

# BAHRAIN

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

## Bahrain's march to freedom will continue past regime's elections

Almost four years after the emergence of the first signs of an Arab attempt to transform the dire political situation in the Arab World and the subsequent coups and plots against the Arab Spring revolutions, a new dawn may have appeared in the political horizon. The tragic consequences of those plots by the counter-revolution forces have interacted to produce new realities which are haunting tyrants and despots more than at any time before. While the people of Bahrain have adapted to the various challenges and counter-revolution plots, others had succumbed to the designs by the evil forces. This has led to a series of failures in countries like Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Syria and Yemen. For a while it appeared that the opportunity for a pan-Arab political transformation had gone and that the tyrants and dictators may have won the day and defeated the people's relentless attempts for change.

What happened in Yemen last month was nothing short of a miracle. After three years of internal conflicts and external pressures and plots, the people of this great Arab nation rose again to challenge the counter-revolution programme led by Saudi Arabia. The Houthis of North Yemen gathered their strength, stood up for extremism and sectarianism and organized countrywide protests that culminated in the removal of the prime minister and the forming of a new national government. This development has upset the Saudis and their allies in the counter-revolution camp. The Alkhalifa must learn a lesson from this episode. Their grip on power will slip one day as the people's grievances accumulate. Bahrainis are not suffering political downturns only but their existence as natives of these islands is itself under serious threat. They are being subjected to genocide at large scale. With the political naturalisation programme implemented by the present dictator and the revocation of the nationality of many others they face a grim future. They have been pushed into a corner and forced to defend their existence. The crisis is thus worse than in any other country of the Arab World.

The regime has failed on every account. In addition to the regional changes that do not serve its aims and objectives, its repu-

tation worldwide is sinking and its allies are under pressure to change their policy towards the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. When its emissaries at the recent session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva presented their report on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and claimed to have implemented most of the 176 recommendations issued in 2012, they were challenged by a number of human rights bodies. Amnesty International issued a detailed statement about their failure to implement the main recommendations. The regime is aware that implementation would lead to its downfall. Dictators often cling to thin ropes and hope to survive. The reality often betrays them. They are governed by natural and divine laws that decree the downfall of tyranny, oppression and injustice. None of these evils last forever. Time always catches up with dictators and enables their victims to mete justice on them. The Alkhalifa are no exempt from those laws. The more they avoid the rule of international law the nearer they become to their eventual demise. Those who attempted to challenge their people through the use of force have only caused more trouble to themselves. They ended up thrown into the dustbin of history with no chance of achieving any form of victory.

Their only hope of presenting a convincing argument that normality had been restored in the country was to hold all-encompassing parliamentary elections. The people have taken a collective decision to deny them this opportunity. The political societies have joined the revolutionary movement in denouncing the regime's attempts to hold elections on the basis of the old laws and regulations, and ignore the people's demands. The decision will undoubtedly embarrass an already discredited regime proven to the world to lack popular, religious or constitutional legitimacy. The Alkhalifa will use all state powers either to force the political societies into submission to their demands or to take revenge for the loss of their pride. Their backers in London must understand that the Bahrainis have decided to move on in their lives without being subjugated by an antiquated regime that cannot function within the framework of modern

statehood. This time there is no way back from the legitimate struggle to attain liberty and freedom. Bahrainis see the land of their ancestors being raped by a gang of pirates and occupiers, looting its wealth and committing genocide against its native inhabitants. Their struggle will continue until this misery is alleviated. When they learn of more foreigners being naturalised freely and easily while native Bahrainis routinely denied their rights to live in the lands of their ancestors, they become more furious and desperate. That is dangerous precedence in a volatile situation that could cause maximum damage to the surroundings. Extinguishing political fires is a priority to sincere citizens.

