

BAHRAIN

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

Natural laws will end Bahrain's dictators despite Western support

The Bahraini political and human rights crisis reached new levels in the past few weeks with directed killings, assassination and intensive torture. While assassination has been carried out with high degree of professionalism (indicating foreign help in carrying them out) killing of innocent protesters has been crude, outrageous and stupid. If the aim is to instill fear in the hearts and minds of citizens, the results have been disappointing to the regime and its backers. The more the regimes spills blood, the more defiant the people become. Gradually there is more realization of the futility of continuing to live under a regime whose existence depends on foreign support. This is not new. For more than 150 years the British had given direct support to the ruling Alkhalifa family from 1820 until 1971.

After the British withdrawal they continued to support the regime rigorously both politically and in operational day-to-day running of the security apparatus. Under the defunct Ian Henderson, the Special Branch became one of the most notorious in the Middle East. After his retirement in 2000 British support remained at hand both in terms of security and public relations work. Mr Henderson's death last year relieved both the Alkhalifa and the British as his tenure of 35 years at the head of Bahrain's security had brought him both notoriety and criminality. In the past decade the security has remained under British influence through several police experts, the last of whom is John Yates, the former Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner. Other British experts helped the regime avoid international condemnation by adopting superficial steps on technical matters relating to human rights while keeping the whole torture body system in place.

However, the people have not been deterred by those immoral policies. For over three years they have been on the move towards achieving real change in their country. While the counter revolution forces managed to plot the demise of most other popular revolutions through the spread of violent and extremist groups Bahrain's Revolution has remained on its track despite the continuing human and material losses. The past month has witnessed serious escalation of people's revolt which was mercilessly repressed by the

regime forces, with the loss of human lives. The policy of assassinating young activists continued and a 19 years old Ali Faisal was assassinated by sophisticated bombs. Another boy, Sayed Mahmood Sayed Mohsin was sprayed with shotgun pellets at a close range killing him almost instantly. The people's outrage continued in response to these Alkhalifa atrocities, and have vowed to ensure that the future of the country will not be linked to their political existence. This is at a time when their allies, especially the British and the Saudis are working round the clock to shield them from domestic and foreign pressures. The UK is preventing the issuing of a damning resolution by the UN Human Rights Council following a visit by a team from the High Commission for Human Rights office in Geneva to Bahrain. What they saw has shocked the team members who want to see action against Alkhalifa regime in order to stop its excessive human rights violations. The British Government appears to be lobbying hard against this step. Moreover, the UK authorities responded to requests from Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship to arrest some members of the opposition and two Bahrainis were detained under the terrorism act and are awaiting police decision whether to charge them. Bahraini natives have been the target of Alkhalifa state terrorism for years but no action has been taken to stop it.

Despite these mishaps, there is clarity of purpose among activists and leading figures of the opposition whether those languishing at torture dungeons or organizers of daily protests. Human Rights activists are also on the move to show the world how Bahrain has become a graveyard for human rights. They hope that their efforts will soon lead to tangible results on the international stage especially in Geneva where the Human Rights Council will, this month, revisit the Bahrain's situation. The release of Nabeel Rajab, the most prominent human rights activist after two years of illegal incarceration is expected to add to the momentum to get Bahrain's regime sanctioned by the international community. There are of course serious obstacles most prominent of which is the Saudi petrodollars which has neutralised would be supporters of human rights, but the people's struggle will ultimately pacify the Saudi money-for-silence policy. Both USA and

UK have, over the past decade, changed dramatically in their approach to the Saudi dimension on the international arena. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on USA the Kingdom was perceived to be the main breeding place of terrorism. Fifteen of the nineteen suicide bombers involved in 9/11 acts were Saudis. They continued to prop up terrorist groups despite the apparent "war on terror" waged by the West. Today, that war looks a total failure as terrorist networks, with roots pointing to Saudi funding, ideological indoctrination, their sectarian policies and total disregard to notions of human rights and values, spread to wider areas. There are three killing fields which have been designated to trap terrorist groups; Pakistan and Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Bahrain's regime is also featuring as sponsoring terrorism. Recent videos on the internet depict those who had been groomed by the Alkhalifa dynasty to resort to terrorism for use against political foes, expressed open mutiny against them. This followed Western pressures on Gulf monarchs to stop funding terrorism after the Syrian experience had shocked the world for taking the human cruelty to new dimensions. Bahrain's regime which had embarked on political naturalisation for more than a decade was forced to recall its own groups fighting in Syria and warning them of revoking their nationality within a short period of time. Both Washington and London turned blind eyes to this shocking development, preferring to continue shielding a regime roundly condemned for its systematic human rights violations. Bahrainis who had conducted the longest and most peaceful Revolution in the Arab world are determined to pursue their legitimate and noble goal of political transformation to democracy. The "oldest" democracy has explicitly taken side in the Bahraini struggle to prevent that happening. This is unfortunate but not decisive. The people's will is stronger than the evil intentions and designs of a regime which is most brutal, cunning and deceptive. The world will soon realise that oil money, state-terrorism and political engineering cannot prevail in the war between right and wrong. Eventually tyranny and hereditary dictatorship will be crushed by the peace-loving, forward-looking and most patient Bahrainis people.

