

BAHRAIN

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

Despite repression; Bahrain's Revolution eyes ultimate victory

The Bahaini crisis seems to drag on for longer than what many had expected. This may be true if the Bahraini Revolution is viewed in isolation from the rest of the Arab revolts. In reality, the political strife in this Gulf state has proven to be the most resilient, least prone to exploitation by other powers and most enduring with purity and dedication. Given several facts that have adverse effects on the political movement, the least that the Bahraini revolt has achieved is the deepening public conviction that it is no longer possible to co-habit with the Alkhalifa rule and that no matter how much suffering is yet to come, the people will persist in their peaceful Revolution until fundamental change in the political structure has been achieved. People are now more aware that half a Revolution is a disaster and that the events of the past 30 months have proven vindicated their demand for a fundamental change. But this is also true on the other side; that of the ruling family. The senior figures of this dynasty have now realized that the time of deception and exercising total control over Bahrainis has ended and that the eventual divorce with the people of Bahrain has arrived. The two cannot continue in the relation of the ruler and the ruled imposed by the Alkhalifa dynasty on the people.

For the people of the Revolution there is a realization that the conflict may take longer, and the suffering may continue. Their overall evaluation is that whatever this suffering it will still be less than tolerating the hereditary dictatorship much longer. The successive calamities of the past two years have created a fate accompli to the people; that of pursuing revolutionary change with determination, steadfastness and vigour. The ruling family has messed up its relation with the people to the point of total fatigue. When death and life become equal in the eyes of the people, tyranny reaches its ultimate ability to turn death into an effective deterrent. For Bahrainis who had to endure the agony created by the death of their beloved sons and daughters suffering has reached its ultimate level. There are two ways available to them. To give respite to the ruling family with the bitter consequence that it will inflict same suffering or even more in the future. The other alternative is to pursue the goal of toppling the Alkhalifa regime knowing that the suffering will not be more than what they have already endured. Death as a de-

terrent has thus been blunted. This is a strategic failure that will cost the ruling family its power.

Is this rhetorical? As the revolutionary fervor fades away in other countries that have experienced the Arab Spring revolts Bahrain remains a hotbed for the Revolution. This is despite the multitude of obstacles placed on its path. First there was the Saudi military occupation which has failed to stem the rising desire to achieve fundamental political change including regime change. Second the use of sectarianism, imposed and encouraged by the regime may have worked in other countries causing death and mayhem. But in Bahrain it has been blunted by the people's awareness. Last month this horrible tool was further blunted when US President Obama declared, from the UN platform, that the world had to find solutions to the sectarian problems in Iraq, Syria and Bahrain. It was devastating to the dictator and his clique. For years the regime has been attempting to attract sympathy of others by exaggerating the sectarian threat. But once taken up by Mr Obama the Alkhalifa officials hurried to deny that Bahrain had ever experienced sectarian tension. In fact this is what the people have all along been saying. Their Revolution is a patriotic movement to end the black era of the Alkhalifa dynastic rule. This horrible clan adopted a policy of social fragmentation on sectarian lines to attract the Sunni citizens to its side. Now that their senior officials who had adopted the sectarian agenda have been cornered by the American President, the world has to decide which side to take in this struggle between democratic forces and absolute dynastic rule.

One of the main pillars of the regime is the Saudi support which turned into a fully-fledged military occupation of Bahrain. The Western powers have colluded with this occupation and they hardly mention it while knowing that the Alkhalifa regime cannot function for one day if the Saudi forces leave. As this occupation has failed in crushing the Revolution, the West must now take a stand and join the people of Bahrain in rejecting the Saudi occupation. The slogans of the protesters in their daily protests has dwarfed the occupiers who possess the most expensive tools of repression and death; yet unable to silence the voice of the pro-democracy movement. Furthermore, the Saudi regional influence

is now on the wane. Their strategy which is based on buying off people with the huge oil revenues, spreading sectarianism as a weapon of mass destruction and adopting terrorism as the main tool against Arab regimes that have turned to democracy. NO one is spared the agony of this state-sponsored terrorism. Egypt was the most outrageous example of foreign intervention, supported by petro-dollars, sectarian ideology and state-terrorism. But the Saudi failure in forcing the West to take military action against the Syrian regime has started the most serious decline of this hated regime. Saudi Arabia today is not the same as it had been for decades. The regime is embattled domestically and regionally and is pressed for innovative ideas to sell to the world. AS it has failed to address the issues of democracy, human rights, women rights and general freedoms the prospect of an amicable settlement with the people is grim.

