

# BAHRAIN

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

## Western support to GCC dictatorships fail to stem popular revolts

The political skyline of Bahrain is becoming clearer by the day. The intensification of repression paralleled by the determination of the people have now made it possible that the Alkhalifa reign is doomed. Day in day out, the people are subjected to most horrific treatment at the hands of the regime's mercenaries, many of whom were recruited from outside the country. Bahrainis come face to face with them everyday and night as they march in protests and were forced to make a choice; whether to continue their sacrifices now and rid themselves of a regime that has no loyalty either to the land or the people, or give up the struggle and face a more bleak future under the hereditary dictatorship. After 21 months of peaceful struggle their choice is clear. It is expressed loudly and clearly; People want regime change. It is the same slogan shouted by millions in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen and elsewhere. These regimes cannot be reformed and the people's choices are limited; either to sustain the status quo or continue their struggle until those dictatorships are removed. They are also aware that, as they insist on regime change, the West has been hypocritical. It has supported those despots for decades and are not yet ready to remove that support. The task of the people thus became more difficult, but not impossible. They have realised that the immediate price they have to pay to achieve their goals may seem high, but it is much less than what they have to pay if the regimes remain in power.

The Bahraini people have reached the conclusion that cannot be overturned by any power; Alkhalifa must go. They have also realised that their mission has been made more difficult by the Saudi occupation of the country. But that has made their mission more difficult. The experiences of the past two years has convinced them that any ground for a middle way of cohabitation with the ruling family have ceased. The continued mentality of killing, mass arrests, collective punishment, destruction of mosques, detention of medics and sacking of thousands of Bahrainis has removed any room for compromise. They are also aware that their revolution that raises the slogan of regime change has come only after the Alkhalifa themselves had taken the decision to replace the natives with foreigners through a process of political naturalisation. Furthermore the way the Alkhalifa had dealt with the peaceful demonstrators at the Pearl

Roundabout has fundamentally altered the political equation. Within four weeks of the people's revolt the Saudi heavy machinery was crossing the causeway linking the two countries to occupy Bahrain and crush the revolution. Initially the unholy Alkhalifa-Alsaud alliance thought they had succeeded and would have declared mission accomplished. But the resilience of the people has surprised them and their Western backers. The Revolution has not only continued but it has also altered the thinking, perception and morale of Bahrainis. The Alkhalifa dictatorship and Saudi occupation turned themselves into enemies through their destructive and inhumane actions. They exercised "victor's justice", "victor's vengeance" and "victor's arrogance". In addition to imprisoning every known activist, whether in the filed of human rights, politics or gender rights, they have continued their killing spree. Last month at least four Bahrainis were killed including an 11-months old infant girl. The situation was made worse by the collective punishment strategy. The blockade of the town of Al Ekr by regime's forces supported by Saudi forces of occupation has added to the public mood to achieve regime change.

The Alkhalifa-Alsaud unholy alliance has not only failed to crush the Bahraini Revolution, but also helped it to export revolutionary zeal to almost all GCC countries. The United Arab Emirates is becoming under international condemnation for arresting and torturing more than 50 activists. Saudi Arabia itself is facing a widening wave of protests. The people's revolt started in the oil-rich Eastern Province where at least 15 people were killed in demonstrations against the Saudi occupation of Bahrain. But what is making the situation more grim is that the discontent has spread to other parts of the kingdom. Riyadh, Al Jawf, Al Qassim and Al Medina have witnessed protests by the families of some of the 30,000 political prisoners languishing in Saudi jails. Most of these people have not been charged or tried, and torture is rampant at Saudi jails. The mood of their families is becoming more desperate and the ground for countrywide revolt is being paved by the arrogant repressive policies of the regime. But what is even more alarming to the West is the current political tension in Kuwait that reached levels unprecedented in the country. Since Kuwait gained its independence from Britain in 1961 no citizen dared to criticise the Al Sabah ruling family, question their legitimacy

to rule or attacked the Emir. But what happened lately has sent shock waves in the spine of the GCC hierarchy. Tens of thousands of Kuwaitis marched against the government and threatened to continue their revolt until the ruling family gave some of its powers back to the people. The Bahraini revolution has thus succeeded in exporting revolutionary spirit to other GCC countries. Instead of curing the illness of the Alkhalifa, the Saudis have inflicted themselves and others with the revolutionary disease. It is worth pointing out that the three countries have contributed forces in one form or another and political support to the Saudi-led invasion of Bahrain.