Bahraini assassinated by regime's forces, UN concerned about disappearances

On 16th May Bahrainis were shocked by the assassination of a young activist at the hands of the Alkhalifa Death Squads. Ali Faisal Al Akrawi, 19, who had been on the run was targeted by the regime's killers in a similar way to that which had liquidated other activists in recent months. The young boy's body bore the marks of hateful revenge by a cruel enemy of the people, morals and humanity. Thousands of people turned out at his funeral chanting anti-regime slogans including "Down with Hamad". They were mercilessly attacked by regime's forces using shotguns and chemical gases.

The Alkhalifa regime was dealt serious blows over the past week as the political stalemate started to turn against the Alkhalifa dynastical rule. The Public Relations campaign which was heavily funded became a liability. First came the cancellation by Prince Andrew of his much-publicised appearance at a propaganda conference in London on Friday 16th May. The attendance was poor and the strong presence by the opposition outside the hall took the case of the people to the heart of the British establishment. Then the Windsor Horse Show, sponsored by Bahrain's dictator, became a propaganda platform for the victims of tyranny. The dictator wanted to buy off the political stand of the UK Government by sponsoring the show and handing awards to jockeys. Bahraini victims gathered outside the race course with their banners depicting images of torture and heavy-handed attacks by regime's forces on peaceful demonstrators. The decision

by a British court earlier to remove the anonymity of dictator's son implicated in a case accusing him of torture had demoralized regime's British supporters, forcing them to save their skin and limit their involvement with the bloody regime of the Alkhalifa.

Meanwhile the hearts of the people are throbbing in anticipation of the imminent release of Nabeel Rajab, the most prominent human rights activist in Bahrain. He had been languishing behind bars since his arrest in July 2012 and is due for release on 24th May. The human rights world has been incensed by the detention and ill-treatment of human rights activists by Bahrain's dictatorial regime. The release of Mr Rajab will bolster the political opposition to the regime which has imprisoned leaders and activists and banned freedom of expression, peaceful protests and free civil society activities.

The human rights situation has been highlighted this week in a report by Amnesty International after the return of its assessment team from Bahrain. The Alkhalifa had prevented human rights bodies from visiting the country for three years, but it has been advised by its Western backers of the need to rescind this decision to avoid being sanctioned by the Human Rights Council. While welcoming being allowed to visit the country, AI's team has registered its disenchantment with the human rights situation. It had met officials and victims and concluded that violations are continuing. In a statement on 19th May AI said: "The organization remains concerned, however, about the lack

of reform of the judiciary, slow and inadequate investigations into past abuses, and continuing restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly."

No sooner had the AI's delegation and that of the UN High Commission for Human Rights left the country than the regime started its atrocious attacks on Bahrainis. This morning Haitham Habib Al Omani, 23, has been snatched from a house at Bani Jamra town and taken to the torture dungeons. Yesterday nine Bahrainis were arrested from different towns and villages. Among them was Sayed Ahmad Al Alawi and his brother. More than twenty Bahrainis were arrested last week.

In Geneva, The United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances reviewed during its 103rd session more than one hundred newly reported cases and examined around 800 updates from governments and sources on previously accepted ones. The Working Group examined 38 of these cases that have occurred in the last three months under its urgent action procedure. They concerned Bahrain, Cambodia, China, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. "We are especially concerned about the high number of recent cases reported to us. We urge the concerned Governments to swiftly and thoroughly investigate these cases in order to determine the fate and whereabouts of the victims", observed the experts.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21 May 2014

Torture of Irish-trained doctors raised with delegates

The imprisonment and torture of doctors, militarisation of healthcare services and sectarian discrimination in public sector employment were among the issues raised today with visiting representatives of the Bahraini parliament.

Senator Averil Power (FF), Professor Damian McCormack, Professor Eoin O'Brien and Mary Lawlor, head of Front Line Defenders met with the Bahraini representatives in Leinster House.