Bahraini delegations have been touring European countries to convey the message of their people that they are struggling to achieve democratic transformation. They want the world to know that action must be taken to stop the torturers from continuing their immoral acts of revenge and unwarranted punishment. Four countries have already referred to Bahrain in their intervention at the Human Rights Council's session under item 4. That is a positive development as it paves the way to refer the case to the UN Security Council. Bahraini activists will not cease their work until they see the Alkhalifa torturers brought to justice. Without denying the dictator the power to inflict pain and exploit state powers the plight of Bahrainis can only go from bad to worse. The daily protests that take place in various towns and villages are evidence that the struggle continues under all circumstances. The events of Yemen in recent weeks have revived the hope that the doomed revolutions may be revamped and led to victory. The Saudis are now a spent force together with their Gulf allies. The Americans and Europeans must choose only one line of action; to support the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain as a serious step to eradication of terrorism and extremism adopted by the Saudis and other Gulf regimes. It will be disastrous to ignore the right to freedom and democracy, or to rely on the regime's narrative. Bahrainis have proven to be serious struggles who do not concede defeat to dictators, despots and tyrants.

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## Saudis criticised in Geneva, Alkhalifa intensify repression ahead of “elections”

At a side event in Geneva, Saudi authorities were severely criticised for their dismal human rights record. The panel, organised during the UN Human Rights Council's session in Geneva, was addressed by several human rights activists, including Samar Badawi, the wife of the jailed Saudi activist, Walid Abul Khair and Dr Hassan Al Amri. Several interventions were also made during the main session to highlight the serious violations of HR in Saudi Arabia. The political societies which had decided to boycott Alkhalifa's elections have reacted angrily to the redrawing of the constituencies in a way that reflects more sectarian considerations. The regime had tried to convince these societies to participate in those elections claiming that it had “reformed” the process and the constituencies. It is now clear that the dictator and his clique have failed to introduce any real reform in their dysfunctional political system. Moreover, the regime has intensified its aggression against the Bahrainis. In the week 15th-22nd September at least 42 people were arrested and scores were given harsh sentences. The intensification of repression is seen as yet another means of subjugating the people into submission. The arrest last week of a known woman activist is an indication to the extent to which the regime is ready to go in order to silence dissenting voices. Ghada Jamshir, a liberal activist, was detained for tweeting anti-regime sentiments. Yesterday morning a young boy, Hussain Abdul Elah was arrested on his way to school at the town of

Karabad. Yasser Salman Al Jordabi, from the town of Jordab, was arrested from his work place by members of the Death Squads operated by the royal court. While on family visit to his brother at Jaw prison, Sayed Qassim Al Mousawi, from Bilad Al Qadeem, was arrested and taken to the torture dungeons. A young man, Ali Abdulla Mushaima, from the town of Daih, was arrested in a raid on the town three days ago. On 20<sup>th</sup> September four young Bahrainis were arrested at a check point manned by members of Death Squads in Muharra. Today 19 native Bahrainis have been sentenced to three years imprisonment for protesting at Wing 19 of the Dry Dock torture centre. Despite being beaten by their jailers in their peaceful protest Alkhalifa dictators wanted to “teach them a lesson”. Among them is the photojournalist, Qassim Zain Aldeen. Last week 14 native Bahrainis were sentenced to life imprisonment for their anti-regime activities. Nine of these are from the town of Bani Jamra; Mohammad Jaffar Al Ghasra, Dhia Mohammad Ali, Hussain Ali Al Shakar, Jamil Mohammad Hussain Al Jamri, Sayed Mustafa Sayed Amin Al Mousawi, Ahmad Mohammad Saleh Al Arab, Mustafa Ali Jaffar, Hussain Jaffar Fateel and Hassan Abdulla Al Ghasra. Hassan Bu Hamid, the brother of martyr Abdul Redha Bu Hamid, has been imprisoned for two months pending investigation. Under the title “Bahrain's UPR Interim Report shows more work needs to be done to implement 2012 recommendations” Amnesty International (AI) issued a severe

