

BAHRAIN

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

Gaza bears the brunt of onslaught by counter revolution forces

The holy month of Ramadhan was overshadowed by the Israeli attack on Gaza and the subsequent land invasion. The scenes of death and destruction have shocked the world as the pro-Zionist lobbies and forces acted to neutralise the effects of those horrible scenes. As the numbers of casualties on the Palestinian side escalated so did the public anger at the Western lack of will to stop the aggression. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, joined President Obama in calling for a ceasefire, but both stalled when the Israelis failed to heed the call, continuing its criminal onslaught on the unarmed civilian population of Gaza. It had been under virtual siege in the form of sea blockade since Hamas won the elections in 2005. In addition to the sea blockade by the Israelis, Egypt's military rulers have tightened their grip on the tunnels that used to supply Gaza with its material needs. Now those tunnels have largely been targeted and destroyed by the Israelis. The Arab rulers have done little to elevate the suffering of Palestinians. Some have contributed financially to those trapped behind enemy lines, but the big Arab powers, like Saudi Arabia, have refrained from taking a strong, principled and humane stands.

Furthermore, there has been almost total ban on demonstrations and protests in Arab capitals in support of the Gaza resistance. People of Bahrain may have been the most active in expressing support to the Palestinians through their daily and nightly protests. In addition to their revolutionary zeal, Bahrainis are experiencing the wrath of occupation by foreign powers of their land. The Alkhalifa occupation of Bahrain has continued for two centuries but has now been compounded by the Saudi occupation which started mid March 2011. Bahrainis understand what it means to be deprived of citizenship in your own homeland and how forces of occupation are wreaking havoc in the country, annexing lands, plundering wealth and displacing natives. The world has ignored the cries of help by Bahrainis for years. They are now determined to claim their land back from those evil occupiers and won't accept any political solution short of total liberation of the country. Occupation is an evil that must

not be condoned, but has to be resisted. The crisis in this small Gulf state is likely to become an igniting factor for wider revolts against corrupt regimes especially those based on tribal basis. Bahrainis have organised countrywide protests and demonstrations in support of the Palestinians who are being slaughtered by the Israelis. It is becoming clearer by the day that targeting Hamas and Islamic Jihad is in line with the plans devised by the counter revolution forces. Saudi Arabia has invested tens of billions of dollars to unseat Islamist groups who succeeded in reaching top government posts. They started their campaign three years ago when they invaded Bahrain and crushed the popular revolution. Unfortunately the reaction by the leaders of the revolutionary movements in other countries was totally absent. The response to that invasion should have been more robust and the official explanation should have been rejected.

Today, the Arab people are paying hefty price for their earlier stands vis-à-vis the counter revolution forces. After crushing the revolutions, one after another, those forces are now targeting two important spheres of strategic significance. First came the attack on Iraq by ISIS terrorists who are occupying North Western Iraq. They were bred by the counter revolution forces (especially Saudi Arabia and Israel). The sophistication of the attack indicate foreign hands behind the organised attack. Sectarianism is the apparent motive for this attack with the hope that the Arab public opinion would support what ISIS had done. The reality is that ISIS aims at uprooting the moderate pan-Islamic movements whose emergence in the past three decades have challenged the Western hegemony in Muslim lands. Then the Gaza attack was launched. The aim is to force Hamas to the same fate as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Hamas and Islamic Jihad have been able to withstand the Israeli military onslaught and are unlikely to accept a ceasefire that does not lead to lifting the blockade on Gaza. There is a big dilemma for counter revolution forces. If the two organisations are not wiped out then it is a major setback to those who had planned the attack. This means that both Hamas and Islamic Jihad

have won the war. It will have psychological consequences to counter revolution forces which had been plotting against the "political Islam". The Egyptian, Saudi, Emirati stands have put them at loggerheads with the popular Islamic movement. The terrorist groups which are helped by those forces will soon find themselves waging a new war against those forces. The rivalry among the armed groups is so big that they have engaged in real internal warfare that resulted in the killing of more than 7000 people. The countries that had witnessed the Arab Spring are unlikely to accept that their destiny is to live under absolute monarchical rulers. Within few years there will be a new wave of revolutions to unseat the present dictators. The Saudis have now become enemy of freedom lovers and proven to be the main obstacle to democratic change.

