

BAHRAIN

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

Trading democracy for petrodollars is not just immoral, but a crime

In the past two years the Western involvement in the re-shaping of the internal political balance in the Arab world has intensified threatening the popular moves to replace the present dictatorships with democratic political orders. No sooner had the regimes in Tunisia and Egypt been toppled than did those powers intervene to force a brake on the fast-moving wagons of change. Military and political interventions immediately led to the stagnation of the transformation process that had been fueled by the blood of a Tunisian vegetable trader, Mohammad BuAzizi. Today, the Revolutions of the Arab Spring have been largely stagnated with little or no change in the status quo that had existed before. While those who had sacrificed their souls and blood for the sake of change had hoped of new realities of dignity, freedom and liberty, the involvement of the counter-revolution forces has turned the situation into ugly factional struggles with the spectre of sectarian conflict looming on the horizon. The US and its European allies have adopted negative stands, protecting their repressive allies in the Gulf and creating discord among the Arab and Muslim populace.

Instead of regaining the initiative in the war of freedom, the energies of the masses that had been originally directed to achieve democratic change have been diverted into meaningless internal feuding along sectarian lines. The mood has now become more somber than ever. On the other hand the dictators have invested heavily in their relations with the Western powers; most notably the US and UK, to counter balance what had been a promising emergence of power shift in the region in favour of the masses. Today, dictators who had been embattled and cornered have found solace in the unwavering support from anti-Revolution powers. Last month, Bahrain's dictator, Hamad bin Isa Alkhalifa, went more than any other tyrant in seeking more British support to his ailing regime. Following his debacle at Ascot horse racing when a young Bahraini victim of his regime's terror rushed to the grandstand calling him torturer and dictator, provided UK with six incentives to continue its support: granting Bahraini citizenship to 240 British citizens, investing \$11 billion in UK markets, arguing against the British withdrawal from Bahrain in 1971 saying:

Who asked you leave?, signing a contract with an architectural company linked to Prince Charles to oversee the construction of 40000 housing units for newly naturalized foreigners, riot police and members of Death Squads and giving \$5 million to refurbish Mons Hall at Sandhurst military academy which has now been renamed in his name.

There comes a time when one is forced to contemplate the whole notion of dignity, awareness, eliticism and patriotism. While the people strive to achieve modern representative governments and justice, the petro-dollars have become the main factor in deciding the fate of their struggle. At a time when the West faces one of its most difficult financial crisis, Gulf dictators who are the worst in the world, suddenly find themselves in strong positions, barely two years after fearing the worst scenario of being overthrown. Instead of being adversely influenced by the democratic changes in other Arab countries, they have succeeded in exporting the worst of the challenges; sectarianism, terrorism and social discord. Their petrodollars have enabled them not only to safeguard their authoritarian rule but to threaten those who ascended to power through the ballot boxes in generally free and fair elections. The struggle between despotism and liberty has thus been fought with the worst of weapons and tools. Public purses in GCC sheikhdoms have been raided with cruelty and viciousness; their contents used to kill the aspirations and hopes of those who had sacrificed with souls and blood to achieve political and social changes. Whose fault is it that the Bahraini people are left to continue suffering under a dictator like Hamad who takes major decision on his own (as those mentioned above) not to safeguard the interests of Bahraini natives but to protect his family's dictatorship? Where are the freedom-loving elites in the Arab World whose silence (or in some cases complicity) have turned the scenes of revolution into blood baths?

