

BAHRAIN

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

For Bahrainis, Alkhalifa tribal rule is no longer an option

Once again the people's resolve has proven far stronger than the Alkhalifa repression, aided by the expertise and power of several other countries. The events of last month have shown the resilience of the people in the face of most inhumane and tyrannical regime. Starting with the campaign against holding the Formula 1 race, the people organized several other campaigns as the regime implemented the old policy of banishing opponents, refused to allow the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and deny the political opposition leaders of the necessary medical care. Furthermore, the regime resorted, once again, to act of extreme desperation; assassinating active elements in the youth movement. The highlights of the month may be summarized in the following developments:

1- The Revolution continued unabated as activists started the month with strong opposition to holding F1 race in Bahrain. They organized protests and rallies in most parts of the country and deprived the hereditary dictatorship of the benefits of holding the game. In addition to paying millions of dollars to the race-organisers, the bribing of many politicians and journalists, the regime had launched a preemptive campaign of extreme repression to forestall the people's activities during the event. In the process, many news outlets chose to investigate the crisis of the country and listen to the victims of torture. Many articles, special reports and interviews were conducted, giving an international dimension to the Bahrain's Revolution. Thirty Seven Members of Parliament in UK signed an Early Day Motion calling for the race to be cancelled as it would lead to more repression of the people and grant the dictatorial regime the appearance of normality. It is now clear that on both counts the people will have the upper hand in the future organization of the F1 race. They will either succeed in halting it by convincing its organizers and participants, or make use of it by diverting the attention of the media to the plight of Bahrainis. In both cases the Alkhalifa are the losers.

2- The criminal policy of assassination and liquidation continued. Four people were martyred as a result of target killing.

Abdul Aziz Al Abbar succumbed to serious injuries he had sustained in the F1 protests. Two young Bahrainis were assassinated by the regime's Death Squads who bombed their car on April. The driver escaped immediate martyrdom but is in critical condition at hospital. The policy of assassinating opponents is not new. In 1976 a leftist organization (The Popular Front in Bahrain) said that one of its activists, Mohammad Bu Naffoor had been killed with a bomb planted by regime's agents. In 1985 a senior religious figure, Sayed Ahmad Al Ghuraifi was martyred when his car overturned as its tyres were detached after had been tampered with. In the nineties, Salman Al Taitoon, his wife and child were killed when a bomb was planted at their home in Sanabis. Last year a senior elderly banker, Hussain Nejdadi, was assassinated in Malaysia. In 1985 he had challenged the then interior minister to pay back a loan of US\$ 4 million which he had grabbed from the bank Mr Nejdadi was directing. Since the Revolution started in 2011 many Bahrainis were subjected to extra-judicial killings.

3- The Alkhalifa regime has revived the policy of banishing opponents. A senior religious figure, Ayatullah Sheikh Hussain Najati was exiled from the country 18 months for refusing to attack the Revolution or praise the Alkhalifa dictatorship. Because of his high religious status, he was targeted for persecution several times. In 2010 his nationality was revoked with the whim of Hamad's pen. It was reinstated in 2011. But in November 2012 it was revoked, once again with an order by the dictator, together with 30 others. He was subsequently subjected to dirty blackmail; If he stands with the regime against the people it would be re-instated, otherwise he would remain stateless. Last month he was summoned by the torturers and threatened with deportation if he did not "cooperate" with them. He adamantly refused to take a stand against his own people. He was told to leave on his own accord. When he refused he was threatened with liquidating his family members. He was forced to leave on Wednesday 23rd April to Beirut. This crime was deplored by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of

Religion or Belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, who said: "Targeting the most senior and influential Shi'a religious figure in Bahrain may amount to intimidating and thus discriminating against the entire Shi'a Muslim community in the country because of its religious beliefs,". This practice has been in existence for many years, dating back to the British era in Bahrain. In 1938 two Bahraini activists, Ahmad bin Lahej and Abdul Wahab Al Zayyani, were exiled to India. In 1957 three of the leaders of the popular uprising were also banished. Abdul Rahmd Al Bakir, Abdul Aziz Al Shamlan and Abd Ali Al Alaiwat, were exiled to St Helena in the Atlantic Ocean where they remained until 1961 when a British court ordered their release. In 1995 four scholars were deported during the uprising.

