

BAHRAIN

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

Bahrain's tragic situation needs new international approach

Over 40 months have now passed since the largest-ever Revolution was launched by the youth of the country whose lives has been miserable. Nothing indicates willingness by the Alkhalifa to change track of their policies or review their attitude towards people of Bahrain. The special links between Bahrain's ruling family and those of Saudi or Kuwaiti ruling families do not have direct impact on the attitude of the regime towards its native boys. Yet Bahrain's dictator has been reacting with more dependence on outside forces. More than ever the ruling family is feeling that its days in Bahrain are numbered and that there is rising national feeling against its dominance of almost all aspects of political and economic lives. Yet sometimes it looks as if it is comfortable with the situation despite the continuing political strife, the daily protests, the international condemnation of their policies and the unease towards them even by their own supporters. The expulsion of US Under-Secretary of State for Human Rights, Democracy and Labour was swiftly rebuked by the dictator's men and asked to leave the country within 24 hours. Tom Malowinski visited Bahrain in July and expelled for making contact with the opposition. Because of the absence of tangible reaction from the White House, the Alkhalifa continued their policy by refusing to grant Congressman Jim McGovern a visa to visit Bahrain.

What is then that makes this regime feel able to rebuff Washington, the European Union and almost all human rights bodies?

There are several factors contributing to this. First is their ability to get away with murder. For years they have been targeting Bahrainis who had opposed them but no foreign force had been able to stop them. Even when they plotted the assassination of a Bahraini businessman, Hussain Nejadi, in Malaysia in July 2013 no action was taken to identify the killers and their financiers. The killing of more than 150 Bahrainis in the past three years for their anti-regime activities has raised no eye brows within the international community despite calls for international protection of Bahrainis. They are being sheltered by some Western countries which do not favour democratic transfor-

mation of Bahrain or Saudi Arabia. The regime's foreign advisers are aware of the reluctance to sanction Alkhalifa for their crimes. As long as this criminal regime continues to enjoy this immunity from pressure or political sanctions, it will continue its policy of extermination of Bahrainis. The second factor is the support it enjoys from the Saudi and the British. Both have collaborated to shield Alkhalifa regime against the angry Bahrainis who want to see fundamental change in their country. The Saudi occupation has been a prominent factor in the blood letting, destruction of mosques, persecuting of the medics, athletes, teachers, men and women. Their troops are still in the country amid the deafening Western silence.

The third factor is the intense repression that the international community has done nothing to end. There are the enormous prisons in this small country. More prisons have been built in the past few years than hospitals. Yet they are today overcrowded to the extent that cells which had been built for four people are now housing eight inmates, with all the emotional, psychological and health hazards attached. The regime has built prisons in various ways and locations. Some prisons have underground dungeons that have become nightmare to the inmates. The basement of the National Security Agency are notorious for their filth and horrific treatment.

Then there is the policy of torture that the regime has adopted and refuses to abandon. The dictator and his clique are aware of the fact that abandoning torture and other forms of human rights will result in more protests that could lead to their downfall. Yet the continued human rights violations have caused little inconvenience to a regime that is un-nerved by international condemnation. The petrodollars of the Saudis and other Gulf monarchies have pacified the international stands and enabled the Alkhalifa and Al Saud to continue their human rights violations unchallenged. Torture has become daily occurrence. The dictator has refused to allow a visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Juan Mendez does not believe that his visit will go ahead as long as the regime feels able to refuse it without having to pay high price for this. When the photographer, Ammar Abdul

Rasool was arrested last month he was severely tortured and abused at a time when the UK's Foreign Office insists that the human rights situation in Bahrain had improved. Torture is an evil but the Bahraini regime feels at ease as it continues adopting it as a tool against Bahrainis.

