

BAHRAIN

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Despite Western support, Alkhalifa dictatorship will fall

People's victory is coming slowly, but surely. This is confirmed by several factors. In addition to the divine promise that oppression does not last, the facts on the ground confirm a confident path to achieving the ultimate salvation of the oppressed, if they pursue their freedom. Other material facts have also emerged in recent times. With the passage of one year after the much-hailed Bissioni report and recommendations people, including those supporting the regime in London and Washington, have clearly realized that the Alkhalifa regime has in no way implemented those resolutions. Instead, it has continued to commit more crimes against the Bahrainis and elicited more help utilizing the billions of dollars granted by the GCC countries under the pretext of developing the country and its people. While the UK Government has continued its open political support with only blurred hints to the incapacity of the regime to undertake reforms, Washington has been more forthcoming in spelling out its disappointment at the lack of progress on the BICI recommendations. Both countries had geared their military deals to these implementations. They had also hailed the dictator for endorsing the Commission and his later promise to act according to its advice. Both have now realized that the Alkhalifa had failed them disastrously. They are now backing a losing horse which has no chance, however slight, of winning the race against time to save his skin and that of his regime.

One of the most outrageous acts has been the revocation of citizenship of 31 Bahraini natives. While the decision was a surprise to the regime's allies, it was an unwarranted disappointment at a time when they were hoping to convince adversaries that change was possible with this hereditary dictatorship. Nationality is a right of citizens; not a gracious act. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights decreed in article 15 that "Every citizen has a right for citizenship" adding "Nationality cannot be arbitrarily withdrawn". Yet Bahrain's dictator took the decision to use nationality as a weapon against his opponents. This is not new. In the fifties it had banished three senior figures of the opposition to St Helena in

the Indian Ocean for their role in the popular uprising that had lasted for two years. After four and half years a British court ordered their release. The nationality of one of the leaders, Abdul Rahmad Al Bakir had been withdrawn as a punishment for his nationalist and patriotic stands. In the eighties several Bahraini families were put on a boat and sent to Iran. They were returned by the Iranians who said they were not their nationals. They spent 80 days in the high seas before being allowed back in the country. One of those whose nationality has been revoked is a Member of the 1973 parliament. Dr Abdul Hadi Khalaf is no stranger to prisons or revoked identity. He has lived in Sweden for the past three decades and had been repeatedly turned back each time he tried to enter Bahrain's Alkhalifa iron curtain. At his advancing age Dr Khalaf is punished for his views and refusal to give in to dictatorship and turning the country into a family private ownership.

Bahrainis are now more determined than ever to rid themselves and their country from this repressive hereditary dictatorship. They have destined themselves to longer and harsher struggle to ensure that the coming years will not be replication of the past years of agony, absolute rule and humiliation. They have become more resilient and resolute in their stands; bracing themselves to more hardship in anticipation of freedom and the rule of law. The event of Ashura has re-invigorated them and renewed their faith in definite outcome of victory and dominance of the rule of law and a regime of their own choice. The situation has been so polarized that even those who had thought they would be able to achieve some reforms by working within the system have now been targeted by the Alkhalifa/Alsaud occupation. Two of the 31 people whose nationality was revoked were members of the dictator's "parliament". While one of them has been convicted (after his nationality was revoked) for participating in "unauthorized" protest, the other one had not been accused of any wrongdoing even by the Alkhalifa standards. It can be claimed now that all links between the native Bahrainis and the Alkhalifa/Alsaud occupiers have been severed. There is no

way to anticipate a situation in which the two sides may co-exist in the same way as before. The people may pay heavier price for their insistence on liberty, but it will still be less than the agony they have been through over the past two years. The regime has lost its cutting edge and his tools have been severely blunted. Killing and death are the ultimate threats against people. They have become ineffective as disgruntled and humiliated citizens now march forward in front of heavily armed tools of death deployed by the enemies of humanity.