4. The regime has sought to hide its crime by refusing the admission of the UN Special Rapporteurs, especially Juan Mendez, the UN specialist on Torture. He has been prevented from visiting the country twice and the dictator has refused to specify a date for his visit. A delegation from the High Commission for Human Rights has visited the country and is due to publish its report this month. The regime has adopted every means to influence their work or sabotage it. They were not given free access to prisons or victims of torture. Torturers were shielded from the delegation. It also exerted pressure on the team to work with its GONGOs to legitimise their work, but many victims refused to cooperate with them. Some members of the delegation was targeted for bribery in order to compromise their position and defend the regime or produce less critical report on the human rights situation in the country. Yet there is worry that the regime's attempts may achieve part of its aims, especially with pressures from Western supporters of the Alkhalifa.

The picture of the political situation in Bahrain is becoming more positive as it becomes clearer that the future of Alkhalifa as rulers, is doomed and has no chance to be revived. The people, on the hand, are today more determined than ever to achieve change. With God's help they will prevail.

Three activists assassinated, senior religious scholars exiled

The past few days have witnessed extreme forms of public outrage at what Bahrainis see as intensification of targeted killing of activists. On Sunday 20th April, two Bahrainis from the town of Maqsha, were assassinated with a car bomb by the Death Squads run by the royal court. Ali Abbas and Ahmad Al Masajjan were killed immediately when the car they were sitting in exploded. The driver, Abdulla Al Samoom, was hurled outside the car by the explosion. Although the regime blamed the victims for the explosion, Bahrainis are convinced that they were victims of Alkhalifa brutality which has escalated in recent days. Last week, another young man was killed by regime's Death Squads and his body was discovered at a house which was burnt. Many activists have now been targeted by the Death Squads who had, over the years, killed many Bahrainis. At the funeral of the latest two victims yesterday, the people expressed grief, outrage and determination to continue the struggle until the country is cleansed of both dictatorship and occupation. The mourners were viciously attacked by riot police and Death Squads which deployed extensive amounts of chemical and tear gases. Another protest yesterday morning at Sitra was mercilessly crushed by regime forces. The people of Sitra demonstrated in support of the women prisoners and called for their immediate and unconditional release.

The arrest of citizens has continued unabated. On Sunday 20th April, several people were arrested during raids on their houses. From the town of Jid Al Hajj,

Hussain Al Mulla and Hussain Abdul Amir were abducted and taken to the torture chambers. Jaffar Abdulla Al Jarish from Sitra was also detained. From Maqsha Town; Abbas Al Abid and Ibrahim Al Mawali were detained. From Karanah, Jaffar Al Aqadi and Ali Ahmad Aman were kidnapped and most likely tortured. Since his arrest few days ago, the child Hussain Ibrahim Mullah Ahmad, from Jid Al Hajj town has been unheard off and concerns are growing for his safety and well-being.

Fears are mounting for the safety of two Bahraini victims of torture who were recaptured after they had escaped from Jaw prison. Redha Al Ghasra, sentenced to 80 years jail for opposing Alkhalifa dictatorship and Hussain Al Banna had "escaped" from their cells on Sunday 20th April but recaptured shortly afterwards by members of Death Squads. Officials of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights have raised the alarm that the episode may have been engineered by security forces. The two were re-captured from a house with seven hiding with them

There has been wide international condemnation of the decision by Bahrain's dictator to exile a senior religious figure. Last week Ayatullah Sheikh Hussain Najati was told by regime's agents to leave the country "within 48 hours". At first he said he would not leave, but was forced to do so. This morning he travelled to Beirut with one-way passport. Amnesty International has condemned the move to exile the Sheikh. Under the title "End threats to Shi'a cleric stripped of nationality" it issued a statement on 17th April

"This campaign of threats, harassment and intimidation against Shaikh Hussain al-Najati is unacceptable and must stop immediately. Forcing him out of his own country would render him stateless." said Said Boumedouha, Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Amnesty International. "The decision to strip Ayatollah Sheikh Najati of his nationality, along with 30 others in 2012 was little more than an arbitrary attempt to silence all government critics. It should be rescinded immediately."