The Palestinian problem has always been starting point for revolutionary indoctrination and political enlightenment. It has also contributed to Arab awareness and became an identity to those seeking change in the region. The counter revolution forces hoped that their sectarian doctrine would divert the attention away from the Palestinian problem. But now that the Israelis have undertaken an all-out war against Gaza the Saudi-sponsored sectarian project is under serious threat. The Alkhalifa regime is becoming increasingly worried that those regional developments may eventually pave the way to its downfall. The Saudis are now considered by world opinion to be the main sponsors of sectarianism, extremism and terrorism. The recent mishap between Alkhalifa and Washington following the expulsion of Tom Malinowski is one such development that could dent the course of events to the disadvantage of the dictatorial regime. With resolute stands by the Bahrainis people and the refusal by the political societies to participate in the regime's shura council elections, the stage is thus set for an eventual showdown between the two camps; that of democracy and that of dictatorship. The hope is that those developments happen soon so that smooth transition from dictatorship to democracy is achieved with least political and human costs.

Saudis, Alkhalifa support Israel, commit crimes against people

As the Bahrainis poured onto the streets to protest the Israeli aggression against Gaza, the regime has intensified its attacks on those peaceful protests. Many Bahrainis have been injured in those attacks in which chemical gases and gunshots were extensively used against peaceful demonstrators. The revolutionary forces had announced a series of activities in solidarity with Gaza. The towns of Demstan, Karzakkan, Sitra and Duraz witnessed increased pro-Palestinian activities braving intensified repression and collective punishment by regime's forces. Both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are accused of supporting Israel and encouraging its attack on Gaza.

The wave of arrests has continued. Yesterday two brothers, Hussain and Mirza Al Saffar were arrested at the Bahrain-Saudi causeway and taken to torture dungeons. In the early hours of yesterday Qassim Ali Jassim was arrested when his house in Sitra was raided by members of Death Squads. Detainee Jamil Abdul Ghani was transferred to intensive care when his condition deteriorated. He was on hunger strike in protest at the ill-treatment and lack of medical care.

On Monday 21st July, the Alkhalifa juvenile court sentenced three boys to 15 years in jail for opposing the hereditary regime. The three, Mohammad Abdul Rasool, Ali Hassan and Hussain Ahmad (from Sanabis) were also asked to pay 1000 BD each. Human rights activists condemned the ruling for using "confessions" extracted under torture as evidence. Yesterday another

youth, Majed Ahmad Habib was sentenced to 15 years under the Alkhalifa terrorism act which had been condemned worldwide by lawmakers and human rights activists. The detention of 13-years old Ahmad Zakariya Abdul Karim was renewed for one more week. Another child, Mohammad Al Shamlan had also his detention extended by one week. The detention of another 15-years boy, Firas Mohammad Al Saffar was also extended by 45 days. On 17th July, Mohammad Mansoor Abdul Hussain, 14, was jailed for six months for opposing the Alkhalifa regime

As UK Parliament went to recess the number of MPs who signed an Early Day Motion (EDM) rose to 36. It calls on the Alkhalifa regime to overhaul the justice system which is oppressive and lacks the international standards of justice. It calls for implementation of BICI recommendations and end culture of impunity of torturers. The EDM "calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners including Ibrahim Sharif, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, Hassan Mushaima, Naji Fateel and Abdulwahab Husain; is further concerned at the failure of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to list Bahrain as a country of concern in its 2014 Human Rights Report; and further calls on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to condemn human rights abuses in Bahrain and list it as a country of concern in order to promote accountability and transparency within Bahrain's justice system."