Perhaps the most destructive of all is the political naturalization that aims at altering the demographic balance in the country. Being of foreign origin, the Alkhalifa have never felt part of the Bahraini society with both branches, Shia and Sunni. The dictator's policy of granting citizenship to foreigners and revoke the nationality of the natives is unique in the world. Apart from the Israelis no other regime is known for rigorously adopting it. Bahrain's tyrant has proven himself unparalleled in his savagery and feeling of impunity when committing horrendous crimes of torture and genocide. His close friends in Washington and London refrained from rebuking him when he revoked the nationality of 31 native Bahrainis in 2012. Last month he repeated the crime by revoking the nationality of nine others who were sentenced to life imprisonment for opposing his tyrannical rule.

There is now a need to protect native Bahrainis against his evil regime by making it a crime to implement its policy which is nothing less than genocide. Those evil practices have gone unchecked, and may have been supported, for years. It is time that the human conscience is evoked to stop these crimes against humanity. The Human Rights Council has become so ineffective and politically manipulated that it has failed to discuss the situation in Bahrain because the Western powers did not want it. For how long will this policy continue? The former High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, had her hands tightened by the protocols of the job. Now that Prince Zaid of Jordan has taken her place, he can act differently if he wants to clear his conscience. The problem is that he comes from within a regime that continues sending troops and torturers to support the Alkhalifa dictator. Will he prove himself capable of living up to his human commitment? Or will he just be another pone in a bigger war of values, priorities and policies?

Saudi-backed regime commits more abuses, faces world-wide condemnation

The Israeli aggression on Gaza has led to new Arab awareness of the counter revolution forces headed by Saudi regime. Bahraini protesters have continued their pro-Palestinian protests amid increasing attacks by Saudi-backed Alkhalifa forces. Concern is growing for the safety of Hassan Abdulla Habib Ali. There have been no news since he had been transferred to the CID torture centre. The family of Talib Ali is also worried about his safety as nothing is known about him since he was taken for further interrogation twelve days ago. He had already been tried and sentenced to a total of 52 years for anti-regime activities. On 3rd August a young Bahraini man was arrested during a visit to his imprisoned brother. Ali Saeed was taken away from the family visit at the Dry Dock prison for no obvious reasons. On 2nd August, Abdulla Ayyoub, from Juffair, was also arrested. The regime's prosecutors have ordered 45 days detention of Mohammad Jassim Habib, from Saar Town, for taking part in anti-regime demonstrations. The economic situation has worsened rapidly in recent months as the political situation remained polarized. First came the assertion by the UNDP that unemployment in Bahrain was more than 20 percent. This compares to the regime's estimates of under 5 percent. The Alkhalifa have always attempted to present a rosy picture of the economy even at times of crisis. On the other hand Standard & Poor's Ratings Services has lowered its long-term rating on

Bahrain-based BMI Bank B.S.C. to 'BB' from 'BB+'. S&P removed the long-term rating from CreditWatch with negative implications, which were placed on June 3, 2013. "The merger of BMI bank with Al Salam Bank-Bahrain B.S.C. was concluded on March 31, 2014, in a "business combination" transaction where Al Salam Bank issued new shares to existing shareholders of BMI Bank to acquire 100 per cent of the bank.

Several human rights bodies have called for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Saeed Al Samahiji who is accused of criticizing the country's dictator. The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), The Bahraini Instituted for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and The Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) signed a statement on 1st August calling for the release of Bahrainis accused of the same "offence" saying that it is contrary to international laws that guarantee freedom of expression. Dr Al Samahiji is one of the Bahraini medics jailed for treating the wounded in 2011. After his release last year he was re-arrested on 1st July for the "new crime".

On another level, regime's forces have continued daily and nightly raids on people's homes. On 3rd August, four houses at Al Musalla Town were raided with ferocity and cruelty. At the town of Bani Jamra, those forces attacked the house of Sheikh Habib Al Jamri who had fled the country in 2011. The home of Abdul Ghani Khanjar,

another activist who had fled last year, was also attacked

Under the title "Electronic Witch-Hunts in Bahrain, Israel and the ISIS" an article was been on 2nd August by The Global Voices Online. It presented the following paragraph highlighting the situation in Bahrain: "A photograph from www.B4BH.com calling people who have any information about the child in the picture to share it in a campaign to reveal "traitors" in Bahrain. The website, part of the electronic witch-hunt which followed the Bahrain protests in 2011, is called "Pictures of traitors of Bahrain".

