

# BAHRAIN

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

## A new year; old problems, but Bahrainis are hopeful of change

The past year has just ended with a gloomy note in Bahrain. The arrest of Sheikh Ali Salman, the Secretary General of Al Wafaq was the last significant event of the year. The reaction of the people has been phenomenal. The Sheikh had been detained in December 1994. His arrest ignited the longest uprising in the country's history. That uprising did not end until the old ruler died in 1999. A new chapter started when the present dictator inherited the throne from his father. He started his reign with many promises that were later exposed to be hollow, thus precipitating a more serious revolution that shows no sign of abating. He freed the political prisoners under pressure from the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and forced the people to approve his national charter. But within less than three years Hamad became embroiled in the most vicious political strife in the country's history. The people were enraged when he unilaterally abrogated the 1973 Constitution and installed himself as a king. It is now evident that he had planned the coup against the native Bahrainis well before he announced the new constitution. His political programme was based on demographic transformation. Native Bahrainis consider this the most outrageous act of treachery.

The past year has witnessed enormous popular movement seeking to change the political situation in the country. The Revolution that had started on 14th February 2011 was able to sustain itself as more people were killed, arrested or banished. The regime had resorted to the policy of revoking people's citizenship at the whim of the ruler. Torture had continued unabated as the regime insisted on rejecting a request by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the country. There were many international calls to allow this visit but the dictator insisted on banning the visit. He is right in concluding that the visit would expose more criminal acts of torture which would incriminate the top of the political pyramid. This position has been defended by the supporters of the regime in the West who are now considered to be complicit in Alkhalifa criminal behaviour. Furthermore, the international media has been engaged in the affairs of Bahrain with many articles appearing intermittently on mainstream me-

dia outlets, critical of the regime's behaviour. The Alkhalifa judiciary sank further into its inhumane practices with hundreds sent to lengthy prison terms of up to life. Several people were sentenced to death on the basis of confessions extracted under torture. The international human rights bodies continued to question the regime about the culture of impunity which meant that torturers have remained sheltered from the rule of law. The dictator had instituted this culture by imposing Law 56 which he had decreed in 2002.

Two major events happened during the year. The first was the elections organised by the ruling family for its parliament. While the revolutionary factions had all along rejected any political engagement with the ruling family, the political societies also decided to boycott these elections. It was one of the most embarrassing episodes to the regime and its backers. The scene on the day of the elections transmitted negative image to the world with empty voting stations and absence of any sign of election campaigning in most areas. To add salt to the injury, the 14th February Alliance announced a referendum on self determination to coincide with the elections. It was one of the most successful campaigns by the revolutionary forces. Almost 80,000 people cast their votes with over 90 percent approving the right to self-determination. It was a decisive step in the history of the Revolution. This means that there is no way that the people will accept anything less than total freedom to determine the future of the political system of the country. The dictator's angry reaction led to the arrest of 15 women whom it accused of organising the referendum.

The past year has also witnessed the entrenchment of the rejection of the tribal regime and its attempts to harass the political societies. The result has been the widening of the gap between the ruling family and those societies. This has impacted on the positions of foreign powers. While the Americans were directing their attention away from the Gulf region and into the South East Asia and the Pacific, the UK Government took a new step that may prove fatal to the British interests. It decided to openly back the regime that had been proven to practice systematic torture. The Cameron Government risks antago-

nising many Members of Parliament who had demanded that Bahrain be listed as a country of concern. Towards the end of the year the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee complained that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) had failed to provide real evidence that Bahrain's regime had improved its human rights record. It said that the arguments presented by FCO did not prove any improvement in the behaviour of the Alkhalifa and that their opinion remained the same; that Bahrain must be listed as a country of concern.

The UK Government has undertaken further steps that risk causing bigger rift with the Parliamentarians. It announced that it had agreed to establish a naval base in Bahrain the cost of which would be shouldered by the Bahraini government. Many saw it an unnecessary return to a region which it had vacated more than four decades earlier. To most of those MPs the new policy is tantamount to political and ethical suicide. It is true that the fortunes of the Arab Spring Revolutions had subsided especially after the Egypt's coup but it is also true that the lack of democratic transformation had become a factor in the development and spread of extremism, terrorism and sectarianism. While at the moment the consequences of these developments are confined to the region but there is genuine fear that they may spill over to the West. In summing up the events of the past year, Bahraini activists have concluded that the UK Government should have been wiser than rushing to the aid of a discredited regime that has been shunned by its own people. The UK risks being accused both of double standards and lack of principles on one hand and complicity in the Alkhalifa regime's criminal behaviour and its total disregard to human rights or the rule of law. With the exposure by the Financial Times last month of the wealth amassed by Bahrain's dictator, the foundation for further political strife and instability in the Gulf region cannot be discounted. The Saudi occupation of Bahrian and the British support of the Alkhalifa regime have thus become major obstacles in the path of democracy and human rights. This situation will become more pressing in the new year. UK is urged to change its political track.

