

# BAHRAIN

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

## Victory is near, time is on people's side

The events in the Arab world, especially in the countries which have recently experienced revolutionary change have highlighted the perils facing those countries as a result of falling into the traps placed in their path by the forces of the Counter Revolution. Despite numerous warnings by the leaders of the Bahraini Revolution to be aware of those traps and not to fall into the deceptive policies of those forces, the new leaders have been far weaker than expected when faced by the challenges of economic hardship, religious sensitivities or worries about consequences of angering those forces. Bahrainis were the first to be targeted by the Saudi-led forces of counter revolution. Bahrain was not only occupied by the Saudi army but sectarianism was used as a weapon to weaken the resolve of the Bahraini people and set citizens against each other. Again Bahraini revolutionaries were alert to those dirty weapons but their compatriots were far less aware. Many have fallen prey to the anti-Shia Muslim campaigns financed and led by the Saudis and the rest of the GCC member states. New leaders of Egypt, Tunisia and Libya should have been more forthcoming when called up to stand up to the challenges of those forces, ignore the sectarian calls, support the Bahraini revolution and reject any truce with the repressive and dictatorial regimes. Alas; that was not to be. The consequences have been horrendous.

Today, the Saudi-led counter revolution has turned the atmosphere of hope that had prevailed in early 2011 into a gloomy outlook. Yet the people are still holding their breath and awaiting better outcome of those revolutions. But sectarianism is taking grip of the situation with preachers of hate, division and fanaticism becoming focal to the anti-revolution campaigns. Moreover, as is happening in Egypt, ordinary people are being turned against the idea of change. Those counter revolution forces are also creating situations that would convince ordinary people that the defunct regimes of Mubarak, Bin Ali and Gaddafi were better than the new ones. Economic, security and stability considerations are presented to justify such claims. The old dictatorships left behind corrupt and bankrupt political structures that have become, themselves, obstruction to devel-

opment by the new leaders. The outcome has been the return of the political and social tension, in addition to factionalism and sectarianism.

Bahrain's situation must be viewed with those facts in mind. It must also be appreciated that its Revolution has been challenged by those forces with all means. Regime repression has been tolerated by the Western powers, especially USA and UK. Saudi occupation that has continued for over two years has not been condemned by those powers which made no calls for the withdrawal of those occupation forces. It is the will and determination of the people that has ensured the failure of the Saudi unholy mission. But the lack of such will, determination or awareness led to the deterioration in those countries that witnessed initial successes. Today, the Alkhalifa regime is as embattled and cornered as ever. The allies of the regime are increasingly becoming embarrassed by the inability to find a "reformist" mind among members of the hereditary dictatorship. In over two years of Revolution and demand for change, it has failed to

show itself capable of changing or reform. As it has always been for decades, the regime remains dependent on repression to stay in power. Its power base among those few who have been lured to support the dictatorship with money and status is fast eroding. The outside supporters are now facing a barrage of criticism for their silence or abetting the crimes of torture committed by the regime. There is now a growing chorus of calls for the release of the "Bahrain 13"; the leaders of the Revolution.

When the EU delegation decided to travel to Bahrain for the 30<sup>th</sup> June annual meeting with the GCC countries, it was inundated with calls and messages urging them to take on board the dismal human rights record and not to let the economic interests overshadow the human concerns and the absence of good governance in those countries. Several international bodies travelled to Brussels to press their demands that the West stop the business-as-usual approach to relations with the GCC. Human Rights Watch published an open appeal to the EU to take the case of the "Bahrain 13" seriously and stop conducting relations with the Alkhalifa if they continued to refuse the calls to reform their political and human rights policies. The UN International Day for Support of Victims of Torture was used by human rights NGOs as launching pad for their programme of sanctioning the Bahraini regime and gradually throttle its dictatorial policies. Despite the heavy political weight of UK, it has failed to achieve international recognition for Alkhalifa's much-hailed reform steps they have allegedly undertaken. In the eyes of the world this regime has remained outside the realm of civilization or humanity. The internal situation of the ruling family has been made more difficult by the fact that any reform, however peripheral it may be, must include the removal and possible punishment of Khalifa bin Salman Alkhalifa, the life-long prime minister, and the main person behind the dismal record of human rights. Removing him will cause much problems to an already embattled family. The competition for power among its senior members has never been more fierce or ugly.