While it is difficult to apportion the blame on well-defined entity, person or group, the overall picture reflects highly-disturbing conclusions. The Arab elite, thinkers, writers and scholars have been dwarfed, marginalized or co-opted by those very people whose removal from power had been the main goal of Arab martyrs who were moti-

vated to act by the Tunisian street trader; Mohammad Bu Azizi. When the most reactionary and dictatorial regimes are allowed to assume the role of the "savior" the "pro-democracy champion" or "the catalyst of change" then the worst scenarios of counter-revolution would have succeeded. This is a defeat, not of the pro-democracy activists and martyrs, but of those who have abetted in this crime, supported its perpetrators or adopted silence as a means ostensibly to preserve "self-interest". This is selfishness in its worst and vicious forms, a crime against humanity of enormous dimensions, and moral emptiness without historical or contemporary parallels. This is of course not the end of the way for those who have, nevertheless, persisted in their peaceful revolutions like the people of Bahrain. These people are raising the flag of change against the odds. After waging one of the most successful anti-regime campaign during the Formula one car racing in April, they have rushed ahead with the banner of liberty high on their heads and challenged not only the Alkhalifa killers but also of the "free world" who have betrayed their slogans and adopted a path with a potential to lead to Armageddon, the doomsday or the conflict of civilizations. By abandoning the pro-democracy campaigners in Bahrain and elsewhere those leaders in Washington and London have aligned themselves with those whose mean weapons against their pro-democracy foes are terrorism, extremism, sectarianism and Satanism. When those leaders continue to justify the cancellation of the long-awaited visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, resume lethal arms whose main use is against unarmed civilians and embrace Alkhalifa dictators as highly-valued statesmen at state functions and meetings, the scene has been set for the destruction of humanity, decent values and modern statehood for the sake of those who erect their thrones on the bodies of their pro-democracy activists whose main guilt is seeking justice in their homelands. Mr Cameron, Mr Hague and Mr Ban Ki Moon: Is this a crime? Before you have time to answer, scores of our people would have been sacrificed in jails or streets because they refused to live as dead. They are the un-dead who will haunt their killers from their graves.

Widespread anger following attack on most senior religious figure

The country erupted in fury after Alkhalifa Death Squads raided the house of the most senior religious scholar in the country; Sheikh Issa Ahmad Qassim. The elderly cleric has been known for his anti-regime since he was Member of Parliament forty years ago. He has become focal in the current Revolution because of his large following and his consistent stands of siding with the people in their political demands. The attackers are believed to have been instructed by the royal court after the dictator's debacle at the Royal Ascot last week. The attack is seen as an immediate revenge to the humiliation suffered by Bahrain's despot; Hamad bin Isa Alkhalifa who is seen as the main authority behind the orders to the troops and police to shoot Bahriani demonstrators. A Bahraini youth, Sayed Ahmad Al Wada'ei ventured into the race course at Ascot, carrying a banner that called Hamad dictator and torturer. The saga unfolded as the dictator was setting near the British Queen. Mr Al Wada'ei had been detained and tortured for taking part in anti-regime protests.

The attack on Sheikh Qassim's house was received with utmost fury and anger inside and outside the country. Senior religious leaders, including Ayatullah Sayed Ali Sistani condemned the Alkhalifa aggression. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokes-

man, Mr Abdullahian, warned the regime of unspecified measures if he continued its aggression against the religious leader. The Alkhalifa were so terrified by the threat that they remained silent swallowing their pride and conceding defeat.

The people poured into the streets raising anti-regime slogans and vowing to defend themselves and the senior religious leaders who have become under increasing aggression by the regime. The revolutionaries vowed to step up their peaceful Revolution and pledged to continue their struggle until the Alkhalifa regime has been defeated. The situation has been so polarized that it has become common knowledge that Bahrainis have reached the point of no-return in the struggle against this hereditary dictatorship. Al Wefaq has decided to suspend their participation in the futile meetings with the loyalists.

On the other hand, anger is spreading among the human rights activists who feel that they have been abandoned by the UN mechanisms purported to protect human rights defenders. The failure of the UN Human Rights Council to take serious steps to stop the merciless attacks on Bahraini human rights defenders has led to the arrest and torture of most prominent human rights activists in Bahrain. The plight of Zainab Al Khawaja, Nabeel Rajab, Abdul Hadi Al Khwaja and Dr Abdul Jalil Al

Singace who are languishing in Alkhalifa torture chambers has become a symbol of the impotence of the human rights world and the failure of UN mechanisms to curtail the excesses of despotic regimes.