What is next? The youth who have spearheaded the Revolution and are capable of continuing the task until the hereditary dictatorship has been removed. While the most senior leaders of the opposition remain behind bars, being tortured, ill-treated and denied access to justice, more activists including human rights defenders are being detained. The regime and its backers operate in accordance to the wrong assumption; that those leaders are behind the political strife. They are unable to see that the policies and practices of the Alkhalifa despotic rulers have alienated almost everyone in the country except the few that have benefited from the corruption and dictatorship. Meanwhile the Western backers of the Alkhalifa, most notably USA and UK, are better advised to change sides and support a peaceful transfer of power from the repressive monarchies to the people in order to avoid more bloodshed and tension in the most sensitive regions of the world. These powers have granted the Alkhalifa regime blanket support for too long hoping some reforms would be adopted. They have realised that Bahrain's dictator, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and his clique are incapable of reform. A regime based on hereditary absolute power cannot accept to be ruled by the people or held accountable under a universal law. He has failed to implement the recommendations contained in the Bissioni (BICI) report or the 176 recommendations forwarded by the UN Human Rights Council. He has proven to everyone including his Western supporters that his regime has structural deficiencies that makes it incapable of serious reforms. It is a regime destined to fall and both USA and UK will do better if they remove their backing to a doomed political system.

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## Two martyrs as UK Government is criticised for pro-Alkhalifa stands

Two martyrs fell during the week. First was Huda, eleven years infant who was suffocated by chemical gases that has become the main tool of repression against the people. She developed breathing difficulties leading to the deterioration of her health until she succumbed to painful death. The second was Hajji Mahdi Ali Al Marhoon, 60. Few months ago he was subjected to intense inhalation of chemical gases deployed by regime's forces against the people of Ma'amir Town. He was hospitalised but his condition deteriorated until he passed away on Wednesday 17th October. His funeral yesterday was attended by thousands of people who chanted anti-regime slogans calling for an end to the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship.

The repression has continued unabated. The security apparatus, commanded by John Timoney and John Yates has intensified its attempts to suppress dissenting voices or anyone attempting to uncover the truth. It is now illegal to tweet anti-Alkhalifa news. Anyone who criticises the dictatorship or its human rights abuses is liable for arrest, torture and imprisonment. Four people have now been targeted for tweeting anti-regime news. The situation has now deteriorated to levels far worse than in previous times. Instead of opening up freedoms, the Alkhalifa, encouraged by the Saudi occupation, Anglo-American

military and security support, has become notorious for its human rights violations. It has made mockery of the recommendations by the Bissioni Commission and the Human Rights Council.

While Nabeel Rajab's trial earlier this week was postponed other human rights activists have been targeted and warned of severe consequences if they continued criticism of the Alkhalifa bleak record of human rights. Mohammad Al Masqati, the President of Bahrain Youth for Human Rights was arrested, threatened and ill-treated for criticising the Alkhalifa. No word of condemnation has come from the UN bodies responsible for protection of human rights defenders. Nabeel Rajab's ill-treatment has stained the human rights world which has failed to protect the most prominent human rights activist in the Gulf region from arbitrary arrest, torture and imprisonment. Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Rajab. AI has confirmed that at least one international observer was denied entry to Bahrain to observe the appeal against Mr Rajab's conviction. Since John Timoney and John Yates were seconded by USA and UK to support the the Alkhalifa criminal regime last year international human rights activists were banned from entering the country. The Alkhalifa have kept an iron-fist policy against Bahrainis with tight grip

on police, intelligence, army, judiciary and media.