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CAPTAIN TAYLOR, made a brief description of the utoabee atrocity in 1818 said that "The aboriginal inhabitants of Bahrein, now subjected to a foreign power, suffer from the tyranny of their masters more keenly than language can express."

Major Wilson acknowledged the atrocity of the Utoabee in 1829 he said that "the enormities practised by the Utoobees towards the original inhabitants of Bahrein far exceed what I have ever heard of tyranny in any part of the world."

*Utoob are Alkhalifa tribe*

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## Alkhalifa crimes exposed on UN Day Against Torture, EU urged to act

Pressure is mounting on the European countries to abandon the policy of appeasing Gulf dictators, call for democratic change in that region and stand firm on the issue of human rights. This has come to light as the foreign ministers of these countries are preparing to go to Bahrain for the EU-GCC annual meeting in Manama this weekend. The silence by the EU on the crimes committed especially by the regime of the host country has been condemned by Bahraini human rights activists and their Western sympathizers. In the past two weeks activists from human rights bodies have travelled to Brussels to lobby for a humane stands by the EU delegations. They were urged not to shake hands with Alkhalifa torturers and those who have spearheaded the policies of hate and sectarianism like foreign minister and crown prince. The calls on the EU to take a pro-active stand in support of the pro-democracy movement and its leaders were also raised in several meetings and seminars held in London in the past few days to mark the International Day in Support of Torture Victims. Redress, the London-based body which supports torture victims, organized a seminar on Monday 24th June to highlight the policies of torture in Bahrain. Several speakers took part in the seminar including the Bahrainis people's delegation consisting families and lawyers of those victims. Farida Ghulam, wife of the jailed liberal leader Ibrahim Sharif, Khadija Al Mousawi, wife of Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, Maryam Abu Deeb, daughter of

Headteacher Mahdi Abu Deeb and Lawyer Mohammad Al Tajir, narrated details of the torture inflicted on their beloved ones. The audience was horrified by the crimes committed by Alkhalifa regime at the torture dungeons, especially those built in the basement of the National Security Agency (NSA). On Tuesday 25th June, Human Rights Watch held a landmark seminar at their London office which was addressed by its Middle East Director, Joe Stork and the Bahraini people's delegation. Mr Stork who has been working on Bahrain for more than two decades raised several points; Europe must act to curtail the Bahraini regime's excessive violations of human rights, policy of impunity must be challenged head on, the Bahrain's 13 (leaders of the 14th February Revolution) must be immediately and unconditionally released. He lambasted Alkhalifa for provoking the nationalities of 31 natives saying: "By doing so the regime has opted to become one of the very few repressive regimes that adopt this policy like Pinochet's Chile".

On Wednesday Lord Avebury, the Vice-Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group organized a Press Conference at the House of Lords to mark The United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. Several speakers, Bahrainis and others, narrated horrific details of the torture inflicted by Alkhalifa on Bahrainis. Lord Avebury urged the UK Government to act in a responsible way against this policy and stop appeasing a regime whose main source of legitimacy to stay in power

is the use of "systematic torture" as described by Alkhalifa-funded Bahrain's Independent Investigation Commission (BICI). On 21st June, Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a statement titled "Human rights record in Bahrain still abysmal - Europe must act" in which it urged EU representatives attending Manama annual meeting with GCC countries to act: "When European Union ministers meet their counterparts from the Gulf Cooperation Council states for a summit in Bahrain on June 30, the dismal state of that island kingdom's human rights record needs to have a prominent place on the agenda. Despite King Hamad's claims of reform, Bahrain is clearly heading down the road of greater repression and the EU ministers should make a point of clearly and publicly saying so."

