invaded Bahrain. To justify this Saudi aggression the propaganda machine of both Riyadh and Manama started their campaign against Iran although no one, apart from US, UK believed them. Now the third phase has started. The dictator returned his emissary in a humiliating way. Iran reacted by refusing to send its ambassador to Manama. Foreign Minister, Ali Salehi repeated the assertion that the ambassador would not return "until the regime's aggression against the people has ended". What a humiliation to a bankrupt illegitimate regime.

Nevertheless, the repression has increased in recent days. The leaders of the Revolution have been ill-treated to the extent that one of them has been transferred to hospital after his condition deteriorated as a result of torture. Mohammad Hassan Jawad, 65, is the eldest prisoner and is being targeted for possible elimination to stop him giving evidence against Nasser, the son of the dictator.

Nasser has been accused of personally torturing many prisoners. At least three have testified against him, including Mr Jawad. Fears are growing that the three may be eliminated to stop them giving evidence against this torturer. Mr Jawad is reported to be seriously ill, vomiting blood and in great pain. He has been taken to the military hospital. Some people saw him there and described his condition as poor. His family is being denied access to him. The other leaders as well as Nabeel Rajab have been subjected to abuse, torture and other forms of ill-treatment. They are being persecuted for refusing to attend Alkhalifa court in recent weeks. The dictator is yet to announce his decision on their fate next week. International NGOs and governments have called for their immediate and unconditional release but they are still incarcerated.

The youngest political prisoner has been sentenced to one more week of incarceration in the torture chambers. Mirza Abdul Shahid, 12, has been subjected to horrible treatment and all calls for his release have been unheeded.

Two other children are denied medical care for their ailment. Hussain Ali Hassan Al Aradi, 16, has 25 shotgun pellets in his body, only four of which have been removed. He was arrested two months ago, sentenced to 45 days initially, then renewed for a similar period. He is accused of taking part in a peaceful demonstration. Another child is Sayyed Ali Sayyed Mustafa Al

Mahafdhah, 16, who has been arrested two months ago. He suffers from inability to pass water, high temperature and persistent stomach ache. He is held at the notorious Dry Dock prison.

There have been several demonstrations in support of Bahraini revolution in several countries. In Sydney, Australia, tens of people demonstrated on Tuesday in support of the people of Bahrain and calling for the release of Nabeel Rajab. In Washington yesterday, a group of Americans entered the Bahrain Embassy compound, held their banners depicting Nabeel Rajab and Zainab Alkhalifa and calling for their immediate and unconditional release and shouting anti-regime slogans. After a while the police asked them to leave the compound but allowed them to stand on the pavement protesting against the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship.

Meanwhile in Manama, the show trial of Zainab Al Khawaja was yesterday adjourned until 3rd September as well as that of Fakhriya Ahmad who is accused of sheltering a wanted person. Next week will be a crucial period for the country.

The people, meanwhile, have been conducting their protests and demonstrations on daily basis; day and night. Women participate in almost every protest anytime of the day. The standard slogan is: People want regime change; Down with Hamad.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
31st August 2012

Washington Post: Editorial: Backing backfires in Bahrain

Tuesday, Aug 7, 2012

WHEN THE Obama administration resumed military sales to the Persian Gulf nation of Bahrain in 2012, it explained the decision as an effort to bolster moderate elements in the monarchy, whose Sunni ruling family has resisted demands for greater democracy from the mostly Shiite population. In particular, the aim was to strengthen Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, who was visiting Washington at the time and who had led an abortive effort to negotiate a settlement with opposition leaders. Three months later, it's worth asking whether the concession to a regime that has been a close U.S. ally paid off. Unfortunately, the answer is a resounding "no." Bahrain remains locked in a stand-off between a largely intransigent government and a slowly radicalizing opposition — and the regime has failed to fulfill its repeated pledges to end repression of peaceful dissent and undertake meaningful reforms.

As Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner reported in testimony to Congress's Tom Lantos Human Rights Com-

mission last week, the Bahraini government has continued to prosecute 20 leading political activists; "despite assurances to the contrary," it obtained the conviction of nine medical professionals who treated opposition activists during demonstrations last year. The country's best-known human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, is serving prison time for a tweet that called for the resignation of the hard-line prime minister. Security forces continue to employ harsh tactics to put down demonstrations in Shiite villages, including what a new report by Physicians for Human Rights calls the "indiscriminate use of tear gas as a weapon." It said police regularly fire tear gas canisters "directly at civilians or into their cars, houses or other closed spaces" in an effort "not just to disperse crowds but to harm, harass, and intimidate the largely Shia neighborhoods that are home to many protesters."

Bahrain's repression doesn't approach the murderous violence used by the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad against its opponents. But many in the Middle East understandably wonder why the United

States demands the removal of Mr. Assad, an ally of Iran whose Alawite sect is close to Shiism, while continuing to back a Sunni regime that represses its Shiite opposition. The administration's answer is that it is not, like Bahrain's neighbor Saudi Arabia, pursuing a sectarian agenda, but attempting to steer its ally toward peaceful reform.