The most likely consequence is the explosion of hostile attitude towards the Saudi leadership with the prospect of wars and conflicts. Time is running short for meaningful reforms that those defunct regimes in the Gulf are unable to carry out. The Saudis are now discredited regionally and internationally. With rising internal demands for reform and insistence by women groups to open up public life for them, they continue to deflect attention away from domestic politics. How long can they keep the lid on the boiling pot is difficult to determine. What is clear, however, is that the future does not bear good for an authoritarian hereditary dictatorship. Cracks are now appearing in the relations between Riyadh and Washington, to the extent that the Saudis decided not to take their seat at the Security Council which they had worked hard to win. The Alkhalifa dictators are relying not only on the Saudis to remain in power but also on the British who are providing political and security support. But it is unlikely that this support will alter the situation fundamentally. The Bahraini people will not give up their struggle without achieving their full rights. After the debacle of the last political settlement in 2001, they are unlikely to risk another deal with a regime that has been proven to be incapable of honouring its promises. People's will has become the decisive factor that will topple the Alkhalifa dictatorship in the near future.

Judiciary turned into tool of repression, unfair trials

In one week alone, more than 90 Bahrainis have been sentenced to prison terms ranging between five and fifteen years for opposing the dynastical Alkhalifa rule. First came the sentencing of 50 Bahrainis to sentences of this kind, with the allegations that they are part of the 14th February Coalition that started the Revolution in 2011. Those implicated in this group are so diverse in ages, locations and political affiliations that it was viewed as a cheap joke devoid of value, logic or substance. Some of these people had already been sentenced several times on other allegations including affiliation to other groups. It is a sham of democracy and justice and can only undermine the regime's credibility and human taste. International human rights bodies have condemned this contempt of justice and called for quashing those sentences described as "unfair". "It's appalling what passes for 'justice' today in Bahrain. The authorities simply slap the label 'terrorist' on defendants, and then subject them to all manner of violations to end up with a 'confession'," said Philip Luther, Middle East and North Africa Programme Director at Amnesty International. More people have subsequently been sentenced to similar terms for their active roles in opposing Bahrain's hereditary dictatorship. In one of the cases, known as

the Case of Duraz, 37 people were sentenced to jail terms ranging between 5 and 15 years. Another group of four people including a child (Sayed Hassan Fardan) from Sitra were jailed for 15 years for allegedly exploding a small cooking gas cylinder at Adliya district. Amir Al Hurr, had his detention period extended by 30 days. In the absence of his lawyer, Abdul Shahid Abbas Al Tawq had his detention extended 60 days. In one of the outrageous regime's judicial crimes is the sentencing of a Bahraini youth to lengthy jail terms for a crime committed while he was on hospital bed. Mohammad Mushaima, was jailed for seven years for allegedly being one of those involved in the civil campaign at the financial harbour in March 2011. The popular orator, Mahdi Sahwan, was sent to 15 months in jail for chanting a poem criticising Bahrain's dictator.

Another outrageous judicial crime by Alkhalifa dictatorship is the sentencing of Bahraini citizen, Abd Ali Al Khair to ten years for re-sending an anti-regime statement on What's Up. On the same day a policeman accused of torturing Ali Saqr to death while in prison, was sentenced to two years. He is unlikely to serve the sentence. Among those sentenced on Tuesday was Volleyball player, Jassim Hammad, 16 who was punished for his anti-regime stands with one year in jail.