Yesterday The Los Angeles Times published an article by Paul Richter titled: "Critics decry lack of U.S. response to Bahrain expulsion". It said: Bahrain's expulsion last month of the top U.S. diplomat for democracy and human rights was a provocative move that seemed sure to bring a strong reaction from Washington. But four weeks later, the Obama administration has made no visible response beyond a phone call from Secretary of State John F. Kerry to Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Khalifa expressing U.S. concern. Critics are warning that the low-key U.S. reaction will be read abroad as a sign of weakness and encourage other governments to push back when Washington presses for reforms on governance and human rights.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
6th August 2014

Saudis condemned for harsh sentences, Bahrainis call for end of occupation

On 15TH August Amnesty International criticised Saudi Arabia for handing down a harsh verdict to a leading Shia cleric. It said that the harsh sentence of Sheikh Tawfiq al-Amr shows the disturbing pattern of harassment against the Shia community in Saudi Arabia. A court in the Saudi kingdom has given the Shia cleric an eight-year jail term and a ten-year travel ban. He has also been barred from delivering religious sermons. "Sheikh Tawfiq al-Amr is the latest Shia cleric to pay a very high price for refusing to be silenced," said Said Boumedouha, Amnesty International's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa. The cleric has been charged with criticizing the country's ruling system and calling for political reform. In a bizarre and sad episode regime's forces pursued peaceful protesters with their four wheel vehicles, running over one of them. As he joined a protest to mark the Independence Day on Friday 15th August, Mohammad Ashoor from Al Ma'amir Town was hit by police vehicle and was seriously injured. He was taken to hospital but was later detained and transferred to torture dungeons. Almost all Independence Day protests were attacked by regime's forces using shotguns, chemical and tear gases. Some protesters ventured into Manama calling for an end to Saudi occupation.

In one of most disturbing acts of contempt of justice fourteen people were sentenced to life imprisonment on the false pretext of killing one of the mercenaries defending Alkhalifa tribe, and taking part in peaceful protests. Despite protestations from their lawyers who detailed the torture inflicted on the Bahrainis, the dictator's henchmen at the court read out the sentence. Almost all of the accused had formidable alibi to exclude them from any part in the alleged crime. More over nine of these innocent native Bahrainis had their nationality revoked by the Alkhalifa occupiers of the country. The Bahraini natives who were punished by revocation of their nationality are: Hamed Jaffar, Ahmad, 30, Nidhal Ali Mohammad Isa, 34, Hussain Jassim Isa Al Banna, 22, Sayed Hashim Radhi Hassan Majed, 23, Mohammad Abbas Ibrahim Mahdi, 25, Ali Ahmad Al Usfoor, 23, Jalal Ali Mohammad Ali, 21, and Ali Hassan Adam Qaher, 23.

The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights reported that 30 Bahrainis have been arrested in the past week. Only three of them were subsequently released. Yesterday a 16 years old Bahraini youth was sentenced to three years in jail for taking part in anti-regime demonstration. Ali Abdul Hadi from Arad was falsely accused in connection with protests at Al Jabiriya Secondary School earlier this year. Another youth, Taha Isma'il Ram-

adhan was given 45 days detention pending investigation for participating in a demonstration. A blind youth, Jaffar Ma'tooq had been sentenced to ten years for inciting against the regime. Another Bahraini youth, Ali Mohammad Ali was arrested at the Saudi-Bahraini causeway and taken to an unknown location. Sayed Yousuf Sayed Abbas Al Alawi was detained during a night raid at his home at Hamad Town. On 17th August Ali Abdullah Salman and Abdulla Hassan Yaseen were arrested after their car had been stopped by mercenaries. Sadiq Al Qatari, from Sanabis was detained at the airport and taken to the torture dungeons.