A day earlier HRW launched a report titled "Interfere, Restrict, Control... Restraints on Freedom of Association in Bahrain". This 87-page report examines restrictive laws and policies that stifle civic and political groups and trade unions. The report shows how authorities use unjust laws to restrict freedom of association by arbitrarily rejecting registration applications and intrusively supervising independent organizations. The government takes over and dissolves — more or less at will — organizations whose leaders criticize government officials and policies, and severely limits the ability of groups to raise money and to receive foreign funding.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
28th June 2013

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## Senior prisoners denied medical care, more electronic spying

A new "Urgent Action" issued by Amnesty International has highlighted the plight of Hassan Mshaima and Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, two of the most prominent leaders of Bahrain's Revolution, calling for their release and demanding that they receive medical treatment. Titled "Jailed activists denied medical treatment" the Urgent Action has been released by the international body which has documented many reports on the serious human rights violations by the Alkhalifa regime in that Bahrain. It said: "Hassan Mshaima" and Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, two of the 13 jailed prominent Bahraini opposition activists, have been denied urgent medical treatment. They are prisoners of conscience." It further added: "Since mid-March the prison authorities have insisted that the 13 must wear prison uniform during visits allegedly to humiliate them in front of their families. The 13 have refused to wear the uniform and thus have not been able to see their families. Amnesty International has urged its members to: Urge the Bahraini authorities to provide Hassan Mshaima" and Dr 'Abdel-Jalil al-Singace with any medical attention they may require, including access to regular check-ups in specialised hospitals, to release all 13 opposition activists immediately and uncondi-

tionally, since they are prisoners of conscience, convicted solely for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. It urged the Bahraini authorities to allow them immediate access to their families,, lawyers and to any adequate medical treatment they require.

In another development, Bahraini refugees in Germany have protested against allowing Alkhalifa thugs to pursue Bahraini refugees in their place of refuge. The Bahrainis have been protesting against allowing Nasser bin Hamad, the son of Bahrain's dictator, who was attending horse racing when Bahraini protesters arrived at the race course, started shouting anti-regime slogans and calling for the arrest of the prince. He had been repeatedly accused of ill-treatment of prisoners, torturing detainees and threatening other Bahrainis who had called for a system based on "one-man-one-vote" system. They pursued Nasser but were stopped by his body guards and hitmen. The German police briefly detained one of the protesters, as calls by Bahraini human rights activists have continued for the arrest of Nasser bin Hamad who is accused of administering torture on prisoners. One of the protesters was set upon by members of the Death Squads accompanying Nasser, kicked and

beaten repeatedly under the eyes of the police.

The Bahraini Opposition Grouping in UK has organized a week-long programme of activities to mark the International Day in support of Torture Victims which falls on 26th June every year.

Under the headline "Spying software 'used in Bahrain to track activists'" the World News website has recently published the following: "Finspy, UK-developed software that spies on computers and how they're used, has allegedly been sold to Bahrain to monitor pro-democracy campaigners. The Arab Spring exposed more than public anger over social issues. It also shed light on the high-tech tools used by repressive regimes to stifle dissent. In many countries the internet was simply shut down, but now we're learning about more sini.koster moves. A surveillance program called Finspy, produced by a British company, is just one that sits inside your computer, recording everything you say or write. Now evidence is emerging that the government of Bahrain is using the program to track pro-democracy activities."

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
20th June 2013

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## Meeting HR Activists from Bahrain on World Day for Torture Victims

By *Hassiba Hadj-Sahraoui, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa*

As Khadija al-Mousawi entered the room I was immediately struck by her dignity.