Meanwhile, the people's Revolution has continued unabated. In the past few days most of the towns and villages have witnessed protests and demonstrations calling for regime change. As usual, they were attacked by riot police and members of the Death Squads. Ring leaders are being hunted by those forces which are directed by Western "experts". But the dynamism of the Revolution has become so formidable that no amount of repression can stop those protests, which have become self-propelling. The anger against the regime has intensified after the Alkhalifa have targeted Sheikh Isa Qassim. There is widespread feeling that if the Alkhalifa are allowed to remain in power repression will remain in force and the only way to stop is to remove them from power. Even the political societies have reached the conclusion that they have to change their tactics and stop wooing the Alkhalifa dictators. "People want regime change" has become the central theme of all the protests while "Down with Hamad" has ended the political career of the dictator.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
24th May 2013

Alkhalifa revenge after dictator's Ascot humiliation

Serious escalation of state-terrorism has been reported in the last few days following the debacle of Bahrain's dictator at the Ascot race course in London on Saturday 11th May. Many people have been arrested; most of them subjected to severe torture on the spots where they were detained. Harsh prison sentences have been passed against scores of Bahrainis. At least five people have been imprisoned for anti-regime tweets. Use of chemical gases has also been intensified, and many casualties reported in various parts of the country.

This escalation came in the wake of one of the most serious peaceful incidents in recent months. A young former prisoner Bahraini youth, Sayyed Ahmad Al Wada'ei managed to reach the grand stand at Ascot race course and raise slogans against the dictator, next to the Queen. He was carrying a Bahraini flag and a banner calling Hamad a dictator and murder. He was filmed as he rushed towards Bahrain's dictator, Hamad bin Isa Alkhalifa who was watching the race alongside the Queen. Police and body guards rushed towards the youth and arrested him. He was later released and asked to report to them again at a later date. Mr Al Wada'ei is a victim of the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. In 2011 he was arrested, injured and tortured when Alkhalifa police and troops attacked the Pear Roundabout killing few people.

His appearance at the "Shouting in the Dark" documentary showed him bleeding heavily after being struck by the Alkhalifa police and soldiers.

After the Ascot fracas, Bahrain's dictator announced that he had naturalized 240 British citizens out of 9000 UK nationals residing in the country. This decision is seen as a bribe meant to solicit its support to defeat the people's Revolution. He also said that the British should have remained in the Gulf and should not have withdrawn their forces in 1971. Who asked you to leave? He said. The day before he had opened the newly-renamed Mons Hall at Sandhurst Military Academy. He had paid 3 million Pounds for its refurbishment and re-named in his name. A great controversy has erupted within the British military circles surrounding this change. Media and political analysts have argued against it saying that a historic piece of military heritage honouring those who had sacrificed themselves in the First World War must not be dishonoured in this way. A dictator like Hamad whose people have continued their calls for his removal is not worthy of having his name attached to Mons Hall.

Repression in Bahrain has, meanwhile, continued unabated. Collective punishment has intensified as the people continued their struggle to achieve a democratic transition. Scores of people have been

arrested and tortured. At least five Bahrainis have been sentenced to jail terms of one year each after being indicted for tweeting anti-regime slogans. Lawyer Mahdi Al Basri (25) was arrested on 11th March following a police raid on his home in Karrana. Four other men, Mahmood Abudl Majeed Abdulla Al Jamri (34), Hassan Abd Ali Issa (33), Mohsen Abd Ali Issa (26) and Ammar Makki Mohammad Al Aali (36) were arrested at dawn on 12th March. Yesterday Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action saying they may be "prisoners of conscience". All five were sentenced under Article 214 of Alkhalifa penal code which criminalises "offending the emir of the country". Last month more than 300 people were arrested as the Alkhalifa crackdown continued following the appointment of crown prince to the post of deputy prime minister.