Where do we go from here? The spread of people's revolts in several GCC countries; Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, indicates that far from being defeated, the Bahraini Revolution has managed to export itself to other people against the odds. The occupiers are on the losing end while their victims have retained the moral high grounds as strugglers for freedom, liberty and dignity. With mounting human rights abuses, intransigent reactionary regime and bloody-minded authoritarian regime, the world ought to wake up to an unpleasant reality. The strategy of the regime and its supporters is to exhaust the people through mass arrests, collective punishment and oppressive curtailment of fundamental rights.

This is a two-edged sword; it may retard the movement; but it may well lose its sharp edge and transform into an ineffective child play at a time when it is highly needed. During the season of Ashura Bahrainis have realized that their religious rituals, and with them their religious identity and culture, are now under severe threat. Accepting the status quo is not an option. At the same time accepting half solutions will only prolong the agony and the decades of corruption, authoritarianism and sectarianism. Bahrain needs a new face; that of dignity, fraternity, equality in front of law and a political system emanating from people's will. It may need more sacrifice but it is the only option for people who have paid dearly in terms of human sacrifices, dignity and freedom. Tomorrow must not be a replication of yesterday; Today is decision time.

Unanimous verdict on Alkhalifa failure to implement BICI recommendations

Today marks one year since the Bahrain Independent Investigation Commission (BICI) published its report and recommendations. While the report confirmed that the Alkhalifa regime had adopted systematic torture against Bahrainis, extra-judicial killings and destruction of mosques, the recommendations were taken by USA and UK governments as a benchmark test of the regime's intention to reform. Today, almost everyone who had pinned hope on swift implementation of those recommendations is in a sombre mood, to say the least. The reality is that Alkhalifa allies are now bracing themselves to the aftermath of Bahrain's hereditary dictatorship. It had a good chance to survive the people's revolution ordeal, but has chosen not to give an inch of their authority.

The head of the independent commission, the Egyptian-American jurist M. Cherif Bassiouni, told Human Rights Watch that the government's implementation of the BICI recommendations has been inadequate. "A number of recommendations on accountability were either not implemented or implemented only half-heartedly," Bassiouni said. "The public prosecution has yet to investigate

over 300 cases of alleged torture, some involving deaths in custody, and there has been no investigation, let alone prosecution, for command responsibility, even at the immediate supervisory level, of people killed in custody as a result of torture." "You can't say that justice has been done when calling for Bahrain to be a republic gets you a life sentence and the officer who repeatedly fired on an unarmed man at close range only gets seven years," Bassiouni said.

As the Day of Ashura gets underway, the country has been transformed into an endless human wave of demonstrations. This is despite the regime's attempts to criminalise demonstrations and protests, and its warnings to leaders of congregation halls not to allow marches or anti-regime slogans. Bahrainis have now adopted a policy of civil disobedience, engaging in anything the Alkhalifa bans despite the heavy price they have often to pay. Revolutionary orations, marches, speeches, leaflets, banners can be seen everywhere. On Budayya Road, for example, the youth of Magasha town staged a scouts show indicating their determination to continue the struggle to uproot dictatorship. At a tent erected by revolutionary youth, the

family of Ahmad Shams (16 years old boy killed by regime forces last year), declared their intention to continue the struggle until the regime is uprooted and the dictator brought to justice.

On 21st November the Alkhalifa junta sentenced 23 of the medical core to three months prison sentences for treating the injured last year. The aim is to keep these noble doctors on criminal records to tarnish their professional reputation. This is in line with their policy of genocide against the majority Shia Muslim population. Among these medics is Dr Nabeel Tammam who is in Gaza helping the injured Palestinian victims of the recent Israeli aggression.