The situation inside Bahrain has remained tense with daily protests in most of the towns and villages. In the past few days there have been protests and demonstrations in Manama, Sitra, Ma'amir, Sanabis, Durraz, Jidhafs and other places. The regime's security forces, made largely of foreign mercenaries, repeated their merciless attacks on these protests, using their chemical and tear gases, in addition to the shotguns. Many people were injured in the last week. The latest weapon being deployed by the dictator and his clique is the adoption of ISIS, the terrorist group wreaking havoc in Syria and Iraq.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
20th August 2014

HRW: Bahrain: Citizenship Rights Stripped Away

Authorities Take New Powers to Arbitrarily Revoke Nationality

August 21, 2014

(Beirut) – Ten people whose Bahraini citizenship was withdrawn without due process are facing deportation or jail. They are among 31 people declared stateless in November 2012, allegedly for damaging state security. The others have left the country. July 2014 amendments to Bahrain [2]’s citizenship laws will grant the Interior Ministry additional authority to revoke citizenship of people who fail in their “duty of loyalty” to the state, a vaguely worded provision that could be used against government critics, Human Rights Watch said. Recent amendments to Bahrain’s counterterrorism law, in tandem with the recent failure of Bahrain’s criminal justice system to provide fair trials and deliver impartial verdicts, provide a further legal pretext for the arbitrary stripping of citizenship, in clear violation of international law. “The Bahraini authorities’ latest repressive tactic is to invest themselves with further powers to arbitrarily strip critics of their citizenship,” said Sarah Leah Whitson [3], Middle East and North Africa director. “Bahrainis who dare speak out for change now risk not only arbitrary detention and torture but statelessness and deportation to an uncertain future.”

Bahrain should repeal laws that will allow authorities to strip Bahrainis of their nationality on grounds so vague as to be arbitrary, Human Rights Watch said. Bahrain should immediately restore the citizenship rights of the 10 people who face deportation and of the 21 others whose citizenship rights were removed without due process.

Bahraini authorities have either obstructed the right of appeal or refused to justify the decision to revoke the citizenship of the nine men and one woman who remain in the country. They have no residence permits and face charges of violating asylum and immigration law. On August 10, the public prosecutor issued a court summons to one of the 10, Taimoor Karimi, a lawyer, for “violations of asylum and immigration law” that include remaining in Bahrain without the residence license that all non-nationals over 16 are required to have. Maryam and Sayed al-Mosawi, a married couple, had received similar summonses.

On July 13, the Immigration Directorate summoned Sayed al-Mosawi to a meeting and required him to sign a statement acknowledging that he had taken no action to find a “sponsor” and thus seek the status of a migrant worker. Under Bahrain’s sponsorship system, all migrant workers must have

a sponsor, usually an employer, to whom their residency and employment in Bahrain are tied. The laws regulating the immigration and employment of non-nationals make no provision for stateless people, however.

Al-Mosawi told Human Rights Watch that the Immigration Directorate had confiscated his passport and national identification card in July 2012. “Apart from my driving license, I have nothing to prove I exist,” he said.

Adnan Kamal, another among the 10, told Human Rights Watch that the confiscation of his passport and his national identification card meant he has been unable to secure a passport or a national identification card for his 1-year-old daughter, Fathima. The Interior Ministry said in November 2012 that the 31 people had been stripped of their nationality under article 10 of the Bahraini Citizenship Act of 1963 because it deemed them to have damaged state security. It said that they could appeal. But al-Mosawi and a Bahraini defense lawyer told Human Rights Watch that none of the 31 could appeal because the authorities removed their names from official databases, meaning that they had no legal status and could not give power of attorney to lawyers to lodge appeals on their behalf.

Alkhwaja on hunger strike as US rushes to save Saudi-backed dictators

Prominent human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja has declared an open hunger strike “in protest against the continuation of arbitrary arrest and detention.” In a statement made to members of his immediate family during a visit on Sunday 24th August, Mr. AlKhwaja declared that he would refuse all food and liquids with the exception of water. He also informed his family that due to the drugging, force feeding, and the forced ending of his 110 day hunger strike in 2012, he will refuse to be taken to any hospital, the prison clinic, or to receive any IV treatment during his strike. Almost all international human rights bodies have called for the immediate and unconditional release of Bahrain 13, the leaders of the Revolution who are languishing in the tribal jails of the Alkhalifa.