Yesterday the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that Bahrain urgently needs to reform its economy to stop its debt burden becoming unsustainable. "Overall fiscal deficits are projected to widen and public debt is estimated to continue on a rising path that could become unsustainable, reaching 61 percent of GDP as early as 2018." It said in the report.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17th May 2013

Faith leaders call on FCO to act on Bahrain's deteriorating state

The following letter has been sent to the Foreign Secretary, and signed by several Muslim organizations. It came in light of the attack on the most senior religious leader in Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Ahmad Qassim

Dear Foreign Secretary

Harassment of Faith Leaders in Bahrain

We are writing to express our alarm at the recent attack on the residence of Ayatollah Sheikh Issa Qasim, the most prominent Muslim religious leader in Bahrain.

Given the recent turbulence in the region and the systematic human rights abuses in Bahrain, we urge you to utilise your

close relationship with the government of Bahrain to urge them to end the harassment of faith leaders and take initiatives to de-escalate tensions.

We are very alarmed by these actions that the government of Bahrain and their security forces have embarked upon. This runs the real risk of escalating tensions through raising the stakes and agitating the population by targeting their senior religious leader. The forced entry into Ayatollah Qasim's home, as well as the attack on his family during the early hours of the morning, was a deliberate attempt to humiliate the Shia community in Bahrain. This represents a dangerous escalation, crossing a new red line that will have implications

beyond just the Kingdom itself.

We hope you will take a proactive stance to help in calming the current tensions in Bahrain and beyond.

Yours truly,

Al-Khoei Foundation
The Council of European Jamaats
Dar Al Islam
Imam Ali Foundation
Islamic Universal Association
Majlis Ulama Shia Europe
Muhammadi Trust
Rasool Adham Foundation
The World Federation of KSIMC
World Ahlul Bayt Islamic League

Bahrain justice: Charges upheld against protesters, but cops acquitted of murder

A Bahraini appeals court acquitted two policemen and reduced a jail term for another accused of killing anti-regime protesters in 2011. However, it confirmed jail sentences to protesters charged with attacking police forces.

The two acquitted police officers faced charges of shooting dead an anti-regime protester in November 2011, AFP reported.

In a separate case the court cut a 7 year prison sentence of another officer to six months. The policeman was sentenced in January for beating to death a Shiite protester.

In addition the court confirmed 5 year jail terms of 19 Shiite anti-regime protesters, which were charged each with attacking police forces. This comes in the wake of clashes on Friday between police forces and thousands of Shiites in the village of Diraz, west of the capital Manama.

The protests were prompted by an unauthorized raid by security forces on a home of a top Shiite cleric Ayatollah Sheikh Issa Qassim on May 17.

One of the best-known cases of human rights abuses in Bahrain is that of activist Nabeel Rajab, who was sentenced to three years in jail in August 2012 for openly criti-

cizing the regime on RT for Julian Assange's show *The World Tomorrow*.

According to Human Rights Watch more than 80 people have been killed by security forces since the uprisings begun in February 2011. The authorities say they are implementing the recommendations of an independent commission of enquiry appointed by the king that confirmed allegations of excessive use of force by security forces. However the kingdom has repeatedly canceled the visit of the UN's special rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, who was to probe police abuses of power.

Intensification of torture as London embraces Alkhalifa torturers

Disturbing news from Dry Dock prison have confirmed that Human Rights Defender, Naji Fateel, has been subjected to horrific torture. Mr Fateel was arrested on 2nd May during a dawn raid on his house. He was taken to various torture chambers and subjected to horrific treatment. He was forced to remain standing on his feet for two and a half days, hung from his hands and feet, beaten on his toes and electrocuted on his sensitive parts. This is in addition to most degrading verbal and psychological abuses. He was forced to sign false "confessions" and denied access to a lawyer. Repeated requests by his lawyer, Ali Al Mahdi, to see him were met with systematic denial that Mr Fateel was in detention. He had been detained several times before and is now languishing behind bars with other prominent HR defenders; Nabeel Rajab, Zainab Al Khawaja, her father Abdul Hadi and Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace.