Professors McCormack and O'Brien expressed their horror at the way their medical colleagues had been imprisoned by the Bahraini government simply for treating anti-government protesters in 2011. While some of the doctors have since been released, others, including DrAli Al Ekri, who trained in RCSI Dublin, are still in prison.

Mary Lawlor from Front Line Defenders raised the continued imprisonment of peaceful protesters in Bahrain, including , Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Nabeel

Rajab and Naji Fateel. She also highlighted the fact that the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has been denied access to Bahrain amid concerns that detainees continue to be subjected to torture there.



Fianna Fáil Spokesperson on Education Senator Averil Power expressed concern about the training and work environment for students and staff of the Bahrain campus of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. She referred to medics being denied jobs simply because they are Shia rather than Sunni, while

those who are given employment have to work in a militarized environment.

The Irish delegation welcomed the agreement by the Bahraini representatives that medical staff should not have been imprisoned and urged them to use their influence to have the remaining doctors and human rights activists released immediately. They also welcomed an invitation to return to Bahrain and follow up on their 2011 visit.

Shia activists sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia

Two Shia activists have been sentenced to death in Saudi Arabia after being convicted of attacking security forces in Eastern Province.

Ali Mohammed Baqir al-Nimr, 20, was found guilty on Tuesday of causing sedition, rioting, protesting and robbery in the district of Qatif.

It follows the conviction on Monday of Rida al-Rubh, the 26-year-old son of leading cleric Sheikh Jaafar al-Rubh.

They can appeal to higher courts and the king to overturn their sentences.

Theirs are the heaviest punishments yet handed down to those involved in the anti-government protests that erupted in the oil-rich east in 2011. More than 900 people have been arrested, and at least 300 are reportedly still in custody.

Ali al-Nimr and Rida al-Rubh are part of a group of about a dozen defendants who have been put on trial for the unrest in Qatif, particularly the village of Awamiya, where police officers and government facilities were attacked.

HRW publishes damning report, Rajab re-joins struggle to free Bahrain

Human Rights Watch published a damning 64-page report on Bahrain's "injustice" system criticising the judiciary as a key player in "maintaining the country's highly repressive political order". Joe Stork, Deputy Middle East Director, Human Rights Watch: "A police officer in Bahrain who kills a protester in cold blood or beats a detainee to death might face a sentence of six months or maybe two years, while peacefully calling for the country to become a republic will get you life in prison..." "Bahrain's problem is not a dysfunctional justice system, but rather a highly functional injustice system."

The release of Nabeel Rajab on Saturday 24th May has focused the world's attention on the Bahraini prisoners of conscience languishing behind bars, most of whom have been jailed for expressing their opinion. It has also served to highlight the lawless judicial system and its role as a tool of repression and subjugation in the hands of the ruling Alkhalifa family. Mr Rajab's first step after his liberation was to visit the family of Martyr Sayed Mahmood Sayed Mohsin who had been killed on 23rd May by members of Death Squads. They used shotguns to spray his body with pellets in three places including near his heart. Nabeel Rajab has called for the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners and all other Bahrainis. Among his main observations after his ordeal was that the situation in Bahrain has deteriorated sharply in terms of human rights and the absence of the rule of law.

Despite Mr Rajab's remarks, the regime has continued its ferocious attacks on Bahrainis. Yesterday, Ali Saeed Khalaf was sentenced to 60 days detention under the notorious terrorism laws. He had been snatched last week as he arrived at Bahrain Airport. Ahmad Al Asmakh, has been given prison sentences that have now surpassed 80 years. The latest charge is in relation to the protests that had taken place in 2011 at the Financial Harbour in the capital, the heart of prime minister's financial empire. Another Bahraini victim has accumulated more than 100 years of jail sentences. Redha Al Ghasra has been repeatedly given harsh prison sentences for opposing the hereditary dictatorship. Together, the total has now surpassed 100 years. It is widely known in the legal systems that one sentence of life imprisonment encompasses all other sentences. Another victim of this vicious judiciary is Hussain Obaid whose prison sentence matched his own age of 15 years.

Meanwhile the mass arrests affecting the natives have continued. From Northern Sehla two brothers, Sayed Hashim and Sayed Younis Sayed Talib Al Abbar were arrested at dawn yesterday. A young cleric, Sayed Sadiq Al Shakhouri has been languishing in jail for more than 18 months and has been forgotten by the human rights world.

