

BAHRAIN

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

New year; new history; new pledge to seek freedom

The year ended with a sombre note on almost all Arab revolutions, with the counter-revolutions claiming new grounds within the realms of those revolutions. Despite the attempts to present the Bahrain Revolution as a failed attempt to achieve change, the enemies of the people have themselves failed to crush the people's revolts despite the use of all methods of repression including lethal means. The people have been on the streets calling for regime change; paying in blood for their steadfastness. The continued violent attacks by the Alkhalifa regime on peaceful protests and civilian areas have solidified the people's resolve to change the regime. It is now beyond comprehension to imagine a situation where the Bahrainis live in peace under a rule dominated by the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. Almost every independent human rights body that had examined the situation has accused the regime of gross violations of these rights as well as crimes against humanity. When a delegation by the European Parliament visited Bahrain in December their findings were damning to the regime. They confirmed that flagrant violations had taken place over the past twelve months. This is well after the Bissioni Report had presented many recommendations aiming at "reforming" the regime and stopping its criminal policies against Bahrainis. During the year other bodies had presented similar recommendations. In September, the United Nations Human Rights Council issued 176 recommendations to the Alkhalifa. Amnesty International also presented a set of recommendations for the Bahraini regime in order to contain the violations.

The year has thus ended with plenty of recommendations but little improvement in the way Bahrainis are being treated. People died under torture (like Yousuf Al Mawali, January 2012), killed by police in the street (Ali Radhi,) or by gas inhalation. A test carried out by an Irish university earlier in the year established that the gases used against peaceful protesters are ten times the legal limit specified by international bodies for crowd control tear gas. On the first anniversary of the publication of the Bissioni report there was a unanimous verdict by the world commu-

nity that the regime had failed to implement its recommendations. Both UK, US had linked their support to the Alkhalifa on the implementation. While Michael Posner, US Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Human Rights, continued to call on the Alkhalifa to implement these recommendations, prosecuted torturers among senior officials and release political prisoners, UK Government has continued its political and security support to the regime. Many believe that the valuable relations between the Bahraini people and UK are best served by principled stands by London on matters of democracy and human rights and that UK interests cannot be secured by oppressive dictatorships.

The continued repression, coupled with absence of any political positive change has continued to fuel more protests and deeper anger and frustration. The enmity between the regime and the people has now reached a point of no-return. It is unlikely that a political solution may be found short of removing the tribal system or marginalizing it to the point where it cannot exercise any more oppression against the people. Five areas need to be "nationalized" and placed under the direct control of the people's elected representatives; the police, intelligence, army, media and judiciary. These have been weaponised by the ruling family over the decades and used to repress the people. They need to be neutralized to serve the whole society and to protect the rights and dignity of the people. It is unlikely that the Alkhalifa will acquiesce to these steps. They are aware that any small step on the road to real democracy will be a recipe to their imminent downfall. They have embarrassed their own allies who have seen absolutely no move towards the political reforms demanded not only by the Bahrainis but also by the world. Even the Americans have become apprehensive of the Alkhalifa inability to take the slightest step to democratize. The UK has unfortunately remained steadfast in supporting one of the most vicious dictatorships in the region. Killings have not stopped, nor have the arbitrary detentions and torture. Medics are still being sentenced to jail terms while women have not fared better. The people are now vindicated by the

numerous reports and statements of world leaders despite the enormous public relations funds dedicated to programmes of deception. Even the Arab people who had been targeted by the Saudi propaganda, have now become more aware of what they call "Bahrain's forgotten Revolution". Seminars were held in Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia to express support to the people of Bahrain in ways that have left the counter-revolution forces dumbfounded. Two years after the emergence of the Arab Spring those forces are gradually being exposed and are unlikely to be able to withstand the people's march forward to achieve their natural rights. Even Saudi Arabia which lives under most vicious regime is witnessing expanding political strife. Instead of succeeding to crush our people, the Revolutionary zeal is now claiming new territories in Saudi cities like Riyadh, Al Qaseem, Al Jawf and Medina. This is in addition to the continuing protests in the Eastern Province where more killings occurred last month. While Saudi repression is expected to increase in the coming months, the Arab march to democracy cannot be put back into reverse gear. New history is being written for the region; this time with people's blood. The dawn of freedom has arrived; dictators must pack up and go.