Amnesty International has issued a web petition on behalf of Jalila al-Salman and Mahdi Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb, ahead of their final verdict on Sunday 21 October. They were sentenced in September 2011 by a military court to three and 10 years' imprisonment respectively. Mahdi is still in prison, he is a prisoner of conscience and Jalila may be arrested to serve her 3 years if their sentences are upheld. If imprisoned she will also be a prisoner of conscience. The link to the document is: <http://amnesty.org/en/appeals-for-action/JalilaAndMahdi> A video message from Jalila al-Salman is also available on our web page at the following link: <http://amnesty.org/>.

These are the links to tweet the web petition and the video which are now both live:

Here's the video: <http://bit.ly/TcXm3s>  
Here's the petition: <http://bit.ly/Q6o90o>

The Foreign Affairs Committee at the House of Parliament has criticised the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for not designating Bahrain as a "country of concern". It said: "The case of Bahrain illustrates many of our misgivings about the system for designating "countries of concern". In our report last year on the FCO's human rights work,

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## People disappointed by UK's unyielding support to Alkhalifa torturers

By signing a defence treaty with the Alkhalifa ruling family, UK has turned its back on the most basic moral issues, a leading opposition figure has said. To defend a hereditary dictatorship condemned for the use of systematic torture, destroying more than forty religious places, imprisoning doctors and other medical staff and granting immunity from prosecution to torturers especially Nasser, the son of Bahrain's dictator is a total abandonment of the least expected standards of human rights and human decency. Instead of rebuking the Alkhalifa rulers for their crimes the UK Government has accepted to become a partner with them at a time or rising popular revolution that will not give up its struggle to achieve a fundamental political change and end the black era of this feudal immoral regime. The Bahraini opposition will continue its lobbying of the political establishment to end this deal which has proven the double standards in UK's foreign policy.

The meeting between UK's Foreign Secretary and the Alkhalifa crown prince has been viewed as yet another form of political support aiming at the rehabilitation of the Alkhalifa killers and torturers within the international community. William Hague has failed to condemn the regime for arresting the medics, human rights activists, the children or the political leaders. He has failed to call for the prosecution of the senior torturers like Nasser bin Hamad Alkhalifa or the military leader who had given orders to kill protesters and destroy people's

property and act mercilessly against Bahraini natives. It was one of the most disappointing public policies by the UK Government.

In Washington a group of two Senators and 22 Representatives issued a letter calling for Bahrain's dictator to release eight medics currently in custody in order "to adhere to international norms of medical neutrality." The group suggests that the medical professionals were targeted due to the fact that they witnessed the brutality leveled against citizens of Bahrain, and it reiterated calls for the government to "adhere to its promises to implement recommendations from the . The signees include Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ), Rep. James McGovern (D-MA), and Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), among others. The Washington-based Human Rights Watch has also called for the release of the medics immediately and conditionally.

The world-renowned human rights activist, Nabil Rajab, has ended a three-day hunger strike in protest against the ill-treatment he had received at the hands of the Alkhalifa torturers who ill-treated him after allowing him briefly to attend his mother's funeral. The International Federation for Human Rights (Fidh) has joined other human rights bodies in calling for Mr Rajab's immediate and unconditional release.

Meanwhile the ruling tribe has intensified its repression against the Bahraini people. Its interior minister has urged citizens to spy

on people and report them to the torturers in exchange for money. He also asked foreign expatriates to do their share of spying and take active role against the people, otherwise they may be expelled from the country. This intensification of repression followed a new threat by the Alkhalifa justice minister to silence dissenting voices coming from the last remaining bastions of public expression. Prayers leaders who defend people's rights or attack human rights violations will be targeted with arrest and persecution. In addition to the leaders of leaders who are languishing behind bars for twenty months, the Alkhalifa are now targeting senior community figures like Sheikh Isa Qassim, who has been cautiously outspoken against dictatorship, persecution and human rights abuses.