Meanwhile the political stakes were raised

by the regime's threat to ban the largest political society. Al Wefaq National Islamic Society is now being actively targeted by Bahrain's dictator and his clique for declaring boycott of the elections of the powerless shura council. The dictator has pinned his hopes of international forgiveness for his crimes on running smooth "elections" to his powerless council, hoping it will convince the world that he is a "democrat". The people's Revolution has created an atmosphere of total boycott of the tribal regime to pave the way for a democratic system based on "one-man-one-vote" principle. The threat by the Alkhalifa minister of justice to issue a court verdict to ban AlWefaq is a serious escalation that has exposed deep unwillingness to reform the hereditary dictatorship. Eighteen Congressmen have sent a letter to Bahrain's tyrant urging that Assistant Secretary Malinowski be welcomed back to the country so that he can resume his diplomatic efforts aimed at improving human rights in Bahrain. The Government of Bahrain recently expelled Mr. Tom Malinowski, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. The signatories made it clear that "good bilateral relations cannot flourish if a top US diplomat is barred from Bahrain". The letter is an indictment of the Alkhalifa dictators who have repeatedly proven their inability to comprehend modern standards of statehood, and remained entrenched in their tribal antiquated world.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
23rd July 2014

Bahrainis angered by Zionist assault on Gaza

As Israeli aggression against Palestinians continues, Bahrain's regime has banned public support to the victims of the Zionist state-terrorism. Yesterday a planned rally at "Freedom Square" near Maqsha Town was swiftly banned by the authorities without giving rational justification. Bahrainis are the nearest in their suffering to the Palestinians; having been under foreign occupation for decades and subjected to ethnic cleansing by the occupiers. They also share the Palestinian experiences of forced exile, expulsion and revoking of nationality. The revolutionary groups have dedicated their daily protests to condemn Israeli aggression and expose the extent of Saudi and Alkhalifa cooperation with the Israelis in their security and political arrangements that violate the rights of the Palestinians.

Last week's decision by Bahrain's dictator to expel the US Assistant-Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, Tom Malinowski, has caused confusion in the political circles, especially that Washington has refrained from announcing proper response beyond the expressions of concern and regret. On the other hand Bahraini activists have warned against exploiting the apparent rift between the Obama administration and Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship to push for a political agenda that aims

at keeping the regime in power. Although Bahrain's political societies had announced boycott of next elections for dictator's shura council, there is unease about the pressure mounted by US and UK on the opposition to join those meaningless elections. Behind-the-scene deals and negotiations are not binding to the youthful resistance movement whose aim is to establish a new political order in the country based on "one man one vote" system and ending HR abuses.,

The attacks on civilian protesters have led to more arrests. In the early hours of this morning three citizens were arrested at the Town of El Ekr in dawn raids on their homes. On 13th July, Jaffar Makki Mansoor was arrested at the Town of Karzakkan by masked members of Death Squads. The regime's courts have ordered the detention of Hassan Al Qatari for 45 days for anti-regime's protests. He was arrested after leaving a congregation of Quran recitation. He had pellet injuries on his body. The Public prosecution also ordered 45 days detention pending investigation for brothers Mahdi and Faisal Saleh Taresh for "illegal gathering". The photographer, Ahmad Al Mosaawi had his detention extended by 15 more days for doing his job and covering the events of the ongoing Revolution. A 13 years old child, Mohammad Al Shamlan has

been detained for taking part in a peaceful protest. A 15 years old boy, Yousuf Sahwan was also detained. At the Dry Dock prison Bahraini prisoners have sustained major assault by officers who beat them mercilessly. They were also abused verbally with dirty sectarian language for celebrating a religious event on 15th Ramadan.

On Saturday 12th July Bahrainis whose nationalities had been revoked by the Alkhalifa regime were summoned by interior ministry and told to sign a statement that their nationality had been revoked and that they had to re-organise their status of residence in their native country. This is one of the most outrageous criminal acts by a regime of occupation against the natives.