For the people the new year marks the beginning of another phase in the struggle to achieve the right of self-determination. With all hopes of reforming the hereditary dictatorship dashed, the only available avenue is the struggle to achieve its downfall. So far the big powers and the Saudi occupation have made that choice difficult to achieve, but social and natural laws dictate that tyranny does not last, struggle cannot go in vain, repression does not protect regimes and the will of people is always stronger than that of the despots. With these facts in mind, Bahraini Revolution is destined to make a fundamental change in the political system of the country, the Alkhalifa clan has approached the end of the road and that victory cannot be far away. They are thus determined to embrace the Revolution as the only way to effect fundamental political change in Bahrain.

Preparations for Martyrs Day continue, US calls for prosecution of torturers

As the countdown to the Martyrs Day begins both the people and the forces of occupation are embracing themselves for a showdown. Both have axes to grind and scores to settle. For the people, 17th December has agonising memories going back 18 years when on that day in 1994 two young men were shot and killed by Alkhalifa police using live ammunition. Hani Khamis and Hani Al Wasti both in their early twenties were killed at two different protests demanding the reinstatement of the 1973 Constitution and the release of political prisoners. Since then Bahrainis have commemorated that day with demonstrations.

On 17th December 2007 a young Bahraini, Ali Jassim, 22, was brutally killed by the regime's forces for taking part in a protest on the Martyrs Day. This year the tension is heightened and the people have more reasons to protest. More than 120 Bahrainis have been killed by the Alkhalifa regime in cruel ways; live, rubber bullets or shoguns, torture, pursued and hit by police vehicles or inhalation of excessive amounts of chemical and tear gases. While it is a known fact that the orders to kill Bahrainis have always come from the royal court, no member of the ruling family has even been brought to justice

The regime is also grinding its axes for more killing, detentions and torture. On 12th December its Death Squad kidnapped Mohammab Abdul Nabi, 16, from his town of Sfalaha, in Sitra. His whereabouts are not known and fears are

growing for his safety. Several other young Bahrainis have been snatched from their homes in the past week.

This coincides with a new form of collective punishment meted out by the regime's forces against civilian areas of the natives. After the ransacking of Al Ekr and Mhazza, both the towns of Duraz and Aali are now subjected to nightly raids that are bound by no ethics or morals. At least eight homes were raided in Aali including that of Martyr Abdul Nabi Al Aaqil. The notorious Turki Al Majid has now become the main culprit in these crimes. In recent months London has joined forces with the Alkhalifa killers and torturers to protect the hereditary dictatorship and defeat the pro-democracy movement.

Unlike the irresponsible and immoral statements of Alistair Burt, UK's FCO minister, Michael Posner, the US Under-Secretary of State has been more forthcoming recently. After attending the "Manama Dialogue" last week, he uttered remarks that infuriated both the Alkhalifa and their British backers; He said: "To create a climate where dialogue and reconciliation is possible, the government needs to prosecute those officials responsible for the human rights violations that occurred in early 2011. It also should drop charges against all persons accused of offenses involving

non-violent political expression and freedom of assembly. Many of these convictions appear to be based, at least in part, on the defendants' criticisms of government actions and policies. We urge a comprehensive review of all of the medics' cases in the interest of turning the page on the events of last year and repairing the social fabric of Bahrain. The government also should continue work to professionalize and diversify Bahrain's security forces so that the police better

reflect the communities which they serve. We also are concerned about the recent revocations of citizenship."

Meanwhile international human rights bodies such as Amnesty International, IFEX, International Federation for Human Rights, the US Human Rights First and Human Rights Watch have

all condemned the confirmation of the two year imprisonment imposed by the ruling family on Nabeel Rajab for peaceful expression of his opinion. Zainab Al Khawaja has also been arrested after one month jail sentence had been imposed against her for demonstrating against the hereditary dictatorship. Calls have been made by the world community to release Bahrainis from the torture chambers run by police trained by foreigners.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
14th December 2012



London Court discharges two Bahraini activists, situation tense

A judge at Marylebone Magistrate Court in Central London yesterday discharged two Bahraini activists who had climbed to the roof of the Bahrain's Embassy earlier this year. Ali Mushaima and Moosa Abd Ali were reprimanded for "trespassing" on a "diplomatic" premises and warned them not to do it again. On 17th April 2012 the two Bahraini activists broke away from their hunger strike outside the American Embassy and made their way to Belgrave Square; climbed onto a scaffolding attached to a nearby building and occupied the roof of the Bahraini Embassy. After 24 hours of negotiations, the pair came down voluntarily and were briefly arrested by the police. Two weeks ago they were taken to court where their case had been heard. Yesterday marked the end of the ordeal when a magistrate at the Court considered the case on its merits and ordered the discharge of Ali Mushaima and Moosa Abd Ali. He also ordered them to pay £100 each towards the cost of the extensive police operations at the scene. The judge expressed clear sympathy with them especially after the courtroom turned

into a trial of the Alkhalifa murderous regime.