Meanwhile the people have continued their revolution with daily protests, both during the day and at night. At least thirty protests are taking place daily with active participation from women who have become pivotal to the revolution. In the past few days, scores of Bahrainis have been injured by police guns who have used shotguns, chemical and tear gases routinely. More people have been arrested and tortured. The Alkhalifa have also intensified the use of judiciary as a weapon against the people. The people are adamant on achieving their goal of fundamental political change despite the intensive repression.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**

12 October 2012

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## Bahrain bans all protests and rallies

Bahrain has banned all protests and rallies, arguing that a complete stop to such gatherings is needed to maintain security in the island nation.

Interior Minister Sheik Rashid ibn Abdullah Khalifa ordered the move, a sweeping attempt to bring its long-simmering unrest to a halt. An Interior Ministry statement issued Tuesday said "rallies and gatherings were associated with violence, rioting and attacks on public and private property.... They also were a major threat to the safety of the public." Anyone calling for rallies or taking part in them would face "legal actions," the statement said.

Bahrain has been roiled by protests for more than a year by dissidents upset with the Sunni Muslim monarchy over police abuses and the marginalization of Shiite Muslims. While the government has undertaken some reforms, human rights groups and activists say abuses have continued, including the jailing of peaceful protesters. Amnesty International laments many "prisoners of conscience" remain behind bars.

Government officials argue that the demonstrations have devolved into violence. Videos have captured masked youths hurling Molotov cocktails at police. Last week, the official Information Affairs Authority said two policemen died of injuries received in the line of duty in a single week.

Activists say few protesters are resorting to violence, but the continued suppression is fueling increasing unrest. Outside groups such as Human Rights Watch complain that the government has unlawfully attacked peaceful demonstrations with torrents of tear gas.

"If the government doesn't allow any kind of peaceful protest, if it always attacks and suppresses them, of course it's going to turn into something else," said Maryam Khawaja, acting president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. The new threat to take legal action against anyone calling for protests, she said, is alarming.

The Persian Gulf nation is a key ally of the United States in the region and is home to the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet. Khawaja and other critics of the Bahrain government

argue that the U.S. should take firmer action to protect protesters. Assistant Secretary of State Michael Posner told a congressional commission earlier this year that "our best role is to be a quiet supportive voice on the outside."

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### Two martyrs: Continued from P 2

we criticised the FCO for not designating Bahrain as a "country of concern" in its 2010 report, published in April 2011. Our criticism was made in the light of the brutal repression by the authorities of demonstrations against the regime in February and March 2011, in which at least 35 people are known to have died and some 2,000 people were arrested. Military courts were used to try civilians, and medical staff who treated the injured were brought to trial and sentenced to long periods of imprisonment." Soon after this report, Saudi Arabia issued a warning to UK that it would punish UK if Parliament took such stands regarding the situation in GCC countries. It remains for UK to rebuke the Saudi regime, which is the most repressive and reactionary regime in the world, for making this threat which is effectively a cheap and blatant blackmail.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
19th October 2012

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## Impunity to torturers and Irish anguish about medics

Recent steps undertaken by the Alkhalifa regime to silence opposition has solidified the people's determination to continue the struggle to achieve regime's change in the country. The first of these policies is the harsh attacks on demonstrators and the total banning of freedom of expression, congregation or religious beliefs. Most of the daily protests in over 30 in Manama, towns and villages have been attacked by regime's forces using chemical and tear gases and shotguns. On Wednesday at least two young people were seriously injured with shoguns as they participated in peaceful demonstrations. Many others were attacked as they continued their political strife against the regime calling for regime change.

Second came the blockade of Al Ekr Town that throttled the people for one week. This followed the death of a policeman who was one of the group which had attacked the houses of the citizens and assaulted women and children. The blockade epitomised one of the bleakest episodes of collective punishment imposed by the Alkhalifa on Bahrainis. Under internal and external pressures the regime was defeated into ending the blockade. The tales that emerged from the town have shocked the people and made them more resolute in challenging the regime and insisting on its removal.