On 17th April the researcher at Durham University, Marc Own Jones, published good documentation of the policy of impunity in Bahrain. Under the title "Bahrain's state accountability" he listed several cases which prove a systematic culture of impunity; either ignoring the complaints of victims of torture, superficial investigation of torture claims, acquitting the torturers or giving them light prison sentences and then reducing them or subjecting victims to more torture. The writer concluded his article saying: police criminality in Bahrain is not simply the fault of individuals or groups, but rather is a result of formal structures such as 'the police organization, the criminal justice system, and the broader socio-political context.' These legal manouvres by Bahraini authorities are a facade for a lack of accountability, designed to detract attention from systemic political reforms that are needed to enable both a reduction in police deviance and an increase in genuine accountability in Bahrain."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
23rd April 2013

Saudi and Alkhalifa rulers increase military spending to stop change

In its annual report the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has reported an increase in the military expenditure by Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The report says: Military spending in the Middle East increased by 4.0 per cent in 2013, reaching an estimated \$150 billion. Saudi Arabia's spending increased by 14 per cent, to reach \$67 billion, possibly due to tensions with Iran but also the desire to maintain strong and loyal security forces to insure against potential 'Arab Spring' type protests. AS for Bahrain's military expenditure the report says: "Maintaining regime survival in the face of internal opposition is also the likely motive for Bahrain's 26 per cent increase."

Bahrain's dictator has meanwhile, sought to recruit more mercenaries to crush Bahrain's native population seeking political and economic rights. Earlier this week Hamad bin Isa Alkhalifa visited Kazakhstan and held meetings with President Nazarbayev. Speculations have mushroomed about the aims of the visit, but

indications point to the desire by Alkhalifa dictator to recruit more mercenaries from that country for use against the natives. Two weeks ago Bahrain's dictator visited Pakistan to recruit more mercenaries. In a grilling questioning to Pakistan's foreign ministry, Naela Chohan, Additional Foreign Secretary (Middle East & Africa) admitted that currently 10,000 Pakistanis were serving in Bahrain defence services. About the visit of the King of Bahrain to JSHQ, she said: "The visit was not meant for anything but due to the fact that we've 10,000 Pakistanis in their defence forces," she added. Commenting on the issue, chairman of the committee Haji Adeel stated that they were not only serving in the defence force of Bahrain but also enjoying their nationality.

On Tuesday 15th April, the Alkhalifa junta told a senior religious figure to leave the country within 48 hours. Ayatullah Sheikh Hussain Najati, 60, had his house and office raided by members of Alkhalifa

Death Squads in clear provocation. His Bahraini nationality had been revoked with thirty other Bahrianis in November 2012 for opposing the hereditary dictatorship. There has been an outcry amongst the natives who see these acts as evidence of the regime's enmity to the natives and determination to change the demographic composition of the country. Last year the senior Ayatullah, who is a representative of Grand Ayatullah Sayed Ali Sistani of Iraq, was asked by the Alkhalifa to condemn the people's Revolution, but he refused on the basis that he had not been engaged in politics.

At another level, one of the most senior figures of the popular leadership has suffered serious deterioration in his health and is now in serious condition. He has been transferred to the military hospital but his family has not been allowed to visit him. Abdul Wahab Hussain, 60, who has been in jail for more than three years had asked

Continued on Page 3

Saudi-backed Alkhalifa cornered as they escalate repression

Today marks three years of Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja's incarceration. He is the most prominent Bahraini human rights activist. He was severely tortured and needed two operations to repair his broken jaws. Thirty international NGOs have signed a petition calling for his immediate release. They said: "The undersigned civil society organizations call for the immediate and unconditional release of Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja as well as immediate access to independent medical examination and treatment. In addition, we urge the Bahraini authorities to cease harassment and persecution of human rights defenders including unwarranted defamation campaigns."

Yesterday Frontline Defenders called for the immediate release of Dr Saeed Al Samaheji, who was severely persecuted for helping the injured Bahrainis. On 3rd April Alkhalifa judiciary upheld a one-year jail sentence they had imposed on him last year. Front Line Defenders expresses concern at the sentencing of Dr Saeed Al Samahiji and at the continued targeting of human rights defenders through prosecutions. Front Line Defenders is concerned that the prison sentence is solely related to Dr Saeed Al Samahiji's legitimate exercise of the right of freedom

Saudi & Alkhalifa

Continued from Page 2

the prison authorities for urgent medical treatment but his request has been turned down. He has several symptoms including general weakness in his body, burning feeling in his limbs and inability to move his legs. Ten years ago he had been treated in UK for neurological ailments and loss of feelings and control of his limbs. when he was arrested in March 2011 he was severely tortured and denied medical treatment. There is now serious concern for Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain's life and calls have been made to international bodies to put pressure on Alkhalifa junta to allow him sufficient medical care.