Another victim of the Alkhalifa policy of silencing opposing voices is Sayyed Kamel Al Hashimi. He was arrested on Sunday 18th November. He was subjected to severe intimidation and maltreatment after being arrested for criticizing the Alkhalifa policies against the majority Shia natives. According to his lawyer, Abdulla Al Shamlawi, Mr Al Hashemi challenged his interrogators insisting on his right to freedom of speech. There is growing fear for his life as the Alkhalifa

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Repression intensifies as calls for regime's downfall consolidated

On Wednesday 14th November regime's forces waged merciless attacks on people participating in the rituals marking the end of the mourning period of martyr Ali Abbas Radhi. The 16 years old boy was killed Friday 9th November on his way to Friday prayers at Duraz Town. He was targeted and killed by members of the death squads under the command of the dictator's court. They used chemical and tear gases as well as shotguns to disperse the thousands who ventured to attend the procession at the graveyard near the martyr's home town of Samaheej.

In recent days the Alkhalifa regime has intensified its repression. It has now targeted civilian areas with systematic attacks, showering people with gases and ransacking their homes. Two days ago the towns of Sanabis, Ma'amir, Al-Jufair and Jidhafs had received heavy punishment. In addition to terrorising the occupants, the contents of the houses were damaged. The destruction continued for four hours from 1.00 am. Scores of people were arrested, tortured and taken to unknown destinations. At least 11 of them have been kept in the torture dungeons. This wholesale collective punishment is in revenge for the persistence of the people in their demands for the downfall of this dictatorial regime

Meanwhile the notable Reporters Without Borders Organisation has issued a statement denouncing the barbaric sentencing of a journalist in revenge for accusing regime's supporters of assaulting her. The charges were brought against journalist

Reem Khalifa after she had accused three doctors, who are regime's supporters, of attacking and insulting her. She will have to pay a fine of 100 BD (210 euros) and a total of 500 BD in compensation to the doctors (BD 200 to each of the two she allegedly attacked and BD 100 to the one she allegedly insulted). The Organisation said: "The appeal court's decision is just the latest in a series of rulings that demonstrate the Bahraini judicial system's complete lack of independence. The court did not examine the evidence provided by Khalifa's lawyer."

The sister of a Bahraini on death row has been summoned by Alkhalifa torturers to be interrogated for talking to the public about the injustice meted against her brother, Abdul Aziz Abdul Redha. The father of Martyr Ali Al Shaikh was arrested and sentenced to 15 days imprisonment for campaigning to get the killers of his son brought to justice.

The US-based "National Interest" electronic site has published an article titled "The New Crisis in Bahrain" by Ted Galen Carpenter alerting the West to the deepening crisis in that country. It said: "Bahrain is fast emerging as the new tinderbox in the Middle East. Although that country has not received much attention from the Western news media, which has been obsessed with Iran, Syria, and the U.S. presidential election, recent developments are profoundly disturbing." Citing several appalling developments in recent months; the writer concluded: "The Bahraini monarchy is a thoroughly authoritarian regime that oppresses

the Shiite majority. To continue backing that government merely because Iran supports the other side makes a mockery of Washington's professed commitment to democracy and human rights. Policy regarding Bahrain should be high on the list of matters for reconsideration in President Obama's second term.

A Press Conference was held on Tuesday 13th November at the House of Lords about the revoking of the nationality of 31 Bahrainis. Several of those affected by the draconian decision by the Alkhalifa dictatorship spoke about their disappointment and anger at stripping them of what is a natural right. However they were all adamant that this draconian step would only confirm their position that the Alkhalifa must leave the stage as they are incapable of adapting to modern laws and obligations. There was a consensus that the situation in Bahrain must not be allowed to get back to what it had been for the past decades under Alkhalifa dictatorship.

On Wednesday 14th November a seminar was also held at the Middlesex University by the Law School. Professor Joshua Costalino presented five speakers to assess the situation in the country one year after the Bissioni report and the UK Parliamentary Inquiry into FCO policies towards Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The speakers were: Dr Saeed Shehabi, Jalal Fairouz, Ali Al Fayez, John Labbuck and Tara O'Grady.