This quiet and unassuming woman is undoubtedly very courageous. Her husband Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is currently serving a life prison sentence for doing nothing more than being a vehement non-violent anti-government critic. She is also the mother of Zainab al-Khawaja who is jailed until February 2014. I was also pleased to meet again two other women who found themselves at the forefront of the fight against injustice in Bahrain: Farida Ghulam, the wife of Ebrahim Sharif, a prominent secular opposition leader who is serving a five-year prison sentence, and Maryam Abu Dheeb, the daughter of Mahdi Abu Dheeb, the Head of Bahrain Teachers' Association who was jailed for five years.

Khadija is part of a seven-member strong delegation of Bahraini human rights activists and relatives of detainees visiting Amnesty International to mark World Day for the Victims of Torture. It is 26 years to the day since the UN Convention against Torture came into force. The treaty sought "to make more effective the struggle against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment throughout the world". It's tragic to hear how torture is becoming a day to day reality in Bahraini prisons and police stations.

Khadija al-Mousawi recalls how human rights defenders used to be untouchable in Bahrain. But following the 2011 pro-democracy uprising they have routinely been targeted for arrest and torture. Khadija has personal experience of this: her husband was arrested in April 2011 during the brutal crackdown to crush the uprising in Bahrain. He was subjected to torture for several days. His family did not recognise him because his face was deformed, bloodied and his jaw was broken.

Another delegate, human rights lawyer Mohammed al-Tajer, spoke of the torture he was subjected to when he was detained in 2011. As well as suffering severe beatings, he was then placed in solitary confinement. Hearing the screams of other prisoners being beaten, as he says, is "mental torture" in itself. Al-Tajer tried to present his account as evidence in court, but it was dismissed, adding to the culture of impunity in the Bahraini legal system. Those he heard being tortured received lengthy, sometimes life prison terms, after grossly unfair trials. They are now prisoners of conscience languishing in a Bahraini jails.

There is no medical treatment for the victims of torture. Maryam Abu-Dheeb spoke about her father Mahdi who had two broken ribs as well as severe neck and back pain as a result of the torture he was subjected to following his arrest. She expressed her fears that her father will leave prison in a wheelchair if he does not receive treatment immediately.

Recently, the prison authorities appeared to play a cat and mouse game with the prisoners and to withhold adequate medical treatment as a punishment for refusal to wear prison uniforms.

Given these experiences, the Bahraini delegation was astonished at the 'business-as-usual' attitude of the UK Government in its relationship with the Bahraini authorities. The British position, they say, doesn't make political or business sense and is morally repugnant.

Particular criticism was levelled at Foreign Office senior officials who have not only failed to speak out against torture in Bahrain, but have questioned the prisoner of conscience status of the opposition leaders. It appears they have taken at face value the claims by Bahrain that no one is jailed for freedom of expression.

The Bahraini authorities trumpet that the 13 jailed opposition leaders are in prison for criminal offences, not for expressing their own views. And the UK is simply too keen to accept this spurious explanation. This is far from reality: When trying these prominent opposition leaders the court failed to produce any evidence that the 13 had used or advocated violence.

The British support for the Bahraini authorities led Khadija al-Mousawi to start her own social media campaign. Now, every time she sees a video on social media of torture or ill-treatment in Bahrain, she

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## US legislators condemn banning Mendez's visit, torture leads to miscarriage

In a tragic development the torture inflicted on a young woman has led to miscarriage. Nadia Ali Yousuf Saleh, from Bani Jamra, who has been in detention since 30th May, had a miscarriage earlier this week. The six months woman had been subjected to horrific torture after her arrest and did not receive medical care despite her pains and bleeding. Her husband is also languishing in the Alkhalifa torture chambers for opposing the hereditary dictatorship. She was beaten with her husband shortly after their arrest and was transferred to hospital for a botched up treatment. She was transferred to the regime's dungeons where she received more ill-treatment that eventually led to her miscarriage. The Alkhalifa have banned the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture from visiting the country for fear that he would expose more crimes committed by the ruler, Hamad bin Isa Alkhalifa and his clique.