Amnesty International, meanwhile, has issued an Urgent Action highlighting the plight of a torture victim and shed light on the policy of impunity adopted by the regime. Mr Ahmad Mushaima, the son of the jailed leader, Hassan Mushaima, has been put on trial for his pro-democracy activities. He had been subjected to horrific torture to extract "confessions" which have been used as the basis of his ongoing trial. Amnesty has urged the authorities to release Ahmed Mushaima immediately and unconditionally, allow him full access to lawyers, investigate allegations of torture and bring those responsible to justice and provide Mr Mushaima medical attention. Another internationally-renowned journalist, Ahmad Humaidan, is serving ten years sentence for his writings that expose the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
16th April 2014

of expression and his human rights work.

The wave of mass arrests and torture has continued. Today scores of Bahrainis have been arrested; Hani Abbas Abdul Wahab from Dar Kulaib, Essa Ra'id from El Eker and 15 years old Mohammad Manoor Abdul Hussain from Bani Jamra. From the District of Mahooz nine people were arrested in the early hours of 9th April: Maytham Hassan Abbas, Nasser Salah Mansoor, Mohammed Jaffar Radhi, Ali Abdulla Abbas Anan, Mohammed Saleh Hassan Anan, Nasser Saleh Hassan Anan, Jassem Saleh Hassan Anan. Ali Hussain Al Saleh and Ali Salah Manoor. On 7th April Mirza Abdul Hussain Al Saffar was arrested at a check-point.

The regime has sentenced a blogger, Ali Jassim Me'raj, from Nuwaidrat Town, to two and a half years for "insulting the king". It is now a crime to criticise Bahrain's dictator in any way or form.

On commenting on the Alkhalifa violations of human rights in relation to the Formula 1 race, The Committee to Protect Journalists said Bahrain ranks 2nd for most journalists imprisoned per capita in the world

On 4th April the renowned American writer, Toby Jones, wrote an article entitled: "Bahrain oil, American water" in which he said: "Bahrain is now an apartheid state, with roving bands of security forces curtailing Shiite movements, routinely cloaking villages in tear gas, and rounding up protesters. Police have detained hundreds of people, most of them young boys who pass their time with an eye toward every evening's nine o'clock clash with the police. He said that President Obama had not raised the case of Bahrain with his Saudi hosts last week, and re-iterated that Formula 1 race organizers said human rights abuses are not their business. But then he narrat-

ed a personal story: "Last week I received an email from the father of Abdallah Madan, a 17-year-old Bahraini-American citizen, who was arrested for protesting in early March. He has been beaten, his nose has been broken, and there is no sign of his being released any time soon. US embassy officials were made to wait three weeks before being allowed to see him, and have so far not made his case a priority. Meanwhile, Abdallah has asked his father to take up the cause of more than 450 other children languishing in Manama's prisons for standing up to autocracy."

Jordanian activists have launched an electronic petition through Avaaz website in which they blamed the Jordanian government for sending troops to participate in the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain. They said: "The batons that left their marks on the backs of your sons in Bahrain streets had left their marks on the backs of our sons in the streets of Jordan, the hands that silence you are the same as the ones that had silenced us. Your sons are our sons, your blood is our blood and our freedom is one" It ended saying: "The participation of the police forces in security duties in Bahrain is the responsibility of the Jordanian authorities before anyone else. This authority that caused the poverty of its citizens and concentration of wealth and authority in the hands of the few is to be blamed for dragging the sons of Jordan to Bahrain to participate in repressing their brothers in return for being able to support their families. The authorities have extended supporting hands to whip the Bahraini citizens without consulting with anyone"

Bahrain Freedom Movement
9th April 2014

Investigating Land Use and Land Cover Change in Bahrain: 1987-2014

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights requested a report from the Geospatial Technologies and Human Rights Project (GTHR), a part of American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), out of serious concern for the environmental changes happening in Bahrain since 1973. The BCHR has observed changes impacting access to clean water and the coastline by non-affluent citizens; massive, urbanization, including land reclamation projects; and changes to the vegetation of the island. The report has observed "major changes in the land use and land cover of Bahrain that will impact the environment in as yet unknown ways."

Using satellite imagery from the last several decades, AAAS found substantial changes in vegetation patterns, including the loss of vegetation and conversion of land into agriculture and landscaped vegetation. The island itself has been expanded by 12.5 percent, from approximately 650 km² to 730 km².

The BCHR has expressed concern that land reclamation and development projects are not benefitting all Bahraini citizens, but rather fueling government corruption. Instead of using the reclaimed land to provide affordable housing, the projects cater exclusively to wealthy Bahrainis and foreigners [1]. A 2007 BBC article stated that, "a leaked government report revealed that the public has access to less than 3% of the coastline of this small island nation. Ownership of the coast allows access to reclaimed land. It is sold on to the highest bidder to build business complexes or tourist resorts. For the ruling family, land has become the new oil" [2].