As the repression inside the torture dungeons intensifies the prisoners have resorted to protests and hunger strikes. On Sunday 25th May Hussain Al Banna started

hunger strike after the prison authorities banned any clothing or sanitary materials from entering his cell. He has been held in solitary confinement for the past 30 days, shackled in hands and feet. His family and that of Redha Al Ghasra have confirmed that their sons have become skeletons due to ill-treatment and lack of nourishing food. Another detainee at Jaw Prison, Ibrahim Al Demstani, who is part of the medical team which had been persecuted for treating the injured, has started hunger strike. His health is deteriorating and was unable to meet his family during their scheduled visit last week.

On 23rd May Amnesty International issued a statement calling on the Bahraini authorities to launch a prompt, thorough, independent and impartial investigation into the death of Sayed Mahmood Sayed Mohsin who was sprayed with shogun pellets. The organization has urged the Bahraini authorities to ensure the investigation is transparent, that its results are made public and that anyone found responsible is brought to justice. After it presented a legal argument in support of its demands Amnesty concluded its statement saying: Amnesty International urges the authorities to launch prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all cases of torture and other ill-treatment, deaths during protests and deaths in custody, make the results public and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
28th May 2014

Bahraini torture survivor resists deportation from Britain

The Independent, 27 May 2014

Regardless of the regime's record of arbitrary arrest and torture, the UK Home Office is pursuing the deportation of a 19 year old democracy protestor back to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Isa Haidar Al-Aali, 19 years old, has been detained by UK immigration authorities for more than three months. His application for asylum has been refused twice and removal directions were issued for his deportation on 22 May 2014 despite his having been sentenced in absentia to 5 years imprisonment by a Bahraini court. Based on recent expert evidence from global and local NGOs, Isa has not, and will not, receive a fair trial in Bahrain and will almost certainly be exposed to physical and psychological harm by Bahraini authorities. His case exposes the UK's abuse of a 'fast track' asylum process designed to expedite straightforward cases.

Isa Haidar Al-Aali is a victim of targeted state violence in Bahrain and was arrested three times for exercising his basic human right to peaceful protest and political expression since 2011. Ahmed Ali of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) says: "He was eventually sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in an unfair trial by international standards."

He was first detained in Bahrain on 15 February 2013 during a peaceful protest.

Isa says he was then subjected to physical abuse. This included handcuffing from behind and being pushed into a moving security vehicle. During detention, he says, he was punched, kicked and beaten with batons and police helmets; police officers also threatened to cut-off his genitals and kill him.

After his third arrest Isa fled to the UK, seeking asylum. On his arrival at Heathrow Airport on 14 February 2014, he was placed on Fast Track Detention.

Sue Willman, partner at Deighton Pierce Glynn, following the case closely, says: "no asylum-seeker arriving from Bahrain should be processed and detained under the fast track process, which is aimed at speedy resolution of straightforward cases. Bahrain has a well-documented recent history of torture and human rights violations verified by an independent commission. Isa Al Aali continuing detention and threatened removal represents a serious injustice."

Isa's application for asylum was refused on 11 March 2014 after almost one month in detention at Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, near Heathrow Airport. His asylum claim was considered by the Home Office without waiting for translations of the documents that he had provided in Arabic to support his claim. As a result, his appeal against the refusal was quashed by the First Tier Tribunal on 24 March

2014, with the Home Office challenging the authenticity of the documents which, at the time, were not translated into English.

Between 14 February and 6 March 2014, Isa was not provided with a lawyer nor was he given an explanation of immigration proceedings in the UK. He therefore had no chance to prepare his defence and was not told of the need to translate his documents into English. Isa had access to a lawyer only the day before his asylum interview on 7 March 2014. He later appealed the decision of the Home Office to reject his asylum application but his appeal was rejected at first instance.

Permission was granted to appeal to the Upper Tribunal and Isa lodged his appeal on 14 March 2014, his evidence included the fact that he had been sentenced, in his absence, to five years imprisonment in Bahrain.

The judge recognised the significance of the fresh evidence provided, and said:

"Given that the appellant is in custody I would hope that any application to the Respondent for further consideration would be made without delay and considered without delay: If there were to be re-hearing on such issues it seems to me that the nature of the evidence and the complexity of the case as evolving would now render it perhaps not suitable for Fast Track Procedures."

AI on Bahrain: Openness on human rights, but serious concerns remain

During its latest visit to Bahrain, Amnesty International found encouraging government openness during discussions on human rights, and signs of limited progress towards greater respect for the rule of law. The organization remains concerned, however, about the lack of reform of the judiciary, slow and inadequate investigations into past abuses, and continuing restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly.

Delegates from Amnesty International visited Bahrain between 3 and 9 May and met ministers and senior government officials, survivors of human rights abuses and relatives of victims, human rights activists and organizations and political associations. They also met with individual prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, in Jaw Prison and women held in the 'Issa Town Detention Centre for Women.