---

## Saudis murder five citizens; MP wants Bahrain listed “country of concern”

Once again the Saudi authorities have committed serious crimes against the people of the Eastern Province. On Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December its forces attacked Al Awamiya Town and wreaked havoc on its inhabitants. At least five people were killed and more than 40 injured as a result of the use of live ammunition. The Saudi crime was unprovoked and the victims include 14 years old child. Several cars and properties were destroyed in the attack. Images on Youtube and Twitter show the intensity of firing on houses. The martyrs are: Thamer Al Rabi'e (14 years), Ali Abu Abdulla, Hassan Al Meslab, Redha Al Bandari and Abdulla Al Madad. Angry citizens in the town and other surrounding places took to the streets to protest the killing and vow to resist Saudi state terrorism.

The Government of Thailand has been severely criticised by human rights bodies for handing to Alkhalifa torturers a young Bahraini who had sought refuge there. Ali Haroon, 20, was forced into an airplane at the Bangkok Airport against his will. He was subjected to severe beating before his departure and tortured extensively after arriving in Bahrain. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December he was transferred to hospital in extremely bad shape. He was allowed to speak to his family only for few seconds; his voice was weak and only said few words before the line was cut off. The Thai authorities have forfeited their obligations by handing a political activist to a regime which had tortured him before and sentenced him to life behind bars. Several human rights bodies have criticised Bangkok and held

its regime responsible for the suffering of this young Bahraini victim.

The regime's attacks on people have continued unabated. In the week from 15 to 22<sup>nd</sup> December at least 24 people were arrested. They include seven children and three women. In the early hours of Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December Ali Rajab, 20, was kidnapped by up to 30 masked members of Alkhalifa Death Squads in a raid on his house in Bani Jamra. Ali Jaffar Isa, 11, from Nabih Saleh town was arrested and tortured on the spot. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December Sadiq Abdul Karim Al Nakal was arrested from his town of Sitra. He had been sentenced to 15 years jail. The family of Ali, the son of Martyr Isa Abdul Hassan is extremely worried for his safety. Nothing has been heard of him since his kidnap by masked members of Death Squads from his workplace at the Dairy Company. On 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Mohammad Hussain Adam was kidnapped in a raid on his home in Bani Jamra. On 18<sup>th</sup> December 14 years old Mahmood Zuhair Isa from Dair Town was arrested and tortured before he was subsequently released. A prisoner from Bani Jamra has been denied the right to attend his mother's funeral.

A senior member of UK's All Party Parliamentary Group on Bahrain, David Amess, MP, has expressed unease about the situation in Bahrain. He said: I am very concerned about the situation in Bahrain. I continue to receive reports from individuals of ongoing torture, arbitrary detention and extra-judicial killings. The recent sentencing of the activist, Zainab al-Khawaja, is of particular concern. The Foreign Af-

fairs Committee this year claimed that it had found no evidence of progress in Bahrain and I have asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to list it as a country of concern. Mr Amess is a backbench Conservative MP representing Southend South.

Human rights organisations have called on Pope Francis to cancel plans for the construction of a church complex in Bahrain, over fears it would utilise public land allegedly bought up by the Royal family through the use of a secretive investment vehicle. An investigation in the Financial Times this month revealed that the ruling Al-Khalifa family in Bahrain has managed to buy up billions of dollars of previously state-owned land in Bahrain through the use of an investment vehicle called the Premier Group which it has used to develop lucrative commercial ventures – such as a high rise housing complexes – depriving fishermen and other Bahrainis of access. The new cathedral will be constructed in Awali in central Bahrain, on land which opposition groups in the country – including Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) – claim is land seized from the public trust. “We urge Pope Francis to reconsider establishing a church on land that may have been stolen from the public trust to benefit the ruling elite,” said Hussain Abdulla, Executive Director of ADHRB, in statement on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
24<sup>th</sup> December 2014

---

## Bahrain: Martyrs Day protests attacked; more resistance to UK's naval base

Today is the Martyrs Day in Bahrain. People have started their country-wide demonstrations against Alkhalifa regime and are facing ruthless attacks by the foreign-staffed security and riot police. The extent of injuries in today's confrontations has not yet been known but many people were injured last night. Protests swept through main towns and villages; Malkiya, Karzakkan, Demstan, Aali, Buri, Salmabad, Hamad Town, Nuwaidrat, Ma'amir, El Ekr, Juffair, Sanabis, Daih, Al Shakoura, Karranah, Abu Saiba, Duraz and Bani Jamra. The peaceful protests were attacked with large amounts of chemical and tear gases. Shotgun wounds were reported in several areas.