The BCHR has documented the arrests of environmental activists and whistleblowers about the drawbacks of land reclamation such as Ghazi Al-Mirbati and Najiya Abdul-Ghaffar. Excessive police force has also been used to disperse peaceful protests staged by fisherman whose harbor was lost to land reclamation.

Heiner Bielefeldt: Bahrain should stop persecution of Shi'a Muslims and return citizenship to their spiritual leader

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Heiner Bielefeldt, today urged the Government of Bahrain to stop the harassment and persecution of the most senior religious leader of the Bahraini Shi'a Muslim community, who was reportedly forced to leave his country following threats from state security agents to arrest him and his son.

"I have received information from reliable sources that on 23 April Hussain Mirza Abdelbaqi Najati was forced to leave his own country for Lebanon after being exposed to enormous pressure and harassment by the authorities," the human rights expert said.

Following Bahrain's Ministry of Interior own statement, issued on its website on 23 April, it appears that the decision revoking Mr. Najati's Bahraini citizenship and the orders to expel him from the country may have been made due to his position as a senior and influential religious authority among Shi'a believers, who make up the majority of the population.

"I have expressed to the Government of Bahrain my grave concerns at what appears to be an act of religiously motivated discrimination which would seem to impose unjustified restrictions on Mr. Najati's fundamental human rights, including his right to practice and profess peacefully his religious beliefs," Mr. Bielefeldt stressed, warning that the case may have far-reaching implications for Shi'a's Muslim community in the country. "Targeting the most senior and influential Shi'a religious figure in Bahrain may amount to intimidating and thus discriminating against the entire Shi'a Muslim community in the country because of its religious beliefs," the Special Rapporteur stressed.

Mr. Najati is one of 31 individuals whose Bahraini citizenship was revoked on 7 November 2012 by the decision of the Ministry of Interior, a decision that rendered him stateless. In this regard the UN expert urged the Government to reverse its decision, which appears to be arbitrary, and to facilitate Mr. Najati's return from Lebanon.

"International law, in particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, prohibits arbitrary deprivation of nationality, including on religious grounds," the expert noted. "Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief constitutes a violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms."

"I understand that Mr. Najati has consistently refrained from engaging into politics, and has maintained his position and activities strictly in the realm of his religion," the Special Rapporteur said. "He is not known to have advocated violence or its use, or to have committed acts that would undermine national secu-

rity or public order, nor has he been charged or sentenced for committing such acts."

Heiner Bielefeldt assumed his mandate on 1 August 2010. As Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, he is independent from any government, and acts in his individual capacity. Mr. Bielefeldt is Professor of Human Rights and Human

Rights Politics at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg. From 2003 to 2009, he was Director of Germany's National Human Rights Institution. The Special Rapporteur's research interests include various interdisciplinary facets of human rights theory and practice, with a focus on freedom of religion or belief.



Birdshot: Deadly weapon in Bahrain

Report Summary

In Bahrain, the regular use of shotguns against protesters has been common practice and increasingly used since popular protest began three years ago. The Bahraini Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) published in November 2011, found that ten individuals died as a result of the use of shotguns by police officers or unidentified actors, and unidentified actors were nearly always seen accompanying or operating under the protection of the police.

Firing shotguns at protesters is one example of the use of excessive force against peaceful protesters in Bahrain, the cartridges found since February 2011 show markings of a number of different manufacturers from UK, Italy and Cyprus.

The birdshot products used against protesters in Bahrain are clearly designed and marketed for use in hunting animals with no indication of their suitability for riot control.

The Bahraini authorities chose to allow its security personnel to

use the most potentially harmful weapon which can cause serious injuries and death. In 2013 alone, at least 96 people were shot with birdshot pellets. Between 2011 and 2013, 13 people were killed by birdshot. Victims varied in age from 5 to 55 years.

SALAM believes that the birdshot is currently being used systematically outside its legal permissibility under Bahrain law and beyond international conventions to punish and murder unarmed peaceful protesters, therefore it calls upon the international community to exert the necessary pressure on the Bahraini Government to stop its security forces from using birdshot and allow victims

to get the medical care they need and also to stop threatening medical personnel who volunteer to help victims.

SALAM also calls for an international ban on the sale and exportation of shotgun equipment and ammunition to Bahrain and demands that independent international bodies investigate all deaths and injuries caused by the use of this weapon and to bring shooters, commanders and higher officials involved in such violations to justice.

<http://t.co/XR0ZnRh90B>