Yet U.S. policy, with its focus on encouraging moderates such as the crown prince, is clearly not working. What's needed is not just support for Bahrain's reformers but greater pressure on its hard-liners — especially those who are complicit in torture and other illegal acts. In testimony before the Tom Lantos commission, Tom Malinowski of Human Rights Watch proposed that officials and security force members linked to human rights crimes be denied U.S. visas and access to the U.S. banking system. Since Bahrain regularly denies visas to critical U.S. journalists and human rights activists, it should have no cause for complaint if those who are sustaining its repression are similarly sanctioned.

Revolution continues unabated as HR defenders jailed

Bahrain's dictator has ordered the imprisonment of the most prominent human rights activist for three years for tweeting anti-regime sentiments. The President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), Nabeel Rajab was sentenced by Alkhalifa court after a summary trial to the long sentence despite appeals by international human rights bodies to release him. Amnesty International described the sentence as "a dark day for justice in Bahrain", adding that the "verdict marks the end of the façade of reform" in the country. Nabeel Rajab was indicted for anti-regime tweets and taking part in anti-regime protests. His arrest and trial were conducted under the supervision of a Scotland Yard team who was dispatched to Bahrain to help the regime quell pro-democracy demonstrations. Last month Amnesty International considered him "Prisoner of Conscience. After the verdict The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders called for his immediate release and put an end to acts of harassment against him and other human rights defenders and guarantee his physical and psychological integrity. The dictator was particularly incensed by one tweet that said: "King of the country: I appeal to you to leave as a mercy for this land and its good people. I consider you a tyrannical despot who is not suitable to rule this land for reasons that I will present".

On Wednesday night, another human rights defender, who is also a member of

BCHR was severely beaten by members of Alkhalifa Death Squads. Sayed Yousuf Al Mahafdh, was stopped while driving by "traffic" police, held up while Death Squads arrived. He was then severely beaten and his telephone snatched. His children were watching the horror of their father being beaten by the attackers. These attacks on human rights and civil liberties came one day after a speech by the dictator in which he threatened more repression if Bahrainis did not accept to join what he called "dialogue" in which the rule is "I speak, you listen".

Instead of heeding the calls for reform and for implementation of Bissioni Commission's recommendations, the Alkhalifa are now conducting a reign of terror, with the help of foreign police and spy agencies, including Scotland Yard and Mossad. Gagging orders have been issued to several people, including Sayyed Kamel Al Hashimi, an outspoken cleric at a local mosque. Alkhalifa minister of justice issued the order that this scholar was banned from addressing the prayers congregation. Two other clerics were stopped by members of Alkhalifa Death Squads, abused and their turbans rolled on the street in a clear humiliation of their religious status. Shia Muslims have been routinely targeted for their political and religious convictions.

Meanwhile the Appeal trial of the 21 leading figures of the revolution was adjourned by the Alkhalifa court until next month. There are 14 of them in the docks

while seven others are at large. On 14th August, Amnesty International issued a statement calling the delay in announcing the verdict in activists' appeal a 'denial of justice'. Dr. Ghanim Alnajar, an internationally recognized human rights expert, who observed the court proceedings on behalf of Amnesty International said, "The decision to postpone the final verdict is unjustified, and is tantamount to a denial of justice."

In the meantime, the people have continued their daily protests and demonstrations despite the enormous pressures, repression and foreign support received by the Alkhalifa. From town to town, village to village, the revolution has been sweeping the country unabated. With it goes the inhumane repression that employs chemical gases, tear gas and shotguns as the main tools. Tens of Bahrainis are injured and maimed everyday but they cannot go to the main hospitals which have been heavily-militarized. The demonstrations on 14th August were particularly targeted as the regime sought to quash the image of independence from the minds of the generations. It marks the British withdrawal from the country in 1971 and is considered by the people as the "Independence Day". On their part the Alkhalifa designated 16th December as the National Day to mark the ascendance to the throne of the former ruler following the death of his father in 1961.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17th August 2012

Lord Avebury's speech at House of Lord's Bahrain seminar

The annual Summer seminar on Bahrain was held at Committee Room G, August 23, 2012, under the chairmanship of Lord Avebury. Among the speakers were Mohammad Al Tajir, a Bahraini human rights lawyer, Yousuf Al Mahafdha, of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Professor Rodney Shakespeare, a British economic expert and Hussain Abdulla of the American Committee for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain. The meeting was chaired by Lord Avebury who delivered the following speech:

I welcome you to this seminar at which we will be considering the latest atrocities by the Al-Khalifa hereditary dictatorship in Bahrain and their failure to undertake the political reforms which are now being demanded by the people. Almost every day there are mass demonstrations across the country, and increasingly the demand is for regime change. Some of the slogans they shout are:

Down with Hamad

The people want regime change

Al-Khalifas you must leave, and

Your visit is finished, Go back to Zebara

Zebara is the place the al-Khalifas came from in the 18th century and in Arabic the slogan rhymes:

Intahat Ziyara, Oodoo illa Zebara

Even Wefaq the main opposition party, which doesn't normally challenge the constitutional status quo, is fed up with the lack of any movement towards a system in which the powers of the monarchy and its hangers-on are transferred to a freely elected parliament.