To mark the occasion Bahraini exiles in several countries organized protests. In London, the Opposition Bloc; the Umbrella body comprising all opposition groups, organized several pickets at Marble Arch and outside the Dorchester Hotel where the Akhalifa London embassy held its annual reception. In Berlin Bahraini exiles protested outside the British Embassy against the proposed construction of a naval base to protect the hereditary dictatorship. In Washington, Bahrainis and their supporters held a protest outside the

Alkhalifa embassy and called on the US government to stop supporting one of the most vicious dictatorships in the region.

Meanwhile opposition to the proposed British naval base has gathered momentum. The Stop the War Coalition has tabled an e-petition against the proposal and urged people to call for an immediate halt to the renewal of UK military presence in the volatile Middle East region. Under the title “No British base in Bahrain” the petition says: “We the undersigned oppose the plans by the British government to open a new military base in Bahrain, the first British base “east of the Suez” since 1971. Rather than increasing military deployment in the Middle East we should be ending our disastrous interventions in the region.” It added: “Bahrain is a repressive, undemocratic regime that brutally crushed the movement for democracy in 2011. Britain should not be showing complicity with the actions of the Bahraini monarchy.” You can sign it at <http://act.stopwar.org.uk/petition/1>

Yesterday, The Economist published an article titled: “We are back” which said: the timing of the Bahrain agreement strikes some as odd. Human Rights Watch, a lobbying group, criticised Britain for announc-

ing the move only a month after the House of Commons committee on foreign affairs issued a damning verdict on the glacial pace of political reform in Bahrain. Dissidents remain in jail following widespread protests in 2010-11. Shashank Joshi of RUSI, a think-tank, says that it sends a message suggesting “a narrow and myopic” definition of regional stability. It also appears to pre-empt the 2015 Strategic and Defence and Security Review.

Concern is mounting about the fate of several people detained for more than a week with no information about their welfare or their whereabouts. Mohammad Mahfoudh, Mohammad Al Dhaif and his brother Jaffar were snatched by security forces from the Bahrain-Saudi causeway on their to perform religious rituals in Iraq.

The regime launched violent attacks on native Bahrainis to pre-empt the Martyrs Day flare up. More than fifty houses were raided in the past week in search for native Bahraini youths. From Bani Jamra Ahmad Mohammad Ali Fateel was detained from the causeway. On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December Hussain Mohammad Falah was arrested in a raid on his house in Demstan.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
17<sup>th</sup> December 2014

---

## MPs denounce building naval base in Bahrain as killing, detentions escalate

The decision by the UK Government to increase its moral and military support to the Alkhalifa rulers has shocked the human rights world and a large section of the British voters. Last week the Ministry of Defence announced that it was building a naval base in Bahrain, more than four decades after the British withdrawal from the East of Suez, and that the costs would be met by the Bahraini regime. There were furious reactions from Bahrainis who viewed it as a slap in the face of the pro-democracy movement and an immoral alliance with those accused of systematic torture. The announcement came only few days after the UK's Parliament Foreign Relations Committee had expressed dismay at the decision by the FCO not to designate Bahrain as a "country of concern" as it had recommended following its thorough investigation into the relations between UK and both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain: *We see little or no evidence that Bahrain has made enough progress in implementing political reform and safeguarding human rights, and we believe that the FCO should have bitten the bullet and designated Bahrain as a country of concern.*

Most of the media coverage of the decision to build the naval base has been critical of the politicians. In Parliament nine MPs have tabled an Early Day Motion to denounce the decision. Many more MPs are expected to sign. EDM NO 609 says: *That this House is appalled that Britain*

*has signed an agreement with the Government of Bahrain to establish a permanent military base at Port Mina Salman in Bahrain; believes this announcement will be deeply upsetting to all those who have suffered human rights abuses by the Government of Bahrain and its officials, and will serve to send a message that the UK Government is not interested in justice, rule of law and reconciliation in Bahrain; notes the protests in Bahrain since the announcement was made; believes that the increased British military presence is likely to exacerbate tensions in the region; and, calls upon the UK Government to play a much more constructive role in Bahrain to help end, and ensure appropriate redress for, serious human rights violations, and to encourage meaningful dialogue leading to substantive political reform.*

Yesterday, an elderly native Bahraini was martyred by regime forces in the town of Karzakkhan. Abdul Karim Mohammad Jaffar Al Basri, 72, was apparently killed with an explosive device fired by the foreign-staffed riot police. According to the Death Certificate, the martyr died as a result of intrusions in the head by metal pellets.