As the regime became more desperate in the face of the steadfast people, its cruelty has become more vicious. It has become emboldened by the presence within the On Saturday 1st December Alkhalifa forces demolished four more mosques in various places. In Karzakkan Fadak Mosque was demolished by regime's mercenaries using tractors. Three other mosques were demolished at Hamad Town; Fadak Al-Zahra at 2nd Roundabout, Abu Talib at 19th Roundabout and Imam Hassan Al Askari at Roundabout 22. These mosques were destroyed by Alkhalifa last year but were partially rebuilt by the people. A tent that had been erected at the site of Imam Al Hadi's mosque at Roundabout 20 has been burnt by regime's forces.

On 3rd December The Washington Post published an opinion column by By Elisa Massimino who is president and chief executive officer of Human Rights First under the title "An intolerable status quo in Bahrain". After describing the proceedings of the trial of the medical staff on

22nd November she wrote: "During my 25 years as a lawyer and human rights advocate, I've been in many courtrooms in many places. But I've never seen anything quite like what I recently witnessed in Bahrain. I sat in on one of the hearings for the 28 medics being prosecuted after treating injured protesters during the democratic uprising last year". She concluded: "In a region where threats to U.S. interests abound, it may be tempting for the Obama administration to conclude that, while not ideal, the status quo in Bahrain is tolerable for now. That would be a mistake. There is no status quo in Bahrain. The situation is deteriorating, and pro-democracy activists are growing more desperate. There will either be reform, or a descent into worsening violence. The United States may not be able to control the outcome, but — for its own strategic interests and the good of the Bahraini people — it must do everything it can to persuade the regime to choose the right path".

Bahrain Freedom Movement
7th December 2012

Chemical gases kill another martyr as regime's terror escalates

The latest martyr is Bassel Al Qattan, 44, from Al Shakhoura Town. He died yesterday as a result of inhaling excessive amounts of chemical gases fired by the regime's forces on the civilian areas. He was exposed to those gases last year, but his condition deteriorated especially with the lack of medical care at the military-led hospitals. A hospital in Ireland has established that the gases used by the Alkhalifa forces against Bahrainis are ten times stronger than the permitted levels contained in commercial tear gas canisters.

The extensive use of lethal gases has led to a diplomatic row between Manama and Tehran. Iran's Deputy Minister for Arab and African Affairs told an Egyptian media delegation that his country was concerned because of the use by Alkhalifa ruling family of poisonous chemical gases against demonstrators. He said that "The situation in Bahrain is deteriorating day after day". He said that Manama authorities are violating human rights in a systematic way, and doesn't care about the legitimate rights of the people". The Alkhalifa officials soon began a tirade of abuse against Iran. The

Alkhalif foreign minister urged the world to help the Iranian people against the government.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch has honoured Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace as a writer who has been targeted by the regime. The honour is part of its programme to honour those sacrificing for expressing their views in the world.

It described him as a prolific writer, blogger, and head of the human rights office of the Haq Movement for Liberty and Democracy, an opposition party in Bahrain. He was an engineering professor at the University of Bahrain until dismissed after his prosecution in 2010. He was arrested in August of that year at Bahrain International Airport on charges of inciting violence and terrorism, on his return from a conference in the UK House of Lords, where he criticized human rights violations in Bahrain. He was held incommunicado in solitary confinement for six months and reportedly mistreated. A month after his release in February 2011, he was arrested again in connection with his speeches and writings during pro-democracy protests, and sentenced to life in prison."

The regime has escalated its terror against Bahrainis in recent days, especially as the 33rd GCC summit approaches. At least thirty people were arrested for taking part in a protest in Manama on Martyrs Day, Monday 17th December. The ruling family decided to punish them with 30 days detention. It has made mockery of the judiciary which justified this imprisonment as necessary "to complete the investigation". The crime that needed investigation in this case is taking part in a protest inside Manama. To the Alkhalifa, this is a major plot against the ruling family that has designated the capital as a no-go area for protesters. Among the detainees is Yousuf Al Mahafdh, a prominent human rights activist with the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. The other activists of the Centre are Nabeel Rajab and Zainab Al Khawaja, both are languishing in jail for defying the ruling family.