Amnesty International (AI) issued an Urgent Action in the case of Dr Saeed al-Samaheji who was taken into custody to serve one year prison sentence for treating the injured. AI urged its members to write to the authorities to express concern that Dr al-Samahiji is a prisoner of conscience and to urge them to repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, in line with Bahrain's obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
16th July 2014

Trouble with Bahrain

By Rep. Hank Johnson
July 22, 2014

As home to more than 7,000 U.S. military personnel and to the U.S. Fifth Fleet and Naval Central Command, Bahrain has been an ally of the United States for decades. Yet the Government of Bahrain is increasingly proving itself to be undependable and erratic – putting the long-term viability of our presence in the country at risk.

Two weeks ago, Bahraini government officials announced the expulsion of Tom Malinowski, the U.S. assistant secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor as he was making an official visit.

The Government of Bahrain declared Malinowski as “unwelcome” and accused him of interfering in the internal affairs of the country. His only crime was meeting with Bahrain opposition leaders inside the U.S. Embassy without the presence of a Bahraini Foreign Ministry official.

This unprecedented decision – to publicly expel one of our nation’s top diplomats without warning – calls into ques-



tion how much we can count on the Government of Bahrain as a dependable ally.

Coupled with an erratic host government, the deteriorating political and security situation in Bahrain also threatens the long-term viability of the U.S. presence in the country.

There has been a clear and steady increase in instability and violence in the country since widespread pro-democracy protests erupted in

2011. Regular warnings issued by the State Department declare growing swaths of the country as “off-limits” to U.S. service members and their families amid reports of regular, violent clashes between protesters and police. The absence of meaningful political reforms to address Bahrainis’ underlying frustrations only makes the potential for increased unrest more acute.

Because of this increased volatility in Bahrain, I offered an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2014 National Defense Authorization Act earlier this year requiring Secretary Hagel to assess the security situation in Bahrain and the threat of increased instability and violence to U.S. military assets and personnel stationed in the country. It also required the Depart-

ment to report on a contingency plan for U.S. naval personnel and their families should the American presence in Bahrain become untenable.

The Fifth Fleet – as a nerve center for U.S. maritime presence in the Gulf – is a critical element of our capacity to protect U.S. national security interests in the region. The development of contingency planning for U.S. personnel is not only in line with the U.S. military’s routine practice of maintaining a wide range of contingency plans to address potential threats with national security implications, but it is imperative in the event that instability in Bahrain becomes severe enough to jeopardize U.S. assets and personnel.

After Bahrain openly expelled a senior U.S. official visiting the country, I believe that my proposal for contingency planning warrants further discussion. The island is becoming more unstable, and the ruling family that governs it is becoming less predictable. With much of the region in chaos, we must ensure our naval assets are sustainably secured through examining a range of alternative options in the Gulf. Ignoring the warning signs in Bahrain now would be a dangerous miscalculation, and a risk we cannot afford to take.

Johnson has represented Georgia's 4th Congressional District since 2007. He sits on the Armed Services and the Judiciary committees.

Internet monitoring in the Gulf We're watching you

Jul 16th 2014

ACROSS the repressive Gulf, social media has become an important way for activists and would-be reformers to speak out. In response, governments have tried to crack down or use this to gather information about dissidents. On June 24th Citizen Lab, a Toronto-based cyberspace security outfit, said it had detected specialised spyware being used in Saudi Arabia—the first time it has seen such sophisticated software in that country. (The Saudi authorities have not responded to these allegations).

The software, known as a remote control device (RCS), can hack into mobile phones, giving the government access to all the user’s information—what he or she has looked at or written online and the call history, for example. Unlike basic surveillance software, the RCS can also transform the device into a monitoring tool by switching on and controlling the camera and microphone, without the user noticing. Citizen Lab and Human Rights Watch, a New York-based rights group that is also looking into the case, reckon the Saudi government is using this particular software to monitor activists in the eastern province of Qatif, home to the country’s minority community of Shia Muslims. Anti-government protests took place there in 2011 and 2012.

Citizen Lab says the software was disguised as a copy of a mobile phone news application called Qatif Today. Once



downloaded, the corrupted version of the application installs the spyware. Since news of the spyware clone broke, Qatif Today’s developers have flagged up the issue and reassured Saudis that the real version is unaffected.