critique of Alkhalifa's report to the Human Rights Council on the implementation of its 176 recommendations two years ago. AI lambasted Bahrain's dictators for attempting to mislead the international community with nicely-worded report that has not manifested itself in everyday life. Torture is still administered on detainees, freedom of expression does not exist; many people are tortured and imprisoned for insulting the ruler, the courts still rely on confessions extracted under torture and ignore the cries of victims for investigating their torture. AI's statement concluded: Amnesty International calls on the authorities to lift their restrictions on freedom of expression, association and assembly and to release all prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights; to systematically and adequately investigate any allegations of torture, make the full results public and bring those responsible to justice; to order courts to dismiss all “confessions” extracted under torture. Investigations into abuses must show they have been conducted thoroughly and “be capable of leading to the prosecution of the implicated individuals, both direct and at all levels of responsibility, with a view to ensuring that punishment be consistent with the gravity of the offence,” as recommended by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), set up by the King to investigate abuses that took place as part of the 2011 uprising.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
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## Calls on Saudis to release AlNimr as Alkhalifa scrutinised in Geneva

In Geneva, 18 human rights bodies have signed a petition calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Sheikh Nimr Al Nimr, the Saudi cleric who had been sentenced to death by a Wahhabi court for his peaceful expression of opinion. The petition calls on the Saudi authorities to abide by its international commitment to respect freedom of expression, which is the only “crime” committed by Al Nimr. It also called for the release of the two Saudi human rights activists; Abdulla Al Hamid and Walid Abul Khair, who are serving long jail sentences for peaceful activities.

Also in Geneva, several countries and NGOs have criticised Bahrain for its bleak human rights record. Four countries; Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Denmark have criticised Bahrain under item 4 of the Human Rights Council's agenda. This implies possible referral to the UN Security Council, which is a serious development.

Despite the international pressures on the Alkhalifa regime to stop its attacks on human rights, arrests and detentions have continued. Last night a young Bahraini, Habib Al Satrawi, was arrested by members of Alkhalifa Death Squads in a raid on his sister's home at Salmabad town. In the early hours of Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> September, four Bahrainis were arrested in similar raids in the town of Jannussan. They are:

Mohammad Mirza, Ali Saeed, Mohammad Ali Muslim and Kumail Mohammad. Seven others were arrested from the towns of Duraz, Barbar and Sitra. These raids and arrests came in the wake of a wave of demonstrations in most areas to mark the third anniversary of the martyrdom of Sayed Jawad Shams and in solidarity with Abdul Hadi AlKhawaja and his daughter, Maryam. Under the slogan “resistance from behind bars” young Bahrainis, men and women, chanted “Down with Hamad”. Hadi AlKhawaja, who has been on hunger strike in Alkhalifa torture chambers for the past 24 days Bahraini exiles in London will stage a one-day hunger strike tomorrow (Thursday) outside the regime's London embassy. They will also highlight the plight of the political prisoners who are on hunger strike in the largest two prisons; Jaw Central and Drydock. Both are notorious for ill-treatment of prisoners. Photo journalist Hussain Hubail and blogger Jassim Al Ni'aيمي have been on hunger strike for seven days in protest at their continued detention. Four Bahrainis, Mohammad and Ahmad Al Alwani and the two brothers Mohammad and Qassim Nasr from AlMusalla town were sentenced to one year jail for anti-regime protests. The family of Yassin Jaffar Juma is extremely worried about his welfare as nothing is known about him

since he was arrested four days ago. Amnesty International (AI) issued an Urgent Action following the upholding of Alkhalifa court of an earlier prison sentences on two Bahraini women; Raihana Al Mousawi and Nafeesa Al Asfoor. Both were arrested when they attempted to attend F1 race in April 2013. AI called for a “prompt, independent and impartial investigation into Nafeesa al-Asfoor and Rayhana al-Mousawi's allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice; quash Nafeesa al-Asfoor and Rayhana al-Mousawi's convictions and sentences as it appears that evidence used in their trial was based on statements marred by allegations of torture; and order a retrial of both women in proceedings that meet international standards of fair trial.