Meanwhile the regime's case for its crackdown against the Bahraini people has been significantly weakened in recent days, especially at the UN General Assembly annual session in New York. President Obama has called for an end to sectarianism in Syria, Iraq and Bahrain. Those remarks angered the Alkhalifa ruling family and exposed the case of Bahrain to the world at large from the UN platform. Other leaders, including Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, have also highlighted the case and afforded it international recognition. This meant that the efforts by the regime's foreign minister and the millions of dollars plundered on public relations efforts have been fruitless. In the past 30 months many delegations have wondered around Western capitals to deceive the world on what is happening in Bahrain.

At the same time, Death Squads have continued their attacks on Bahrainis outside the realm of law. On Wednesday 2nd October, masked members of Alkhalifa Death Squads in civilian clothing abducted five people at dawn from a flat at Jid Ali Town. There has been no news about them since. Also, a young Bahraini, Sayed Ali Hashem Shubbar was arrested on the Bahrain-Saudi causeway and led away to unknown destination.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
3rd October 2013

Chaotic scenes as protests continued inside and outside prisons

Yousuf Al Nashmi, 31, a young Bahraini citizen, is dying as a result of severe torture inflicted on him in jail. This week the regime ordered his release when it became clear that he was approaching "clinical death". His family protested his ill-treatment and detention. His lawyer, Zainab Abdul Aziz repeatedly called for his release but the Alkhalifa insisted on keeping him at the torture dungeons despite his severe brain tumour. He was tried while his body was on machines. Only when he approached death did the Alkhalifa order his release so that he dies outside jail.

Bahraini detainees at the Dry Dock and the Central prisons have been on hunger strike since 2nd October. They are protesting against ill-treatment, intolerable prison conditions and the new restrictions imposed during family visits. Several detainees collapsed as a result. Those prisons have become notorious for the lack of essential facilities needed for human habitation and intensification of repression, attacks on, and torture of detainees.

A young Bahraini sentenced to life imprisonment went on strike demanding that his solitary confinement be ended. Kumail Al Manami has been kept in his small cell for two years during which he reached the verge of death.

On Tuesday 8th October, five youth from Duraz Town were seized by members of

Death Squads and taken to unknown destinations. Among them is Sayed Abbas Sayed Mahdi, whose brother, Sayed Mahmood is already in jail on trumpeted charges and false accusations. He is married with two children. At mid-day Wednesday, three youth were snatched from their homes at Bilad Al Qadeem Town. Among them was the brother of Martyr Hani Abdul Aziz.

The ruling Alkhalifa family has summoned both Sayed Hadi Al Mousawi, a former MP from Al Wefaq block and Yousuf Al Mahafdha of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. The allegations directed to them are linked to their claims that Bahrainis often face ill-treatment in detention. The two are among only few who have not been jailed for long periods although Al Mahafdha had been kept for more than one week behind bars earlier this year for criticising the ruling family for its bleak human rights records.

Another Bahraini, Younus Hadher, 19, is also dying slowly at the Dry Dock Prison as a result of severe form of epilepsy. His family has repeatedly called for his release but the authorities have, hitherto, refused to heed these calls. His condition has recently worsened; he is losing his sight, hearing and movement. He cannot walk in normal way and his epileptic attacks have increased dramatically.

Amnesty International has, meanwhile, issued an Urgent Action appeal calling for the immediate and unconditional release of a popular orator. Mahdi Sahwan has been convicted of "insulting" Bahrain's dictator and sentenced to three months' imprisonment for "calling for an illegal gathering". Amnesty has urged its members to write to the Bahraini authorities to demand Mahdi Sahwan's release, to ensure that he is protected from torture and other ill-treatment and that he has regular access to his family and lawyers. It has also urged the Alkhalifa "to repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression".