US urges Bahrain to 'exercise restraint' in response to protests

The Obama administration on Friday urged the government of Bahrain to "exercise restraint" in responding to peaceful protests in the Persian Gulf kingdom.

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said the United States is concerned about rising violence in Bahrain and urges all Bahrainis to pursue their political objectives peacefully.

Bahrain, which is home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, has been rocked by protests since the government quashed an Arab Spring-inspired uprising in February and March of last year.

Nuland's comments come on the one-year anniversary of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) report, which faulted the government for systematic torture and made recommendations to alleviate tensions.

Bahrain has taken "important steps" toward implementing BICI recommendations, Nuland said in a statement, including allowing the International Red Cross to visit prisons and a new police code of conduct, among other reforms.

Nuland added that there are delays in fully implementing the report's recommendations. She cited concerns "regarding accountability for official abuse, limits on freedom of expression and assembly, meaningful security sector reform, and a political environment that has become increasingly inhospitable to reconciliation."

Calling Bahrain a "valued strategic partner and longtime friend of the United States," Nuland said the U.S. would continue to encourage the Bahraini government and all segments of its society to create an "environment conducive to political

dialogue and reconciliation."

"The Bahraini Government can only achieve the more prosperous, stable, and secure Bahrain it seeks through the continuation of the reform efforts it has initiated and must now fully implement," she said.

In late October, the State Department issued a tough and lengthy condemnation of Bahrain's crackdown on protesters, saying the United States is "deeply concerned" by the U.S. ally's decision to outlaw public gatherings.

"Freedoms of assembly, association and expression are universal human rights," department spokesman Mark Toner said. "We urge the government of Bahrain to uphold its international commitments and ensure that its citizens are able to assemble peacefully and to express their views without fear of arrest or detention."

Political prisoners subjected to ill-treatment before & after family visits

21 November 2012

The political prisoners Mohd Almughni, Jaffar Hussain and Hussain Al-Aalihave all reported that they have been subjected to severe mistreatment before and after they are allowed to receive visits from their family members. Before the family arrives, these prisoners are required to stand for up to six hours, handcuffed, blindfolded and without food or water, often in the same room in which they claim that they have been subjected to other forms of torture at the beginning of their detention. The prisoners are not allowed to pray during this time.

The families of Mohd Almughni and Jaffar Hussain are scheduled to meet with their families on Thursday, 22 November, but have decided to stop conducting these visits in order to protest this brutal treatment. When the family members have visited the prison before, they stated that they observed the detainees shaking and report that they have trouble hearing and seeing properly.

The actual location of their detention remains unknown after more than five months of imprisonment, although the visits are held in the Central Investigation department (CID). The detainees are not allowed access to any books, newspapers, writing papers or pens; the only book they are allowed to have access to is the Quran.

Other prisoners are allowed periodic access to television and others to radio, but these political prisoners are not allowed access to any such communication lines with the outside world. They are only allowed outside for approximately five minutes per day, and this always occurs at night so that the prisoners never have any exposure to the sun.

Furthermore, they have not been allowed regular access to a lawyer. One of the detainees spoke on one occasion with a lawyer, but when he showed evidence of his torture (marks on his body) to the lawyer, he was beaten. The lawyer is only allowed to attend a selection of the court sessions. Once Jaffar was actually beaten in court when he tried to speak with a lawyer.

Mohd, Jaffar and Hussain were all held separately in solitary confinement for months. There was a public outcry at their solitary confinement, and so the authorities now allow a prisoner of a foreign nationality to sit in the cell with the prisoners at times, but they are not allowed to speak to each other. The prisoners are not allowed to speak to anyone, make any sounds, or even read the Quran aloud.

All three of these men suffer from multiple health problems, which have been caused or made worse as a result of the poor treatment that they have received during the first month of their detention. They are not receiving the medical attention that they urgently need, and indeed one of the detainees was taken to a hospital for treatment, but instead received further harassment and mistreatment, and threats.