Third came one of the most miscarriages of justice. One of their courts has acquitted a notorious torturer of any wrong doing despite the abundance of evidence implicating her in the crime. Sarah Al Moussa had tortured Miss Naziyah Saeed, who is a Bahraini journalist working for Radio France 24. The crime happened after the Saudis

occupied Bahrain in mid March 2011 during the martial law period. Miss Saeed was severely tortured and abused by Sarah Al-Moussa. The crime led to an outcry by many human rights bodies who called for the punishment of the torturer. In order to contain the situation and stem off the criticism the regime announced that it was "conducting an inquiry" into the appalling crime. This week the dictator ordered that the torturer be acquitted. There was another protest from several human rights bodies.

IFEX, which is an international body defending the freedom of expression issued a statement condemning the decision to acquit a notorious torturer, despite the enormous evidence linking her to the crimes attributed to her. IFEX called for justice to be administered by the regime against those who are accused of human rights violations. It attacked the culture of impunity granted to torturers like Al Moussa, Nasser bin Hamad AlKhalifa, Khalifa bin Abdulla Alkhalifa and Khalifa bin Ali Alkhalifa. A delegation representing several human rights NGOs visited Miss Saeed and expressed the solidarity of others like the International Union of Journalists, Reporters Without Borders and Committee to Protect Journalists, with her. Also the American Committee to Protect Journalists, CPJ, issued another statement condemning the decision to acquit the notorious torturer.

At another level, Dr Ruairi Hanley, a senior Irish doctor and columnist has written the following letter to The Irish Times on 25th October in support of the jailed Bahraini medics:

Sir, – I wish to congratulate Prof Damien McCormack (October 19th) for his coura-

geous comments on the situation in Bahrain. As he correctly states, Irish-trained doctors have been illegally detained, tortured and convicted of the "crime" of treating injured anti-government protesters. Although media attention has drifted away from Bahrain, these colleagues remain under sentence and their treatment has been roundly condemned by the United Nations and multiple human rights organisations.

Regrettably, as Prof McCormack also points out, a number of Irish medical institutions have disgraced themselves in their reaction to these events. Truly, it beggars belief that representatives of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland paid social visits to the leaders of the brutal Bahraini regime in the same week that their own graduates had their convictions upheld by a kangaroo court.

Throughout this entire episode, the leadership of the Irish medical profession has failed to consistently and unequivocally condemn a savage regime that has incarcerated and tortured doctors. Much opprobrium has deservedly attached itself to the RCSI, but the muted response and lengthy silence of both the Irish Medical Organisation and the Royal College of Physicians in recent times must also be highlighted.

The Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee has, in the past, investigated these issues and the behaviour of certain Irish medical institutions with respect to Bahrain. I urge them to revisit this matter and to hold members of our profession to account for their actions and inactions during the course of this scandal. – Yours, etc,

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
27th October 2012

## UK is to Bahrain what Russia is to Syria, says Bahraini HR activists

Maryam al-Khawaja doesn't mince her words when she's asked to assess what many Bahrainis think about Britain. "It's not a very positive picture," she sighs, stirring a spoonful of sugar into a steaming latte.

"People today are saying the United States and the UK are to Bahrain what Russia is to Syria. They are countries willing to aid repression, people who are willing to overlook human rights violations because it's in their own interests. The only difference is that Russia doesn't try to present itself as a beacon of human rights and democracy."

Al-Khawaja - one of Bahrain's most prominent human rights activists and the daughter of jailed opposition activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja - doesn't want to be down on Britain. She recently travelled to the UK to hold talks with the Foreign Office and desperately hopes Downing Street will signal some sort of policy shift towards our ally in the Gulf. But she knows it is unlikely.

Over the past 18 months - as whole swathes of the Arab world have hit the streets to demand greater democratic representation and the end of autocracy - Britain has tried to portray itself as a friendly benefactor who is willing to help Arabs achieve a greater level of personal freedom. In Libya and Syria especially we marketed ourselves as supporters of a just cause, whilst chastising countries like Russia and China for blocking the march of self-determination. But with Bahrain our silence has been deafening.