On 9<sup>th</sup> September The Guardian published an article by Ian Black titled: “Bahrain urged to free rights activist” referring to Maryam Al Khawaja. The article said: Bahrain stands out as the first example of an Arab country where popular protests were crushed – with the assistance of neighbouring Saudi Arabia and the acquiescence of the US and Britain”

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
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## Bahrain's arrest of a dissident merits a firm protest from Washington

By Editorial Board, September 4

IT HAS been nearly a year since President Obama announced at the United Nations that the United States would subordinate concerns about human rights when dealing with governments that "work with us on our core interests" — which, as he defined them, include the free flow of oil but not the prevention of genocide. Since then, as we have pointed out on a couple of occasions, several nations with close security ties to the United States have launched crackdowns against secular and pro-Western opponents and made a show of humiliating senior State Department envoys.

Prominent among these "allies" is the Persian Gulf nation of Bahrain, a tiny island state that hosts the U.S. 5th Fleet and depends on the United States for arms sales, free trade and protection from predatory neighbors. Since Mr. Obama's speech, the autocratic al-Khalifa regime has arrested scores of peaceful opponents and sabotaged a "national dialogue" it had previously pledged to carry out; in July it ostentatiously expelled the State Department's assistant secretary for human rights after he met with members of a legal opposition party. The administration could have responded to these insults and abuses by suspending military

sales to Bahrain, or at least with strong statements by Mr. Obama, as it had in the past to good effect. Instead, following the president's new policy, it limited itself to meek expressions of "concern" by low-level spokesmen.

And so, predictably, the abuses continue. On Saturday one of Bahrain's — and the Arab world's — best-known advocates of human rights, Maryam al-Khawaja, was arrested at the country's international airport. Ms. Khawaja, who had been living abroad, was attempting to enter the country in order to visit her father, a peaceful critic of the regime; since 2011, he has been unjustly imprisoned on trumped-up terrorism charges. Ms. Khawaja, who is 27 years old and under 5 feet tall, was accused of assaulting airport police; she says she was roughed up by four officers. Her supporters believe she may face more charges when she is brought to court this Saturday.

Ms. Khawaja's real offense, as the al-Khalifa regime no doubt sees it, has been her tireless advocacy for Bahrainis who have been arrested, tortured or killed in the past several years while attempt-

ing to advocate for peaceful democratic reforms. A fluent English speaker who spent a year at Brown University on a Fulbright scholarship, Ms. Khawaja has been particularly conspicuous in Washington, where she has met with members of Congress and senior U.S. officials. In 2012, Washington-based Freedom House presented her with its Freedom Award in recognition of her work and that of her father and sister.

Though it has resisted pressure to grant more rights to its Shiite majority population, the al-Khalifa regime used to be sensitive to political pressure from Washington. After Mr. Obama made a May 2011 speech specifically citing Bahrain and the administration temporarily suspended arms sales, the al-Khalifas promised a series of reforms. Now they feel free not only to abandon those efforts but also to take steps that they know will be seen in Washington as provocative. And no wonder: Ms. Khawaja's arrest has so far drawn only another rote statement of concern from the State Department.



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## International revulsion at persecution of native activists

As Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja enters his third week of hunger strike, emotions are running high among the Bahraini people who are anticipating the worst. His health is rapidly deteriorating as his body becomes weaker by the day. Few days ago he was taken off the IV feeding and started on glucose and water. His family is getting seriously worried as they witness him fading away. Mr Al Khawaja started his hunger strike on Tuesday 26th August in protest at the continuation of his imprisonment by the Alkhalifa dictators despite the demands by almost every human rights body in the world to release the Bahrain 13 including himself. The lack of tangible action by the European Union against his jailers, despite being a citizen of EU countries, has shocked many. Meanwhile there have been feelings of disgust, condemnation and disappointment as the regime extended the detention of the world-renowned human rights activist, Maryam Al Khawaja, for another ten days. She had been arrested and ill-treated when she arrived at Bahrain's airport on Saturday 30th August. She wanted to be with her family during the ordeal of her father's hunger strike.