On 11 December, police raided the family home of Mohammad Mohammad 'Abdulnabi 'Abdulwasi in Sitra – an island east of the capital Manama – and arrested him,

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21st December 2012

Repression intensifies as British MP hailed for refusing regime's gift

The latest martyr is Zainab Al Fardan, from the town of Karzakkhan who died on 24th December in her mother's womb shortly before birth. This is due to inhalation of large quantities of lethal chemical gases used by the Alkhalifa regime against peaceful protesters. The regime has also used canisters containing these gases on homes of people causing death and destruction. More than 50 people have lost their lives as a result in the past 18 months.

On Wednesday 26th December Alkhalifa ruling family sentenced two Bahrainis to life in jail for taking part in peaceful protests last year. The two, Ali Al Singace and Abdul Aziz Abdul Redha had been sentenced to death for allegedly killing a policeman. Their confessions had been obtained under severe torture. After international pressure mounted following the Bissioni report last year, the Alkhalifa commuted the sentence to life in jail. The families of the two Bahrainis have been devastated as they are convinced that the two are innocent of any wrong-doing. Several cases made up by the regime had failed the simplest of truth tests and the Alkhalifa had to swallow their pride as they were forced to concede defeat in these cases. Several others had their sentences reduced by the ruling family. This is an indication of the arbitrary nature of its judiciary.

Meanwhile it has continued to jail human rights activists for exposing its crimes. After the detention of Nabeel Rajab and Zainab Al Khawaja, Yousuf Al Mahafdh of the Bahrain Centre for

Human Rights was sentenced to two weeks in the torture chambers for his human rights activities. The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) issued a statement calling for his immediate and unconditional release.

The world was shocked this week when a video taken by a Bahraini citizen at Aali Town recorded a policeman slapping a Bahraini young man carrying his child for no reason. The man had approached the police and appeared on the video asking them for something. The policeman approached him and slapped him on his face. After few moments he slapped him on the other. The child then started crying, filled with fear and agony for what he had just witnessed. Another video showed a man at the town of El Ekr, being subjected to horrific beating, kicking while his body was bleeding. He could not even stand on his feet. The attacks on Bahrainis by the Alkhalifa have increased in recent months and torture has been carried out away from formal prisons into houses, farms and streets.

On 25th December the New York Times published an article written by Zainab Al Khawaja, who has been repeatedly locked behind bars for opposing Alkhalifa dictatorship, titled "A brutal ally". After arguing the case against the continued Western support of the regime Alkhalifa said: "At present, the Bahraini government believes it has international immunity. It commits widespread human rights violations, and business continues as usual: the government continues to

buy arms and negotiate lucrative deals, without having to face any real consequences. This is why the most prominent Bahraini human rights defenders are languishing in prison. Until the United States starts to put real pressure on its ally, Bahrain's government has no incentive to change." She ended the article saying that "No matter the price, Bahrainis will keep demanding the very values, human rights and democracy, that the US claims to stand for. It is an outrage that America continues to back a regime that tramples them."

On 20th December The Guardian published an article about a courageous MP who refused to accept an expensive Christmas present from Alkhalifa regime. Ann Clwyd, who has criticised the regime for torturing and imprisoning pro-democracy campaigners, was surprised to find a festive Fortnum & Mason wicker basket in her office on Wednesday 19th December. She sits on a committee conducting an inquiry into human rights abuses in the country. After inquiries with the royal grocers, she discovered the hamper was a gift from Alice Thomas Samaan, Bahrain's ambassador. Clwyd returned the hamper to the store and sent a letter to the embassy explaining that she could not accept it. "I just could not accept it given what has happened to the citizens of Bahrain. I said, 'Lets get it out of my office and send it back!'" she said. Further inquiries from the Guardian established that Samaan sent similar packages from the store in London's Piccadilly to about 10 other MPs. Ann Clwyd has been hailed a hero by Bahrainis for refusing to be bribed by a murderous regime.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
28th December 2012



Bahrain, a Brutal Ally

By ZAINAB al-KHAWAJA

Published: December 25, 2012

EARLIER this month, Aqeel Abdul Mohsen, 19, was shot in the face for protesting against Bahrain's government. He was covered in blood, with the lower side of his face blown open, his jaw shattered, and a broken hand hanging awkwardly from his wrist. It's one of those images that you wish you had never seen, and can never forget.

After more than 10 hours of surgery, and before Mr. Abdul Mohsen regained consciousness, his hospital room was already under guard by the police. Had he been able to speak, he might even have been interrogated before going into surgery. Others have lain bleeding without medical attention while government security agents asked questions like: "Were you participating in a protest? Who else was with you?"