Despite the deaths, the show trials, the continued suppression of protesters with tear gas or bird shot and the lacklustre pace of reform, Britain has gone from issuing the occasional cautiously worded statement to wholeheartedly welcoming Bahrain back into the fold as a rehabilitated Arab nation. It was not lost on Bahrain's opposition that when Prime Minister David Cameron came back from his summer break last month Bahrain's King Hamed was the first foreign dignitary he met.

Khawaja, 25, believes the pace with which Britain has accepted Bahrain's assurances it is on the path of reform has simply emboldened the hardliners in Bahrain's government. "A year ago statements from the US and the UK made a difference," she says. "Now they don't make any difference because the Bahraini government now knows that even if there are statements it won't result in any consequences."

Over the past 18 months - since predominantly Shi'a protesters hit the streets of Manama calling for the ruling Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty to go - scores have died and hundreds have been imprisoned. The

al-Khawaja family have suffered acutely. Maryam's father helped found the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights - a group which has seen many of its key personnel imprisoned or fled.

Abdulhadi is one of a number of prominent activists who were handed down life sentences by a military court following the February 2011 protests. He and a group of prominent opposition figures and activists have since been retried and convicted in a civilian court, an attempt by the Bahraini government to legitimise the sentences but one that has nonetheless been rounded on by multiple human rights groups in a country where the independence of the judiciary is highly questionable.

Her sister Zeinab - a prominent Bahraini blogger and activist who uses the moniker Angry Arabiya, has also been arrested seven times. She currently has 13 cases against her ranging from tearing up a picture of the king, to insulting a police officer and blocking a public highway.

The only reason Maryam is not behind bars is she got out shortly after the government's crackdown against pro-reform protesters began in February 2011.

"I didn't want to go, but my father convinced me that it was important to make sure people on the outside made sure what was happening on the inside," she explains. "I thought I would go back. That's why I left with a very small suitcase, enough clothes for one week." She now leads a peripatetic existence, shuttling between Lebanon, Denmark, Britain and the United States trying to make sure human rights abuses inside Bahrain are brought to the wider world's attention.



Al Khawaja has been an exile before. When she was a child her family fled to London and later settled in Denmark during a previous crackdown against opposition supporters.

"My parents built my life on the basis we would go back," she explains, in fluent English with an American twang that comes from two years college Stateside. "They always prepared us for the idea that we would return. So instead of putting me in Danish school they put us in private English schools. They knew we'd need English not Danish if we returned."

At the time there were just 21 Bahraini families living in Copenhagen and every Saturday they would meet to make sure their children learned Arabic and the history of the little island in the Straits of Hormuz that called home.

Abdulhadi took his family back to Bahrain in 2001 when the king promised a series of reforms that were never granted, a situation that eventually led - ten years later - to the massive street protests that broke out last year calling for the regime to go.

The Bahrain government describes the opposition to their rule as a front for the local Shi'a superpower Iran in an attempt to get a foothold in the Arab Gulf. The United States, which uses Bahrain as a base for its regionally vital Fifth Fleet, and Britain have largely bought this line, fearing the removal of the Khalifa dynasty would strengthen Tehran's hand.

Opposition groups and human rights activists say Iran's involvement is deliberately over played and that those hitting the streets each night wish to see a Bahraini democracy, not a repeat of the Islamic Republic across Hormuz.

But Khawaja warns that as the repression continues it is inevitable people may start looking for help wherever they can get it.

"I had a meeting at the White House and I told them 'Everything you fear and is making you not do the right thing because you fear it, you are actually making it a reality'," she explains. "At the end of the day it only makes sense that when people feel polarised, cornered and ignored they're going to look for help from wherever they can get it."

I'm actually really surprised that hasn't happened yet. I'm really surprised that we're still to a large extent peaceful. I'm surprised we're not as sectarian as I thought we would be and that we haven't yet reached a point where we say we'll find help from wherever it comes."

She leaves with a final word of advice for Britain: "In Bahrain you have a largely religious society demanding a civil secular state that institutionalises human rights. Grab that opportunity because it doesn't come along very often."

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