These crimes by the regime have only solidified the people's resolve and determination to pursue their legitimate demands especially the right to determine their own destiny, write their constitution and elect government. From Dair Town in the North to Karzakkan in the South, daily protests have continued unabated. Many houses were subjected to collective punishment including intensive use of chemical and tear gases. Two schools were attacked as students participated in the protests. Al Jabiriya and Al Ta'awon Secondary schools were attacked by

Bahrain Freedom Movement
10th October 2013

Imported chemical and tear gases twice the population

Bahrain's Ministry of Interior is planning to import 1.6 million tear gas canisters and 90,000 tear gas grenades, according to a [leaked document](#), published Wednesday 17th October by research and advocacy group **Bahrain Watch**. The document -- apparently a tender issued by the Ministry of Interior's Purchasing Directorate -- shows that Bahrain's security forces are stockpiling massive amounts of tear gas, despite serious concerns of [international NGOs](#) and the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#). These groups have called Bahrain's use of tear gas "[unnecessary and indiscriminate](#)", and "[lethal](#)". This planned new shipment will supply Bahrain with more tear gas canisters than the entire population of the country. Efforts are underway to challenge this massive deal which has confirmed what the opposition had claimed; the Alkhalifa are there to kill, maim and torture as many Bahrainis as possible.

The ferocity of repression was laid bare in recent days. Yesterday regime's security forces attacked peaceful protests in many areas causing serious injuries. The intensification of repressive attacks by those forces are desperate measures to stem the deepening political and humanitarian crisis engulfing the country. At the end of the three-days mourning of last weeks' martyr, Yousuf Al Nashmi, 31, at Al Musalla Town, the funeral service

was attacked by regime's forces using chemical and tear gases and shotguns against participants. A young man from Karzakkan Town received a direct hit fired by the police using shotguns. He has been admitted to intensive care as his condition remains critical. He suffers broken skull and severe internal bleeding.

Many Bahraini youth have been detained in the past week. Among them is Mohammad Al Nashaba, 21 who was snatched from his house in the early hours of the Eid Day, Tuesday 15th October. Another youth, Jaffar Al Wada'ei, 19, was also snatched from his home and taken to Alkhalifa torture dungeons.

On 14th October, Foreign Policy website has published an article titled "Ignoring Bahrain's iron fist". It was written by Sarah Margon, acting Washington director at Human Rights Watch and Mary Laurie, a fellow in the Human Rights Watch Washington office. It said: "For two years, as the United States has condemned massive abuses of protesters throughout the Middle East, it has largely turned a blind eye to equally horrific treatment in Bahrain, a small but significant ally. As the situation in Manama shows no sign of abating, the United States needs to step up its game -- before it's too late." After detailing America's stands on Bahrain in the past two years including what President Obama said in his address at the UN recently, it concluded: "If the United States is trying

to gain leverage with Bahrain's rulers by limiting its criticism, there is no evidence that this approach is making a difference. In fact, it appears to be making a bad situation worse."

Although the regime's forces are committing atrocious crimes against Bahrainis every day, only a portion of those crimes are documented. The link below shows how those forces are waging war against Bahraini natives. The crime which has been recorded took place at Al Ekr Town. Those forces prefer to commit their crimes on the secluded roofs of houses they raid without legal permission. A similar video was broadcast about a similar crime at Karrana Town last year.

http://youtu.be/WQg5E_Xpz30

Meanwhile, the protests have continued in most parts of the country under different mottos. The regime's failure to contain the situation or defeat the Revolution has taken the struggle steps ahead and created more pressure on Alkhalifa's allies especially Washington. The protest on Tuesday to mark the end of the commemoration service of Martyr Yousuf Al Nashmi, has proven beyond doubt that the people are clear in their minds about what they want, and possess power and carriage to counter the regime's mouth-pieces.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
18th October 2013

AI: Jailing of Bahrain Shiite activists is 'appalling'

Human rights watchdog Amnesty International has criticized a Bahrain court decision to jail 50 Shiite activists for up to 15 years in a mass show trial, calling the verdict "appalling" and urging a probe into reports that some activists were tortured.