The detention and torture of Mr Fateel was the beginning of a new wave of terror being waged by the regime which has lost popular and constitutional legitimacy. Many others have been arrested in the past two weeks while their fami-

lies have confirmed their ill-treatment. Many others have been given lengthy jail sentences for participating in anti-regime protests. This latest flare up of arrests and abuses have followed the cancellation of the visit by Juan Mendez, the Special Rapporteur on Torture, scheduled for 9th May. Human Rights bodies and people have been dumbfounded by the lack of proper response from the two main protectors of the Alkhalifa regime in Washington and London. The cancellation of the visit is nothing short of admission by Bahrain's dictator that not only had he sanctioned torture but that allows it to be used as a weapon of revenge against his opponents. The arrest and torture of Naji Fateel has confirmed this.

While the Alkhalifa rulers have sanctioned the American envoy in Manama for his remarks about the situation, the British Government have continued weapons supply to Bahrain despite the calls to observe a moratorium on arms sales to Alkhalifa. A British arms sales team from United Kingdom Trade & Investment Defence & Security Organisation (UKTI DSO) has been promoting weapons exports to Bahrain, even as the Gulf state cracked down on civilian protest. Kaye Stearman from

CAAT said: "UK efforts to sell weapons to this abusive regime seem undimmed by events. First, a member of Bahrain's ruling family visits London to shop for the latest technologies to monitor and suppress citizens who want to exercise the basic human rights which the UK government says that it supports. "A few days later the head of the UK government's arms sales unit flies to Manama to meet another member of this same ruling family to persuade them to buy even more UK weaponry. In another few months the red carpet will be rolled out for a Bahrain delegation to visit the DSEI arms fair. We should stop selling Bahrain arms and should tell their ruling family they are not welcome in the UK."

In Washington the Labour Department and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative has requested consultations with the Government of Bahrain to discuss actions taken by Bahrain that appear to be inconsistent with the Labor Chapter of the United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement. Representative Sander Levin said: "I applaud the Administration's request to consult with Bahrain over worker rights.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
9th May 2013

16-Year-old children beaten in Prison then moved to solitary confinement

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights expresses grave concern over the alleged torture of children in Bahrain's Jaw prison at the hands of prison guards. Jihad Sadeq and Mustafa Al Muqdad are reportedly two of at least 8 youth the detained president of the BCHR, Nabeel Rajab, reported witnessing their torture.

On the 14 of May 2013, Nabeel Rajab, the president of BCHR, stated in a telephone call from jail that he witnessed the torture of young political prisoners by the guards in Jaw prison and asked his wife to request that the ICRC visit him so he can report what he saw. That night he was removed from his cell

(Read: www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/6121).

Further reports from Bahrain's Jaw prison identified some of the youth that were reportedly tortured that day, amongst them two children, Jihad Sadeq and Mustafa Al Muqdad. To conceal what had happened, they were removed from their cells and put in solitary confinement. Their family reported that they have not received any calls from their sons for more than a week now. Jihad did not attend his scheduled appeal hearing on the 21st of May 2013.

Jihad Sadeq, 16 years old, has been detained for approximately 10 months now. He was arrested on 23rd July 2012 and was subjected to enforced disappearance; his family did not know his whereabouts for up to 48 hours. Jihad was reportedly beaten, cursed and insulted at the time of arrest. He was tried under the internationally criticized terrorism law and was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment last month based on confessions taken under

duress (Read: www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/5701).