Citizen Lab is unable to tell how many devices have been infected, but has linked the RCS to the legal Italian spyware providers known as Hacking Team. Hacking Team’s website says it provides the technology “to the worldwide law enforcement and intelligence communities”.

This is not the first time such surveillance spyware has been found in the Gulf. In October 2012 similar software known as FinFisher, manufactured by Anglo-German company Gamma, was linked to the monitoring of high profile dissidents in Bahrain. Like Hacking Team, Gamma only sells to governments.

Until recently such technology was only used by governments with a long history of expertise in spying, such as Russia, says Bill Marczak of Bahrain Watch, an NGO that monitors human-rights violations in Bahrain. “Now any government that is willing to spend several hundred thousand dollars can acquire these hacking tools and get the training they need,” says Cynthia Wong, who researches internet violations for Human Rights Watch.

That leaves activists more exposed than ever. “Social media activity is increasingly being used as evidence against us,”

says a Saudi activist, who wishes to remain anonymous. Most online activists in the Gulf use pseudonyms on their Twitter or Facebook accounts, but Human Rights Watch says a common counter-tactic used by the authorities in the United Arab Emirates, for example, is to unmask users’ identities by recording their internet address and therefore their location.

Currently it is legal for governments to buy the spyware—the sale and export of surveillance tools is virtually unregulated by international law. Spyware providers say they sell their products to governments for “lawful purposes”. But activists allege that their governments violate national laws in their often politically motivated use of such software. They argue that companies should be held accountable for selling spyware to repressive governments.

Activists grumble that the growing use of spyware is being largely ignored. “This issue has not yet got the attention it deserves,” says Bahaa Nasr, a Lebanese representative of Cyber Arabs, an Arabic-language platform that promotes digital security and transparency in the region.

Without legal recourse, all activists and researchers can do is to expose the software and campaign against its use. Citizen Lab and Human Rights Watch have called for companies to carry out due diligence of governments before agreeing to sell them the software. However, Citizen Lab warns that the usual response to spyware detection is to encourage manufacturers “to update their software to evade detection”.

Message from the Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Méndez

The following is the text of Mr Mendez's message to the meeting organised by Lord Avebury on Bahrain on 26th June 214:

I am very pleased to be able to speak to this important hearing and I want to thank Lord Avebury for the opportunity to be able to discuss with you the human rights situation in Bahrain. It is a situation that is a reason for grave concern on my part as the special rapporteur on torture because we continue to hear of a harsh clamp down on human right defenders and on peaceful demonstrators. That is in the context of a highly polarised political situation. That is why the United Nations Special Procedures have quite an interest in Bahrain.

On a regular basis my mandate receives information on allegations of torture and ill treatment of detainees including beatings and forced confessions. We also receive information about the denial of medical treatment for people who are incarcerated and are suffering different ailments some from torture and some pre-existing but in violation of the state of Bahrain to provide adequate medical treatment to anyone in detention.

We are also concerned that there is very little information pointing to the fulfilment of Bahrain's obligation to investigate, prosecute and punish torture. We understand that there have been two convictions

of policemen with sentences of ten years in prison for causing the death of an inmate. We also hear that the ombudsman of Bahrain says that there are currently 12 cases before the courts involving police officers and two before the disciplinary boards but we do not have any information about the charges filed against those individuals or the outcome of prosecutions.

We also receive frequent complaints about the excessive use of force in the repression of demonstrators in the street. Since the clashes of 2011 those reports have been unceasing. We have continued to receive them which means that the government has not changed its policy regarding crowd control or the excessive use of force in repressing demonstrations.

The recommendations made by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry under the Chairmanship of Professor Sheriff Bassiouni are all in a state of unimplementation despite the fact that it is more than three years since that seminal report has been published.

Similarly all the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council during the Universal Periodic Review of Bahrain seem, as far as we can tell, are not being implemented by Bahrain at this point. At the same time there has been no progress in ratifying the optional protocol to the Convention Against Torture that would facilitate independent prison visits in Bahrain.