"It's appalling what passes for 'justice' today in Bahrain," Amnesty International Middle East and North Africa director Philip Luther said, as quoted by AFP.

The court sentenced the activists on Sunday, including a prominent Shiite Iraqi cleric who was sentenced for forming a secret opposition group.

The activists were charged with allegedly organizing the 'February 14 Revolution Youth Coalition' and trying to topple the country's constitutional monarchy by organizing bombings and inciting anti-government rallies.

The Sunni-ruled kingdom equates the opposition group with terrorism.

"The authorities simply slap the label 'terrorist'

on defendants, and then subject them to all manner of violations to end up with a 'confession,'" Luther said.

Some of the charges included "training elements to commit violence and vandalism" and "attacking security men." The accusations further state that "terrorism was among the means used" by the group, which also had "contact with a foreign state." This is reportedly referring to Shiite powerhouse Iran, which Bahrain believes is meddling in its affairs.

Twenty of the activists were reportedly convicted in absentia.

Sixteen of the activists received 15-year sentences, four were jailed for 10 years, and the other thirty received five-year terms.

Amnesty International stated that there are claims that some of the activists were tor-

tured, and urged for a prompt investigation into the matter.

"The allegations that confessions were extracted under torture must be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and independently, with those responsible brought to justice," said Luther.

Earlier in September, Human Rights Watch accused the Bahraini government of violence and torture, with frequent reports of child protesters facing extremely harsh conditions while in custody.

The Gulf state is a predominantly Shiite country and has seen frequent unrest since authorities cracked down on the popular uprising against the ruling Sunni monarchy in 2011. Human rights organizations have accused the West of turning a blind eye to the crack-

down.

Bahrain, a small island nation and home to the US Fifth Fleet, has seen 80 people killed since the protests erupted, according to the International Federation for Human Rights. Hundreds more have been arrested.



Ignoring Bahrain's iron fist

For two years, as the United States has condemned massive abuses of protesters throughout the Middle East, it has largely turned a blind eye to equally horrific treatment in Bahrain, a small but significant ally. As the situation in Manama shows no sign of abating, the United States needs to step up its game -- before it's too late.

Last week, a Bahraini court sentenced 50 Shiites, including the human rights activist Naji Fateel, to harsh prison terms of up to 15 years after a mass trial allegedly linking the activists to the "February 14" movement, which it claims is working to overthrow the government. February 14 is the date in 2011 when the recent protest movement began. The leaders of those largely peaceful protests remain in prison and have been joined over the past two years by other activists convicted solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly.

A week before the sentencing, U.S. President Barack Obama made an unexpected reference to Bahrain, alongside Iraq and Syria, as a country fraught with sectarian tensions that challenge democracy and regional stability in his September 24 address to the U.N. General Assembly. This reference prompted the Bahraini foreign affairs minister to issue a statement extolling the country's culture as tolerant. Bahrain's U.S. ambassador also responded, contending the speech did not properly portray Bahrain's progressive and open-minded society.

The presidential mention ruffled feathers in Manama -- a sure sign of U.S. diplomatic leverage there -- but it was not enough to stop last week's sentencing. The majority of Bahrainis are Shiites, but the country is governed by a Sunni-dominated, autocratic monarchy that has shown reluctance to reform, despite a number of cosmetic initiatives. Historically, civic groups have played an important role in shaping the country's political debate but the government has consistently undermined these groups with restrictive legislation. Security forces have increasingly employed brute force, particularly in response to peaceful protests. Detained civilians are prosecuted in farcical trials, with many documented cases of torture to elicit confessions.

To be sure, the Obama administration hasn't been silent about Bahrain's escalating political crisis, but it hasn't taken a strong or consistent stance either. This is primarily because Bahrain is a strategic ally and home to the U.S. Navy's 5th fleet. Located in the oil-rich Gulf, with Iran to the north, Bahrain is linked to Saudi Arabia by a 16-mile causeway. The Obama administration's security partnership brings with it influence over Bahrain's ruling family. But that leverage will be lost if the government's reliance on repression pushes society to a boiling

point and the 5th fleet can no longer maintain its presence.