The Bahraini regime has been humiliated into accepting a visit by Tom Malinowski, the US Under-Secretary of State for Human Rights, Democracy and Labour. Last month the dictator ordered his removal from Bahrain after 24 hours of his arrival, because he had a meeting with an opposition group. Washington re-scheduled the visit by Mr Malinowski who is returning to Bahrain soon, under Washington’s terms. Yesterday, the US State Department spokesperson, Jen Psaki said: Our view is that the Government of Bahrain has much to do in order to meet its own commitments to reform. It’s unfortunate that they have not taken advantage of opportunities to hear from outside observers. There are steps that the government has taken in the right direction, including estab-

lishing an ombudsman office in the ministry of interior, reestablishing the national institution on human rights, rescinding the national security agency’s arrest capabilities, training police on human rights standards. But there are still remaining concerns we have: lack of accountability, for instance, of abuse by security forces; ongoing harassment and imprisonment of persons exercising their rights of freedom of expression; continuing reports of ill-treatment and torture in detention facilities. And obviously, there’s more that they can do to show the international community that they want to keep taking steps forward when it comes to reform. On Assistant Secretary Malinowski, he has received an invitation to return to Bahrain. There’s a trip that’s currently being planned.

On another level the Alkhalifa have refused entry to US Congressman Rep. James McGovern because he had previously criticised their dictatorship.

As a Manama court prepares to rule on internationally-renowned photographer Ahmed Humeidan’s appeal on 25 August, Reporters Without Borders has prepared the following overview of these 12 detainees. The youngest is 15. Eight are photographers or video reporters and four are online activists. Eight have been given prison sentences ranging from three months to life. RWB calls for their release and withdrawal of all charges or the quashing of the convictions of those already sentenced. The Bahraini authorities arbitrarily arrest news providers and peaceful civil society activists in an attempt to suppress dissent. Bahrain is ranked 163rd out of

180 countries in the

Among the latest journalists criminalised for doing their job is Ammar Abdul Rasool. He has been detained and tortured for taking a photo in March 2011 for which he received several awards. Last week he said that he had been forced to remain standing for three days, shackled with closed eyes. He was subjected to severe beating, swearing and humiliation. He was prevented from praying. He added: “They stripped me of my clothes, abused me and threatened to use electric shocks. They also threatened to assault my wife and baby (Fatima) to force me to sign pre-prepared “confession”. When I lost all my energy I had no alternative but to sign the false statement.

Reports from the notorious Jaw prison confirmed that prominent human rights activist, Naji Fateel, has been transferred to solitary confinement for demanding treatment of sick prisoners. Among them are: Mohammad Fadhl who suffers from asthma but is denied medication and Hussain Khalteet. Other prisoners have been denied family visits.

The prisoners at the Dry Dock prison have gone on hunger strike and several of them have fallen unconscious. Some are being treated with IV feeding. Among those who slipped into coma are Hussain Mash’al, Detainees of Wing 10 at Jaw prison had been denied family visits or medical care. Their cells are over-crowded as the dictator orders more arrests of Bahraini natives.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

27th August 2014

Nabeel Rajab speaks out on Independence Day at House of Lords

On Wednesday 14th August a Press Conference was organised by Lord Avebury for Nabeel Rajab to speak to the Press about his personal predicament and experience. It was held to mark the 43rd anniversary of Bahrain's Independence. The British withdrew their forces from Bahrain in mid August 1971 after 150 years presence on the island. Here is a transcript of the session:

Lord Avebury, Vice-chair, Parliamentary Human Rights Group:

Nabeel Rajab was imprisoned in Bahrain for two years between July 2012 and May 2014 for exercising his right to freedom of assembly. He participated in and called for peaceful protests in the capital Manama, in defence of people's rights in Bahrain.

The sentence was condemned by Amnesty International, for whom Nabeel was a Prisoner of Conscience, but also Human Rights Watch and other international human rights defenders. His imprisonment was declared arbitrary by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention. Human Rights Watch demanded his release and the cancellation of his sentence. He has been appointed to their Middle East and North Africa Advisory Committee. Index on Censorship called on Bahrain to release Nabeel, who won their Freedom of Expression award in 2012.