The visit was the first since January 2013 due to the authorities not allowing the organization back during this period and was restricted to five working days. It came a few days after a two-month mission by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to Bahrain.

Amnesty International welcomes the Bahraini authorities' willingness to engage on human rights at many levels of government and the legal and institutional steps introduced to tackle abuses. The real test for the government now is to ensure that this climate will encourage the right approach to tackle current and past human rights violations and will result in a tangible impact on the lives of the Bahraini people.

Human rights concerns remain over the continuing detention of prisoners of conscience and the harsh sentences handed by Bahraini courts in connection with rioting, including against children. Other prisoners, including women, were sentenced to lengthy prison terms based on "confessions" they said were extracted from them under duress, and with little evidence to substantiate criminal intent. More worrying is the length of time it takes to examine and bring to court alleged perpetrators of killings, torture and other ill-treatment and the final extremely light sentences handed to the few security policemen convicted of such abuses.

The organization expressed concerns regarding house raids and arrests carried out by the security forces without warrants as well as instances of torture and other ill-treatment at the Criminal Investigations Directorate, including exposing detainees to extreme cold conditions.

During meetings, the Bahraini authorities have assured Amnesty International of their commitment and seriousness about moving forward the human rights dossier and the need for more time and engagement from the national and international human rights community in order to make the reform work. They shared with the

organization information about the training received by the security forces and the international human rights expertise they sought in order to put in place mechanisms to enhance and safeguard rights.

Amnesty International delegates also met with members of the Public Prosecution Office, the Head of the Special Investigation Unit (SIU), the Ombudsmen of the Ministry of Interior and the National Security Agency, the Commission for the Rights of Prisoners and Detainees and the National Institution for Human Rights. The authorities said they established most of these institutions as a follow-up to recommendations by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), put in place to investigate abuses in connection with the 2011 uprising.

Amnesty International supports the efforts of these institutions to investigate past and current violations. Their efforts are essential to any process that seeks to deliver justice for victims and to strengthen the rule of law and protect human rights. It is therefore imperative that these efforts are not done in half measures. The organization has raised cases of abuses with the Ombudsman of the Ministry of Interior and the SIU, and will follow closely the outcome of their investigations.

Against the backdrop of the difficult human rights situation in Bahrain and the deep mistrust towards the security forces and other government institutions, Amnesty International has urged the authorities to ensure that the burden of proof lies with them. They must demonstrate concretely and convincingly that abuses do not happen and that, when they do happen, adequate and transparent action is taken to deliver justice.

This situation is compounded by the fact that those who head the newly established human rights bodies are former members of the Public Prosecution Office, appointed by

royal decrees, or people seen to be too close to the government. Human rights activists and opposition groups told Amnesty International that they did not believe these institutions would deliver justice and that if the government was really genuine about its reforms it would have staffed these institutions with independent people.

Regrettably, the institutional reforms so far introduced have not yet extended to removing restrictions on freedom of association, expression and assembly or to reforming the judicial system. Royal decrees introduced in 2013 continue to restrict freedom of expression and assembly, banning demonstrations in the capital Manama indefinitely and increasing punishment for those convicted of insulting the king. NGOs continue to operate under very restrictive conditions, and political and human rights activists face judicial harassment, forcing some of them into exile for fear of imprisonment.

The Bahraini authorities continue to use vaguely worded security concerns to strip or revoke individuals of their Bahraini nationality, rendering some of them stateless. Amnesty International considers that for the current human rights efforts to be more meaningful the Bahraini authorities must start a serious process of reform of the judiciary to ensure its independence to deliver justice and a thorough review of laws still in breach of Bahrain's obligations under international human rights law. Amnesty International also urges the members of the Human Rights Council to address the human rights situation in Bahrain robustly at the Council's upcoming 26th session in June 2014 to ensure Bahrain's full implementation of the recommendations it accepted during its Universal Periodic Review in 2012.

Two Bahraini youths were martyred in May. On 16th May Ali Faisal Al Akrawi was assassinated by the regime's Death Squads who have been pursuing activists on the run. On 21st May 15-years old Sayed Mahmood Sayed Mohsin was fatally wounded by regime's Death Squads. After being shot in the legs, he was taken to an alleyway and shot at close range. His killers will never be prosecuted. Human Rights Watch has described the justice system in Bahrain: "*Bahrain's problem is not a dysfunctional justice system, but rather a highly functional injustice system.*"



Ali Al Akrawi



Sayed Mahmood