In July they pulled out of the so-called 'National Consensus Dialogue' after only a couple of weeks, saying they had only 35 seats out of 300, and were given three minutes to speak at each session. The head of Wefaq, Sheik Ali Salman, said they wanted a government elected by the people and a parliament with full legislative power, a perfectly reasonable demand for any democrat to make and one that we Britain and the US support in the Maghreb and in Syria, but apparently not in the Gulf.

In any case this 'Dialogue' was bound to fail, because four of the country's main human rights defenders have been silenced. Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, his daughter Zainab al-Khawaja, Abduljalil al-Singace, and Nabeel Rajab are all behind bars.

I was at the Index on Censorship Freedom of Expression Award Ceremony earlier in the year, at which Nabeel received their 2012 Advocacy Award. You would think the Foreign Office might have protested against the three year prison sentence passed on him a few days ago for a Twitter posting in which

he called for Bahrain's prime minister to resign, but they are silent.

Nor have they said anything about the retrials of Abdulhadi al-Khawaja and Abduljalil al-Singace, speakers at several of our previous seminars, who were originally sentenced to life imprisonment by a military court after weeks of incommunicado detention and torture.

The international commission of inquiry into human rights violations in Bahrain, chaired by the jurist Cherif Bassiouni, and on which our own Sir Nigel Rodley, former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture served, recommended that all sentences on persons charged with offences involving political expression, not advocating violence, should be commuted (para 1291). The Commission also recommended that all victims of torture or mistreatment should receive compensation (para 1248). King Hamad said at the launch of the Bassiouni report that he accepted all the recommendations without reservation. He has broken his word.

Worse, torture and detention without charge or trial continue unabated. Some progress has been made in stopping the abuse of persons in custody once they are brought to a police station. But before that, protesters are still often subjected to brutal beatings.

Defence lawyers are also reporting that some prisoners convicted in the crackdown are being denied vital medical care.

And the police have continued to use crowd control tools like bird-shot and tear gas as offensive weapons, sometimes firing them directly at protesters at very close range. 16-year old Hussam al-Haddad, aged 16, died on the night of August 17, after being peppered by the security forces at point-blank range and then beaten and kicked as he lay helpless on the ground. The security forces also attacked the young lad's funeral procession in the city of Muharraq, arresting at least 8 people.

Many people have died from inhaling the powerful tear gas used indiscriminately by the security forces. Physicians for Human Rights documented 34 deaths of unarmed civilians from canisters fired into crowds and into people's homes. There was a sharp increase in the deaths reported in the last three months of this survey, after the Bassiouni Commission had completed its work

There has been little progress in implementing the BICI's recommendation that those responsible for deaths and torture of opposition activists during Bahrain's state of emergency last year be investigated and prosecuted. The government has said that 70 officers have been investigated, but the highest known rank facing prosecution is a police lieutenant, and many of those to be tried are low-ranking non-Bahrainis serving in the riot police. No senior officials

have been held accountable, despite the BICI's conclusion that torture was a systemic problem.

One of the highest ranking torturers was Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad al-Khalifa, son of King Hamad and head of Bahrain's delegation at the recent Olympic Games. I sent copies of statements made by two of his victims to the Home Secretary on July 24, suggesting that he should be denied entry to the UK as a person whose presence here would not be conducive to the public good. The Immigration Minister Damian Green who replied, said that any person would be refused if there was reliable and credible evidence that they had committed human rights abuses. I don't know what threshold of credibility the Home Office applies, but it reminds me of how we failed to get the police to act in the case of Ian Henderson, the British former head of the security police in the 1990s, when we submitted five witness statements by victims he had tortured, or at whose torture he had been a participant. This is a matter we shall have to pursue further, with legal advice.

Human Rights Watch said in their Annual Report on Bahrain for 2011 that over 1,600 people were arrested from mid-March to the end of the year for taking part in anti-government demonstrations or were just suspected of supporting them. Almost certainly the rate of arrests has increased in 2012, but no records are kept or published. Wefaq says that there are 90 children in custody, a huge number in such a small country.

I believe, as I always have, that resolving the long-standing problems of human rights and government legitimacy in Bahrain, are matters of concern to us in Britain. Because of our historic relationship and close ties with the ruling family, symbolised by King Hamad's recent entertainment by the Queen at Buckingham Palace, we get blamed as accomplices in the repression. Our rhetoric about democracy in the Arab world is seen as being selective. Like the Americans, we are prepared to line up with our autocratic Sunni allies in the Gulf, and particularly to avoid offending Saudi Arabia, whose oil we need. But absolute monarchies are anachronisms that are certain to disappear in the longer term, and the people will remember us as having helped to prop them up. If the transition is not managed peacefully, there could be a period of violent civil unrest, as we see now in Syria. That gives us a reason of self-interest to back the forces of democracy and human rights in Bahrain, as we did in the Maghreb and now do in Syria. But surely if we believe in the principle of government of the people, by the people, for the people, it should apply across the world, and not just here in Britain