Jaffar requires an operation on his leg, and also suffers from kidney problems. Hussain suffers from knee friction and has a problem with a disk in his spine. Mohd also suffers from back problems. All three have lost a great deal of weight. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights calls for the immediate release of all three of these political prisoners, and an investigation into the allegations of torture these men have made against the prison guards.

Urgent Action: Trial of two boys

Two children and three male adults continue to be held in a prison in Bahrain after they participated in a protest in July. Their trial before the High Criminal Court in Manama started on 16 October.

On 16 October, Jihad Sadeq Aziz Salman (16), Ebrahim Ahmed Radi al-Moqdad (15), Naser Saeed Hassan (20) and Hassan Abdul Jalil al-Ekri (20) appeared before the High Criminal Court in Manama, the capital of Bahrain, for the first time, together with Sadeq Jalil Ibrahim al-Haiki. Their charges under articles of the Bahrain Penal Code and the 2006 anti-terrorist law include "intending to murder", "burning a police car", "illegal gathering and rioting", "throwing Molotov cocktails", and "attempting to steal a police car". One of the defendants told the court he had been tortured in detention. Their lawyers are still waiting for the results of a forensic examination and their case has been adjourned to 3 December. All five are still held in the Dry Dock prison in Manama.

The age of criminal responsibility in Bahraini law is 15 years old. However, as Jihad Sadeq Aziz Salman and Ebrahim Ahmed Radi al-Moqdad are under 18, they are children and should be treated in accordance with the rules and principles of juvenile justice.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has stated that "every person under the age of 18 years at the time of the alleged commission of an offence must be treated in accordance with the rules of juvenile justice". These include: detention or imprisonment only as a last resort – under regular review and for the shortest appropriate time and a commitment to the use of alternatives to detention whenever possible; prohibition of solitary confinement; separation of children in detention facilities from adult detainees; no life imprisonment without the possibility of release in connection with offences committed while under 18; attention to the particular needs of children in custody; and an emphasis on reformation and social rehabilitation of child prisoners.

Time for Britain to take a lead on Bahrain

By Eric Avebury | 23rd November 2012
On November 5, thirty-one Bahrainis were deprived of their citizenship arbitrarily, without notice and without judicial process, contrary to customary international law. Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that everyone has the right to a nationality and no-one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality. The victims can appeal these decision, but there is no point. The king has absolute power to grant or rescind citizenship, and the courts wouldn't dream of overturning his decisions. No wonder that hundreds of Bahrainis demonstrate against the government every day. Even after a total ban on meetings they continue to turn out after Friday prayers. The ruling family's assault on the rights of the people provokes their hatred, and they are calling for regime change.

The ancestors of the royal family came from Zebara in the 18th century, so the chant on the streets is; Your visit is finished – go back to Zebara

In Arabic it rhymes:

Intahat Ziyara, Oodoo illa Zebara

The US State Department repeat their call to the government of Bahrain to create a climate that is conducive to reconciliation, to meaningful dialogue, to reform, to bring peaceful change. Britain also calls for peaceful dialogue, but many of the leaders of the opposition are serving life sentences in prison, among them Hassan Mushaima, leader of the Haq movement and Abduljalil al-

Singace, the head of its human rights bureau; Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, a leading human rights activist.

Nabeel Rajab, head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, is imprisoned for three years for a remark he made on Twitter.

The Bassiouni Commission, which examined hundreds of human rights abuses following the uprising that began in February 2011, recommended that political prisoners should be freed and compensated for the torture they suffered.

Prince Salman, the Crown Prince, gave the Foreign Secretary William Hague a personal commitment to an inclusive political dialogue. This can't happen while most of opposition are behind bars. Now the provocative and unlawful deprivation of these people's citizenship, with the threat of more to come, makes it harder than ever to start a dialogue.