In May 2011, Obama raised concerns about Bahrain in his major speech about the Arab uprisings. He declared that, "mass arrests and brute force are at odds with the universal rights of Bahrain's citizens." And he noted "you can't have a real dialogue when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail." These comments were welcomed as a sign that the administration planned to flex at least some of its diplomatic muscle. After the speech, and in response to growing con-

Human Rights First Trial of Bahraini Defender Naji Fattel

By Diana Sayed, 10-3-2013

This week, a Bahraini court ruled in the case of the "February 14 Coalition" in which 50 individuals were tried under the Kingdom's terrorism law. Among those sentenced was human rights defender Naji Fateel, who was given 15 years in prison.

When he first appeared before the newly-established Fourth Criminal Court -- a court led by the son of Bahrain's head of parliament and that includes a member of the Kingdom's royal family -- Fateel took off his shirt to reveal evidence of torture on his back. It was a poignant moment in a trial that lacked basic due process during which claims of torture were summarily ignored.

Last month, on September 5, Fateel's legal defense team submitted a letter requesting a change of court due to the court's inherent conflict of interest and requested that a medical committee investigate the defendant's allegations of torture. The defense team ultimately withdrew from the session based on Article 211 of the Criminal Procedure Law of Bahrain, a statute that says the defense team can refuse the judge's ruling. Accordingly, the defendants issued a statement boycotting the trial for reasons that included the lack of an independent judiciary.

Human Rights First condemns the politically-motivated charges, sham trials, and continued judicial harassment against human rights defenders in Bahrain, including Fateel. He should not be sitting in a Bahraini prison. He should be released immediately and Bahrain refocus its attention on working to ensure that all trials fully conform to international fair trial standards.



gressional pressure, the administration decided to withhold military equipment that could be potentially used against protesters -- including armored vehicles, anti-tank weapons, and certain small arms and light weapons.

In early 2012, the U.S. State Department spokesperson noted the administration would maintain "a pause on most security assistance to Bahrain pending further progress on reform." But less than five months later, and in conjunction with a visit to Washington, D.C. from Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al Khalifa, the administration announced potential military sales to Bahrain. Since then, the administration has walked back its public pressure on the ruling party. As a result, U.S. policy has suffered from an inconsistency that belies any commitment to pressing for meaningful reform.

For instance, when authorities recently arrested Khalil al-Marzooq, deputy leader of the largest opposition group, al-Wefaq, for allegedly "inciting terrorism" in a speech -- despite his clear statements to the contrary -- at first the State Department barely responded. Instead of calling for al-Marzooq's release, the spokesperson criticized the opposition for withdrawing from the national dialogue. She shifted gears the next day, noting al-Marzooq's detention with concern and urging the Bahraini government to "uphold its obligations to protect the freedoms of assembly, association, and expression." But the damage had already been done.

Instead of hedging its rhetoric, the Obama administration should develop a stronger and more consistent approach. Specifically, the administration should make good on its claim to hold Bahrain to the recommendations of its own Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) -- appointed by the king to review abuses that occurred during and after the 2011 protests.

The State Department's report to Congress found that Bahrain has fully implemented only five out of 26 of the commission's recommendations. In the nearly two years since it was published, there have been no consequences from the United States for backsliding and inaction.

In addition, the United States needs to seek access to all detained political activists and press publicly for their release. Simple calls for all parties to return to the deeply flawed national dialogue process make no sense when so many potential participants are behind bars. Finally, the administration needs to meet regularly and publicly with Bahrain's remaining activists in a show of solidarity.

If the United States is trying to gain leverage with Bahrain's rulers by limiting its criticism, there is no evidence that this approach is making a difference. In fact, it appears to be making a bad situation worse.

Sarah Margon is acting Washington director at Human Rights Watch. Mary Laurie is a fellow in the Human Rights Watch Washington office.