But what happened when Nabeel arrived at Heathrow for a short holiday with his family? He and his wife and two children were detained at the airport for nearly five hours. They were photographed and fingerprinted. Their luggage was ransacked, and their passports were confiscated.

I have asked the Minister for Immigration to apologise to Nabeel; to destroy his photographs and fingerprints, and to tell me who authorised this shameful reception of a world famous human rights defender soon after he was released from two years of solitary confinement.

The Bahrain Center for Human Rights, of which Nabeel is the illustrious President, is a beacon casting light on the crimes of the al-Khalifa regime. It continues to report on the three thousand political prisoners, the silencing of political and human rights activists, the killing of demonstrators by foreign mercenaries who are given citizenship and houses.

I'm glad that our Foreign Affairs Select Committee points to the 'inexplicable' failure of the Bahrain government to implement the recommendations of the international commission of into human rights abuses. They say there is a danger to the UK's credibility if it becomes associate with the problems in Bahrain,

but this is exactly what has happened. The way that members of the royal family are feted at Buckingham Palace, Ascot and Sandhurst, and the constant reminders by Ministers of our longstanding friendship with Bahrain prove that we are not really serious when we ask the regime for example to allow political societies the space to engage. The infamous treatment of Nabeel is yet another indication that the hereditary autocrats in Manama are the Government's real friends, and that we are not interested in the rights of the people and their defenders.

Nabeel Rajab, President of The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights:

On the Independence Day to mark the 43rd anniversary of the British withdrawal from Bahrain, Lord Avebury, the Vice-Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group organised a Press Conference on Wednesday 13th August at the House of Lords. After hailing the steadfastness of Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, he presented a realistic picture of the situation in Bahrain in terms of dictatorship, human rights violations and the UK's lack of proper pro-democracy policy towards Bahrain. Then he called on Mr Rajab to present some of his ideas.

Nabeel Rajab started by talking about his ordeal at the Heathrow airport upon his arrival two weeks ago. He was interrogated for five hours, had his fingerprints registered and his passport (and those of his family) taken away for two weeks.

He expressed dismay at the way the British Government is dealing with the situation in Bahrain, preferring to side with the oppressors, torturers and dictators, and abandoning their victims. He said that in the past three years the American position has improved slightly while that of the UK became worse. "They are against our pro-democracy movement" he said.

He added that he had seen the FCO's human rights report and was totally disillusioned. "It is wrong to leave Bahrain in the hands of dictators by trying to mislead the

world about the human rights situation" he said. He added that all reports show serious deterioration and abuses are becoming wider and more dangerous. Only the UK speaks of Bahrain's human rights record differently. "When I was arrested two years ago, there were 2000 political detainees. Today there are 3000. Demonstrations were not banned by law, today they are. You cannot criticise the king. Dr Samahiji is in jail because he did that on twitter. By law, you cannot protest today in Manama, UK does not see a problem with this clamp down on freedom of speech, protest or assembly".

The conditions in the prisons are hard, he said. It was hard to live where I was held, which was relatively better than where other prisoners are held. God helps them. When I saw people tortured I was ordered not to tell the outside about that. Torture is widespread. It is practiced at Intelligence HQ, a horse stable at Budayya, a youth hostel in Manama and other secret jails.

The judiciary is not independent. US report says that 3000 are in jail in a small country of no more 700,000 natives. Hundreds of Bahraini youth are on the wanted list and are in hiding in miserable circumstances. In the past three years at least 50,000 went to jail at one time or another. I am angry at UK's insistence that human rights are improving. We are victims of UK's double standards foreign policy. We have our own miseries. The country is paying high price for dictatorship. We are victims of hypocrisy.

What happened to me at Heathrow airport is indication of how we, Bahrainis, are punished by the regime and its supporters. They can't see what their allies are doing. We should inform their people of the reality and also the human rights groups.

Before I was released, my lawyer was asked by the British Embassy in Manama whether I would remain silent after my release. I have fear that UK may ask Bahrain's regime to arrest me on my return.