More evidence of systematic torture has emerged few days ago. A video of a naked young Bahraini boy has been circulating among the people. It came as a shock to those who have seen it. In the recordings, the boy, Hussain Jamil, is shown "confessing" to his crimes which are mainly his participation in peaceful protests against the dictator and calling for him to go. The boy appeared in a bad shape with unintelligible speech and with

red marks on his body, confirming that he had been subjected to pretty rough treatment before recording his "confessions".

The lack of progress in terms of human rights is becoming more embarrassing to the allies of the regime whose support has been crucial to the existence of the hereditary dictatorship. Washington has recently expressed its dissatisfaction and called for "real reforms". In his recent to the US, Salman bin Hamad Alkhalifa was given lukewarm reception and was met only by low-ranking officials. President Obama did not accord him an official meeting for fear of backlash from the media and human rights bodies. He was met by some members of the Congress to explain why his family could not afford any serious political reform. Despite this, a secret war is waging inside the Alkhalifa camp. There is widespread fear among the prime minister's camp that a deal may have been reached between Washington and Salman at the expense of the pm. Rumours have spread that Salman has agreed to dump his uncle in the dustbin of history as a step to satisfy the calls from Alkhalifa Western allies for reform. The scene has now been set for the departure of Khalifa bin Salman Alkhalifa after 42 years in office. But this will not satisfy the people who want the downfall of the Alkhalifa regime. They are ready to continue their struggle and wait longer for a fundamental change of the regime. The experiences of the past two years are so painful that

shortcuts will not work this time. The popular slogan "People want regime change" still stands high and loud.

On 7th June, twenty US Senators and Congressmen wrote a letter to Bahrain's dictator calling on him to allow a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez. They said: We write to express our concern and disappointment with the announcement that United Nations Special Rapporteur Juan E. Mendez will not be permitted to visit Bahrain. This is the second time since the outbreak of protests in 2011 that he has been invited, and then disinvited, to carry out his important work. The letter ended by saying: "We urge you to reverse the decision to deny Juan Mendez and other international observers the opportunity to investigate all allegations of torture, and in doing so, demonstrate your commitment to help put an end to such abuses".

The letter was signed by three Senators; Patrick Leahy, Ron Wyden and Barbara Boxer. It was also signed by 17 Congressmen: Henry C "Hank" Johnson, Jim Himes, Jim McDermott, Jan Schakowsky, Jim Moran, Charles B Rangle, Carolyn B Maloney, Earl Blumenauer, Alcee L. Hastings, Raul M. Grijalva, James McGovern, Peter De Fazio, John Conyers, Jr, Barbara Lee, Rosa L DeLauro, Keith Ellison and Donna F. Edwards

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
14th June 2013

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# Lord Avebury on Culture of Impunity in the Kingdom of Torture

Today (26th June) is the International Day Against Torture, when all of us who work for human rights have a responsibility to denounce the abhorrent practice of torture and those who deliberately inflict suffering and injury on fellow human beings. It is literally intolerable that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century torture is still widely used as an instrument of state policy, and even worse, that some countries, while paying lip-service to the Convention Against Torture, continue to violate it and to defy the mechanisms established by the United Nations for its eradication.

A week ago the Foreign Office Minister who deals with Bahrain, Alistair Burt, told the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, when asked about the Bahrain government's cancellation of the visit by the Special Rapporteur on Torture's visit for the second time, without offering an alternative date, that it does no good to the Bahrain authorities not to allow the visit.

Far more important, it does no good to the 'Bahrain 13' who are languishing in prison as a result of false confessions extracted from them by torture. It does no good to those who are still being tortured, or to the families of the victims tortured to death since the uprising began in February 2011.

Our Government says that we don't appeal for the release of the 'Bahrain 13' or the internationally acclaimed head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights,

Nabeel Rajab, because the charges on which they were convicted went beyond 'political expression', including espionage and trying to overthrow the government. What our Ministers have never challenged is that paragraph 1720 of the BICI report, which they pray in aid of their policy, required that

*'the fundamental principles of a fair trial, including prompt and full access to legal counsel, and inadmissibility of coerced testimony'*

must be respected. The use of evidence obtained by means of torture blatantly contradicts that provision Nor should we say its OK for Bahrain to imprison someone on charges of trying to overthrow the government when that includes, in the context of Bahraini jurisprudence, advocating peaceful change from the autocracy of the al-Khalifas to a democratic system with the government elected by the people.