Bahrain, a small island nation off the coast of Saudi Arabia, has been ruled by the Khalifa family for more than 200 years. It is also home to the headquarters of the United States Navy's Fifth Fleet, which patrols regional shipping lanes, assists with missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and monitors Iran as tensions in the region mount.

The oppressed people of Bahrain joined the Arab Spring soon after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. With newfound hope, Bahrainis took to the streets on Feb. 14, 2011. Rich and poor,

Shiite and Sunni, liberal and religious, they felt what it was like to speak freely for the first time in the capital, Manama, at a traffic circle with a pearl monument at its center. The Pearl Roundabout came to symbolize the Bahraini revolution.

But this newfound freedom didn't last long. The government's security forces attacked the peaceful protesters, then tore down the Pearl monument. And in March 2011, troops from neighboring Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates intervened to suppress our pro-democracy protests.

Going out on the streets, carrying nothing but a flag and calling for democracy could cost you your life here. Chanting "down with the dictator" could lead to your being subjected to electric shocks. Giving a speech about human rights and democracy can lead to life imprisonment. Infants have died after suffocating from toxic gases used by riot police. And teenage protesters have been shot and killed.

It's not unusual in Bahrain to find families with four or five members in prison at the same time. My father, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, was beaten unconscious in my apartment in front of my family, as a report last year by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry documented. He was then taken away with my husband and brother-in-law; they were all tortured.

My husband was released in January, and my brother-in-law was released after a six-month sentence in late 2011; my father

was sentenced to life in prison. He staged four hunger strikes; the longest lasted 110 days and almost cost him his life. (He was force-fed at a military hospital.)

But despite all these sacrifices, the struggle for freedom and democracy in Bahrain seems hopeless because Bahrain's rulers have powerful allies, including Saudi Arabia and the United States.

For Bahrainis, there doesn't seem to be much of a difference between the Saudis and the Americans. Both are supporting the Khalifa regime to preserve their own interests, even if the cost is the lives and rights of the people of Bahrain.

The United States speaks about supporting human rights and democracy, but while the Saudis send troops to aid the Khalifa government, America is sending arms. The United States is doing itself a huge disservice by displaying such an obvious double standard toward human rights violations in the Middle East. Washington condemns the violence of the Syrian government but turns a blind eye to blatant human rights abuses committed by its ally Bahrain.

This double standard is costing America its credibility across the region; and the message being understood is that if you are an ally of America, then you can get away with abusing human rights.

If the United States is serious about protecting human rights in the Arab world, it should halt all arms sales to Bahrain, bring Bahrain's abuses to the attention of the United Nations Security Council, support a special session on Bahrain at the United Nations Human Rights Council, and begin a conversation about potential diplomatic and economic sanctions. The Obama administration should also demand that high-level Bahraini officials be held accountable for human rights abuses, and that nongovernmental organizations, United Nations human rights investigators and journalists be allowed to enter the country and investigate abuses.

At present, the Bahraini government believes it has international immunity. It commits widespread human rights violations, and business continues as usual: the government continues to buy arms and negotiate lucrative deals, without having to face any real consequences. This is why the most prominent Bahraini human-rights defenders are languishing in prison. Until the United States starts to put real pressure on its ally, Bahrain's government has no incentive to change.

No matter the price, Bahrainis will keep demanding the very values — human rights and democracy — that the United States claims to stand for. It is an outrage that America continues to back a regime that tramples them.

Zainab al-Khawaja, an activist, was arrested and jailed earlier this month and charged with inciting hatred against the Bahraini government.

Bahrain regime urged to free prisoners

The head of a European Parliament human rights delegation has called on the Bahraini regime to free political prisoners.

During a Thursday visit to the Bahraini capital Manama, Inese Vaidere called on Bahraini officials to release all "prisoners of conscience" to soothe the political tensions in the country.

Vaidere further said the European delegation paid a visit to imprisoned opposition leaders, including Abdulhadi al-

Khawaja, who has been sentenced to life in prison.

The European team's visit to Bahrain comes nearly a week after the Bahraini prince called for dialogue with the opposition on December 5, saying only talks could solve the political unrest in Bahrain. The uprising in Bahrain began in mid-February 2011. The Manama regime promptly launched a brutal crackdown on peaceful protests and called in Saudi-led Arab forces from neighboring states.

Dozens of people have lost their lives in the crackdown, and the security forces have arrested hundreds, including rights activists, doctors and nurses.

Bahraini demonstrators say they will continue holding anti-regime protests until their demand for the establishment of a democratically elected government is met.