There are many political prisoners who have been arrested, mistreated and tortured

and unjustly convicted to lengthy prison terms in the two and a half years since the political conflict began. It seems that new arrests of activists are on the rise again.

The government claims it has been making some positive achievements. We note the creation of the Office of the Public Ombudsman and the official launch of this office in July 2013. However there are serious questions regarding the independence and effectiveness of this office. It does not comply with the Paris principles on national human rights institutions.

In February 2012 the government created a special investigation in the Public Prosecution Office but again we do not see any signs that this is an impartial and independent investigation unit or that it has had any effect in investigating cases of torture.

As many of you know I was invited by the Government of Bahrain to visit the country. The original visit was planned for March 2012 and the government cancelled at the very last minute – literally within days of having to arrive in Manama. After lengthy negotiations we settled for April of 2013 and again at the very last minute the government cancelled that visit.

It has also tried to portray the cancellations as my decision. I want emphatically to state that I have never reneged on my intention to visit Bahrain. Not only was the decision made in both cases unilaterally

by the government despite my repeated requests to the contrary. Also since April 2014 I have been asking the government of Bahrain to set another date since it says they are only postponing my visit and not cancelling it. It has been more than one year and at least three attempts on my part I have not been able to get the government of Bahrain to establish a firm date for my visit to the country.

In March last year I had a meeting in Geneva with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was a very inconclusive meeting. The minister then told me of the intention of the government to invite me eventually but was not in a position to commit to any specific date. He even tried to make it appear that I myself had cancelled at least one of the visits which is completely untrue. The government seems to count the proposal of a date that I could not accept because of previous commitments as a cancellation. The two cancellations that the government produced were on previously agreed upon dates and as I said previously happened at the very last minute when all the plans were in place for my travel. I am of course continuing to insist on going to Bahrain and beyond that I continue to follow the situation as closely as I can.

As you may know we have sent several communications and I have published my final views on cases which were at different stages brought to my attention. They have published in the reports of the Officer of the High Commissioner and in several cases I found that Bahrain was in breach of its international obligations with regards to torture and cruel

and degrading treatment in the cases presented before me.

Most recently in the course of this year I have had occasion to send at least two additional cases. In both cases the government of Bahrain has responded but with very cursory information about the fact that these people have been incarcerated and prosecuted and in some bases punished but without any response to my inquiry about whether they have in fact been mistreated or tortured during their interrogation or whether the evidence used against them was based on coercion which would be a violation of Bahrain's obligation under the Convention Against Torture.

In the two recent cases that I have sent to Bahrain involve the torture and ill treatment of Mr Ahmed Al Arab a 22-year-old student and political activist who was arrested on 9th January 2014 in Hamad town. His relatives claim that he was severely beaten by the security officers in order to obtain a confession and he was stripped naked, beaten and sexually assaulted. They also put a cloth on his face and poured water on his face to make him feel like he was drowning – the torture technique known as water boarding. He was also hung up naked by his arms. In addition he suffered a shoulder injury because of this and my information is that this very severe injury was not being treated while he was in custody.

The other case involves a 15-year-old Mr Ahmed Al Megdad. He was arrested in 2012. My reports claim that he was beaten, threatened and assaulted. His captives attempted to sexually assault him. He was subjected to a mock execution and he was moved around to different detention centres but in the dry dock detention centre he was reportedly held with adults and convicted criminals.

It seems that the criminal court which convicted him has relied on evidence extracted under duress and refused to investigate the complaint of ill treatment and torture filed by his lawyer. His family has been prevented from attending the verdict and sentencing and he was ultimately sentenced to ten years in prison under the anti-terrorism law for burning a police vehicle.

I mention these two cases because they are the most recent that I have been working on but also because they seem to be illustrative of the ongoing policies of the government of Bahrain in violation of the most clear standards of human rights protection prohibiting torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

I hope that this hearing contributes to bring attention to the situation in Bahrain and that it makes a step towards persuading the authorities in Bahrain about allowing independent investigations but also to start implementing the recommendations that the international community has been making to them on how to treat the very highly polarised situation in the country today.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a very successful hearing.