On 5th September Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action about Maryam Al Khawaja. It urged its members to write to Alkhalifa regime and demand her immediate and unconditional release, adding that "she is a prisoner of conscience targeted for her long-term peaceful activism" It also

called for her protection in the meantime from torture and other ill-treatment.

In Washington there have been many voices calling on the White House to act in defence of Maryam AlKhawaja. While Human Rights Watch has been focal in its condemnation of the regime, the Washington Post dedicated its editorial on 4th September to the issue. Under the heading: "Bahrain's arrest of a dissident merits a firm protest from Washington" the paper talked about Washington's reluctance to take a stand as Bahrain's regime dragged its feet. It said: Though it has resisted pressure to grant more rights to its Shiite majority population, the al-Khalifa regime used to be sensitive to political pressure from Washington. After Mr Obama made a May 2011 speech specifically citing Bahrain and the administration temporarily suspended arms sales, the al-Khalifas promised a series of reforms. Now they feel free not only to abandon those efforts but also to take steps that they know will be seen in Washington as provocative. And no wonder: Ms. Khawaja's arrest has so far drawn only another rote statement of concern from the State Department.

In the past week the regime has intensified its attacks on people through arrests and detentions. On Thursday night 4th September five youths from Duraz were snatched by members of the regime's Death Squads and taken to torture houses. Upon his return to Bahrain on Saturday 6th September, photo-journalist, Mohammad Darwish, was arrested

and taken to unknown destination. He had been arrested and tortured before. Bahraini photo-journalists have been targeted in recent weeks in order to keep the lid on Alkhalifa atrocities against Bahrainis. Twenty people were arrested after Israeli-supported members of Death Squads managed to intercept a network of wanted activists who have been hiding for long periods. The family of a young Bahraini, Mohammad Ali Kadhem, is extremely worried for his safety as they received no information about him since he was snatched by regime's Death Squads ten days ago.

On 5th September Reporters Without Borders issued a statement saying that it was shocked that a Manama appeal court had upheld the ten-year jail sentence that the internationally renowned young photo-journalist Ahmed Humaidan received on 26 March in connection with an attack on a police station in 2012. "The Bahraini authorities continue to abuse the most elementary human rights and are becoming more and more repressive in their treatment of news and information providers" said Reporters Without Borders secretary-general Christophe Deloire. "Despite a major international campaign for Ahmed Humaidan's release, the Bahraini regime has chosen to turn a deaf ear and to continue silencing the witnesses of its brutal crackdown."

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
10th September 2014

## Amnesty International's response to Bahrain's UPR interim report

# More work needs to be done to implement 2012 recommendations

the Bahraini government's publication of its Interim Report on the implementation of the recommendations made during the UN Human Right Council's Universal Period Review (UPR) in 2012. While a number of positive steps have been taken, the organization remains concerned that key human rights concerns have yet to be addressed. Considerable efforts are still needed if Bahrain is to deliver on promises made two years ago.

Bahrain expressed its acceptance of 156 recommendations – 143 of them fully and 13 of them partially – out of the 176 made during the UPR in May 2012. In their Interim Report, the Bahraini authorities referred to a number of legal and institutional reforms, which they said are part of their implementation of these recommendations. Some of the reforms, especially those related to torture and other ill-treatment, freedom of expression and fair trials, for instance, are inadequate and often not implemented in practice.