Our Government needs to tell the hereditary autocrats of Bahrain that the long-term peace and stability of Bahrain can't be achieved by killing, torturing and arbitrarily imprisoning human rights and political activists. Bahrain and the other Gulf monarchies need fundamental reforms that transfer power from permanent autocrats to the people, as in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and soon we hope, Syria.

Britain should line itself up with the future, and not with anachronistic family oligarchies.

Eric Avebury is a Liberal Democrat Peer, and the former Liberal MP for Orpington. He has campaigned on minority rights across the globe over many years.

Unanimous verdict:

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become increasingly vicious, violent and murderous. Another cleric, Sheikh Ali Al Biladi was arrested on Monday 19th November for expressing his opinion. His torture started the minute he was arrested and his ill-treatment has continued until now.

With intensification of repression, Mr Jawad Al Sheikh, the father of one of the martyrs has been locked in torture cells for insisting on bringing to justice those responsible for the killing of his son. On 31st August 2011 Ali Al Sheikh, 16, was shot dead as he made his way to the mosque on Eid Al Fitr (the day marking the end of the fasting month of Ramdhan). The father has been outspoken, pointing his fingers to the dictator, Hamad bin Isa Alkhalifa, as responsible for the death of Bahrainis as he is the one who issued orders to kill them. The father's detention has been repeatedly extended. Fathers of other martyrs have been threatened with arrest and torture if they accused senior Alkhalifa figures especially the dictator of killing their children.

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of officers, and the fact that no high-ranking officers have been sentenced for abuse. "Delivering justice appears to be a slogan for the authorities to pacify the population, and for victims and their families justice and reparation remain elusive," the report said.

The government has repeatedly insisted that it is committed to the changes and is carrying them out, while blaming the violence by some protesters for the country's increasingly bitter divisions. Bahrain's rulers have often been unwilling to acknowledge the grievances of the protesters, claiming they have been manipulated by foreign powers.

Amnesty also criticized Bahrain's allies, especially the United States and Britain, for occasionally criticizing the monarchy without withdrawing any real support. The report called on those countries to "match their condemnation with action, instead of satisfying themselves with the narrative of reform while ignoring the reality of repression."

The report comes as tensions are rising in Bahrain, which hosts the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet. In recent weeks, the government has banned protests, stripped dissidents of citizenship and announced it was taking legal action against Shiite religious figures for delivering "politicized sermons."

On Tuesday, the government said it had arrested a "domestic terror cell" that planted fake bombs in crowded places.

The New York Times

Bahrain Failed to Deliver Promised Changes, Report Says

By KAREEM FAHIM

The New York Times, 20/11/2012

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/21/world/middleeast/bahrain-didnt-enact-promised-changes-report-says.html?src=rechp&_r=1&

CAIRO — Bahrain's government has failed to put in place changes it promised after cracking down on a popular uprising last year, and it instead has expanded its repression of political opponents, according to a report released Tuesday by Amnesty International.

The group said that the human rights situation had "markedly deteriorated" in recent months. It also warned that the government's failure to follow through on the reforms, recommended almost a year ago by an independent panel, posed a looming threat to the tiny Persian Gulf nation, which remains deeply polarized, racked by nightly protests and reeling from escalating violence. "Bahrain risks sliding into protracted unrest and instability," the report said.

Dozens of people have been killed since the uprising began in February 2011 against the Sunni monarchy with protesters demanding political equity and an end to widespread discrimination against the island's Shiite majority.

In November 2011, a panel of legal and human rights experts who investigated the uprising and its aftermath released a report that found the authorities had used excessive or indiscriminate force, including torture, against the protesters. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain, who commissioned the report, promised to heed its findings. But the report faulted the government for not transparently investigating allegations of torture, or in many cases simply ignoring accusations of abuse. The cases of several political prisoners who said they had been beaten, sexually harassed or subject to other abuses had not been independently investigated, the group said.

The government had also failed to hold officers accountable for misconduct, Amnesty said, noting the low number of arrests