Under Bahraini law its an offence punishable by a minimum of six months imprisonment to criticise the king, and up to five years for a second offence. The blogger Ali Abdulemam had to flee Bahrain after two years in hiding, when he was sentenced to 15 years for attempting to overthrow the monarchy. Before that he had been jailed, tortured and accused of being part of as 'terrorist network' when the real threat he posed to the state was that his online forum offered dissidents a voice.

In his most recent report the Special Rapporteur on Torture takes up a number of individual cases of torture victims includ-

ing that of Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, a distinguished human rights activist who has always argued for non-violent means of achieving political change. Mendez expresses 'great concern' about Abdulhadi's medical condition and reminds the Bahraini authorities of their obligation to observe the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. He also reminds Bahrain of its "obligation to provide full redress, including fair and adequate compensation, and as full rehabilitation as possible to all victims of torture and other ill-treatment" That applies to every one of the Bahrain 13.

If the al-Khalifas really want to make progress with the deadlocked political dialogue, they should release all the political prisoners and invite them to express their views on the way forward, without the threat of serious criminal charges against those who want a radical change in the system of governance. People should be free to argue for a republic, as they do on the streets when they chant that the al-Khalifas must go. It is the essence of freedom that people should have the power to change their government.

Dictators can lock up, torture and kill their opponents, but they can't murder ideas. The blood of martyrs nourishes the love of freedom, and ensures that in the end, the tyrants always lose. So it will be in Bahrain, and we salute those who sacrifice their own liberty, to secure the freedom of the nation.

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## AI: Meeting HR activist

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ends Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt a message on Twitter saying 'thank you for your training'. She is of course referring to the role that the UK had and continues to play in training Bahraini security services.

However, even in these dark circumstances there remains hope. It was poignant that Farida Gulham and Khadija al-Mousawi gave up their weekly phone calls with their detained husbands, to enable them to thank Amnesty International activists in person. Both said they are in good spirit and stressed that the solidarity from Amnesty International activists gives them hope. They will continue fighting for a Bahrain free from torture.

It was Denmark that first proposed a World Day for the Victims of Torture. How ironic that Abdulhadi al-Khawaja is also a Danish national. The European Union is holding a meeting with Gulf Cooperation Council states in Bahrain at the end of this week.

Somehow I fear that human rights will be swept under the carpet, sacrificed in the name of business and stability.

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## Victory is near, time is on people's side, *Cont from P1*

The dictator is not in a better position and can hardly claim the moral high ground he once attempted to portray. His son, the crown prince, is highly discredited both for his weak character and lack of leadership skills and his siding with the more vicious members of the Alkhalifa web. With the Bahraini people chanting day and night "Down with Hamad" it is likely that they will settle for anything less than the total removal of this hereditary dictatorship. The recent change in neighbouring Qatar has embarrassed the regime whose prime minister has clung to his post for 42 years and continues to leave it. Any engineered "settlement" short of liberating the essential powers from Alkhalifa hands is unlikely to lead to peaceful settlement. Bahrainis have paid enough in time, blood and economic deprivation that nothing short of total liberation will be acceptable. This may take some time, but the Revolution won't allow for deception, containment or co-option. The blood of the martyrs cannot go in vain, and the trees of freedom, dignity and democracy have been planted by the leaders, irrigated with martyrs blood and

maintained by the daily protests which have proven to be stronger than either the shotguns used against peaceful protesters or the chemical gases used to inflict maximum mass punishment to the people. They love to live and they will survive the onslaught and defeat the forces of the counter-revolution.

**Martyr  
Hussain  
Abdulla,  
26h June  
2013**