The authorities have brought the definition of torture in the national legislation in line with international standards and criminalized acts of torture by introducing a number of amendments to the Penal Code. While eradicating torture in legislation is an important step, this has had little impact in practice. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment continue to reach Amnesty International. Many detainees have said they were tortured or otherwise ill-treated during interrogation when they were held incommunicado, especially in the headquarters of the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama, the capital. The first time the detainees are able to talk about their ordeal is when they are brought before officials of the Public Prosecution for interrogation, when they meet their relatives or when they appear in court to stand trial. These allegations are often not adequately investigated or, in some cases, were dismissed after preliminary investigations.

The Bahraini authorities have also declared that they had implemented recommendations relating to freedom of expression, association and assembly by introducing amendments to the Penal Code, in particular by abolishing Articles 134bis and 174, limiting criminalization of spreading information harmful to the state to cases of incitement to violence (Article 168), and interpreting limitations on freedom of

expression in line with what is “necessary in a democratic society” as specified in Article 69bis. However, no amendments were made to a number of articles in the Penal Code which continue to criminalize offending the King, the national flag or emblem, a foreign country or international organization (Articles 214, 215 and 216). Instead, the authorities have increased the penalties for “insulting the king” to up to seven years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 10,000 BDN (US\$ 26,000) and toughened them further if the “offence” happens in the presence of the king.

A number of individuals have been imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression. For instance, prisoner of conscience Dr Sa'eed Mothaher Habib al-Samahiji was sentenced on 11 December 2013 to one year in prison for “publicly insulting the King of Bahrain”. He was convicted under articles 92(2) and 214 of the Penal Code. He was arrested on 1 July 2014 to serve his sentence after an appeal court upheld the verdict in April 2014. Thirteen other prisoners of conscience, known as the 13 opposition activists, continue to serve prison sentences behind bars. The authorities have put further restrictions on political associations. In September 2013 a new decree was introduced requiring political associations to inform the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs three days in advance of their meetings with foreign political organizations, including diplomatic representatives or foreign government officials visiting the country, and to do so in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such meetings must take place in the presence of a government official. In 2014, further amendments were made which empowered the Minister of Justice to file cases to close or dissolve political associations. Freedom of assembly is also limited with the ban on demonstrations in Manama still in force. As yet, no plans have been made to lift it ahead of the forthcoming parliamentary elections in November.

Human rights defenders face restrictions

and are being targeted because of their human rights work. A number of them have already been forced to leave Bahrain to escape prosecution for their work. Others have criminal cases pending against them. For example, Maryam Al-Khawaja was detained at Manama International Airport after coming from abroad. She was held for 20 days before she was released on bail on the orders of the High Criminal Court on 18 September. Her trial is scheduled to start on 1 October on a charge of “assaulting police officers”.

In response to recommendations on ensuring fair trials, the authorities referred to the fact that cases tried before the National Safety Court (a military court) in 2011 were transferred to civilian courts after October 2011, but made no reference to whether there are any plans to guarantee, in legislation and practice, the right to fair trials for all defendants and to ensure the independence of the judiciary. Lawyers and defendants, particularly in security and anti-terrorism cases, complain they are not allowed to mount a meaningful defence. Torture allegations made in the court are not adequately investigated and requests by lawyers to stay the trial until a final decision is reached in relation to torture complaints have gone unheeded by trial judges.

In a number of cases, defendants were convicted on the basis of “confessions” which they denied in court and said were extracted from them under torture. This is the case for the “14 February Coalition” trial, where many defendants were sentenced to up to 15 years in prison despite widespread torture allegations. Defence lawyers in the case known as the “Diah Explosion Trial” in connection with a bombing in March 2014 which killed three policemen, repeatedly complained of the restrictions imposed on them by the court, including not allowing them to speak to their clients as well as denying them proper access to the court documents. Some defendants also told the judge they were tortured.

In addition, accountability for human rights violations is taking place at a very slow pace and with little satisfaction to the victims and their relatives. The Bahraini authorities have only been able to prosecute and bring to court a small number of cases and most of them resulted in acquittals or with the defendant receiving sentences that seem to not be consistent with the gravity of the offences of killing or torture leading to death.