Mustafa Al Muqdad, 16 years old, was arrested on 19 May 2011 after a house raid at dawn. He was reportedly tortured for two weeks after his arrest. According to the testimony, he was beaten with a plastic cable, deprived from sleep for three days and was forced to stand for days. His lawyer requested a medical examination at court but was rejected. Mustafa was not allowed access to his family nor legal representation until his first court hearing on 21 June 2011 at the military court. In October 2011, he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment at the National Safety court (vis-à-vis the Military court) which was later reduced to three years (Read: www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/4845). Both Mustafa and Jihad Sadeq are academically excellent students who have now been deprived from their studies because of their imprisonment on trumped up charges and bad prison conditions.

The BCHR and the families of the detainees are concerned over the wellbeing of Jihad Sadeq, Mustafa Al Muqdad and all the other detainees that were subjected to torture in Jaw prison. The Government of Bahrain is signatory to the Covenant of the Right of the Child and its actions are in direct violation of its articles, specifically article 37 that states that "(a) no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by persons below eighteen years of age. (b) no child shall be deprived of his or her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily. The arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child

shall be in conformity with the law and shall be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time."

The Government of Bahrain continues to ignore the recommendations of the Committee of the Rights of the Child (CRC.C.BHR_CO_2-3.doc) which stated several times, most recently after the May 2011 review, the recommendation: "(b) raise the age of full criminal responsibility years and accord protection of juvenile justice to all children below 18 years and over the newly established minimum age. (d) ensure that all cases of children in conflict with the law are treated by specialized judges, in specialized courts."

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights calls on the United States, the United Kingdom, the United Nations and other close allies and international institutions to put pressure on the government of Bahrain to:

Immediately release Jihad Sadeq, Mustafa Al Muqdad and all other political prisoners
Put an end to the practice of systematic torture of prisoners

Form an independent committee to look into all allegations of torture and ill treatment

Hold those responsible for torture and ill-treatment in prisons accountable, including officials in higher positions

Allow Jihad, Mustafa and all other prisoners to contact their families

Reform the judiciary system so that it adheres to the international standards of fair and independent trials

Allow immediate access to the ICRC to the prison to meet with human rights defender Nabeel Rajab who witnessed the incident

BCHR: Incommunicado detention of a blind man

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights expresses its grave concern over the wellbeing of Ali Abdulla Saad, a 28 year old man suffering from visual impairment, who was detained from Al Daih village after his house was raided at dawn and he was arrested without a warrant. His family did not hear about him until 5 days after his arrest.

On the 14th of May 2013, a group of security forces in civilian clothing raided the home of Ali Abdulla Saad at 3.20am and he was arrested without a warrant. His family inquired with the authorities numerous times about his whereabouts but with no avail. Five days later, Ali called his family and only managed to say he was fine before the line was cut. Ali Saad was previously arrested in Sep 2010 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on political charges after which he was released in Feb 2011 on a royal pardon due to start of the mass pro-democracy protests. During his previous detention Ali was reportedly subjected to severe torture with electric shocks and hanging and beating all over his body. (see: <http://>

bahrainrights.org/en/node/3543) According to his family, Ali suffers from chest inflammation and mental illnesses. The family, as well as BCHR, are concerned are raised about his wellbeing and health. Charges and reasons behind Ali's arrest are not yet known. Ali lost sight in both eyes after a car explosion in 2009 as per a medical report.

Bahrain is signatory to the UN Convention of the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities since June 2007. Detaining Ali Saad is in violation with a number of articles, including article 14 which states that "States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others: (a) Enjoy the right to liberty and security of person; (b) Are not deprived of their liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily, and that any deprivation of liberty is in conformity with the law, and that the existence of a disability shall in no case justify a deprivation of liberty." And article 15, "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights calls on the international community and

the governments of the US, UK and other close allies of Bahrain to put pressure on the Government of Bahrain to immediately:

Release Ali Abdulla Saad and all other people of disability including human rights activist, AbdulJalil Al Singace

Allow Ali to contact his family and lawyer and update them of his case and well-being

Provide adequate medical care for prisoners