Yesterday Alkhalifa court issued three prison sentences on Zainab Al Khawaja totaling 16 months for her anti-regime activities. This is in addition to the three years sentence she had received for tearing up dictator's picture. Zainab has recently delivered a baby boy. She received the news with bravery and defiance vowing to continue

her struggle with her baby from behind bars as long as this dictatorial regime remains in power. Earlier Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action calling for quashing the sentences against Zainab Al Khawaja. "Tearing up a photo of the head of state should not be a criminal offence. Amnesty International is calling for this and all of Zainab Al-Khawaja's other convictions to be quashed and all outstanding charges to be dropped," said Said Boumedouha, Deputy Director of the Middle East and North Africa Programme at Amnesty International. The regime's court has also sentenced Ahmad, the son of the most prominent jailed political leader, Hassan Mushaima, for one year.

On the eve of the International Day for Human Rights, Bahrainis were subjected to harsher treatment by the ruling Akhalifa junta. Sixteen natives were detained on the causeway on their way to Iraq to take part in religious rituals. In the first week of December 21 others had been arrested, mostly in raids on their homes in the early hours of the morning. They are from the towns of Barbar, Hamala, Aali, Demstan, Kawara and Salmabad. On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 13 years old Mohammad Faisal Fateel was detained from his town of Bani Jamra. Alkhalifa court subsequently ordered his detention for further seven days pending "investigation". This often means subjecting him to severe torture.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
10<sup>th</sup> December 2014

---

## Saudi women arrested for driving, homes of Bahraini activists raided

Native Bahrainis were angered by the jubilation of their dictator at the acquittal of Egypt's dictator. Hamad Al Khalifa was among the first to call Hosni Mubarak congratulating him for the politically-motivated decision by the court not to consider the case in which he is accused of ordering the troops to shoot unarmed demonstrators in 2011. Bahrain's dictator is also accused of ordering his armed police and troops to shoot and kill native Bahraini protesters over the past four years.

House raids by regime's forces have continued as native Bahrainis maintained their solid resistance to the Al Saud occupation and Alkhalifa dictatorship. At least 11 houses were raided in the early hours of this morning and several people arrested. From Malikiya, Imad Bu Rashid was arrested at a police station. From Sitra Mansoor Tawq was snatched in a raid on his home. Adel Al Marzooq, Director of Al-Wahdawi Observatory was detained in a raid on his house; his personal belongings were taken away. From Buri Abbas Ibrahim Abdullah was also detained. The family of Fadhel Abbas, from Demstan is worried about his safety as nothing has been heard of him since his arrest yesterday. From Hamala Town, Ali Saleh Hassan has been arrested. Ali Faisal Al Shofa was detained after members of Death Squads stopped his car at Kawara Town. In the

early hours of yesterday at least 15 houses at Demstan and Malikiya towns were attacked, including the house of Martyr Abdul Redha Bu Humaid. Homes in Sitra and Duraz were also raided. In those raids several people were detained among them is Hassan Ahmad Al Basri from Sitra. The Town of Karbabad was also attacked and five houses raided. Ali Jawad Taraif and Mohammad Abbas were snatched by plain-clothed members of Death Squads.

The Saudi security forces also raided many homes in The Eastern Province. From Qatif at least three people were arrested on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November: Saeed Al Saffar, Munir Al Saffar and Hassan Al Tuhaifa. Samar Badawi, wife of detained lawyer, Walid Abu AlKhair, has been banned from travel. On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> December, two Saudi women who challenged the ban on driving were arrested; Lujain Al Hadloul and Maisa Al Amoodi.

Today, Tom Malinowski, the US Under-Secretary of State for Human Rights, Democracy and Labour, is expected to arrive in Bahrain after the regime was brought to its knees by an American threat to stop supplying arms to Alkhalifa. Five months ago, Mr Malinowski was expelled from Bahrain after he had a meeting with AlWefaq Society. The dictator was furious and ordered his expulsion. The regime is angry because in an earlier trip Mr Malinowski had visited

towns and villages and observed the Alkhalifa crackdown on native Bahraini protesters. Yesterday The New York Times said: "The Obama administration is expected to reassess its suspension of some arms deliveries after Mr. Malinowski's visit and after evaluating the election process and the human rights situation there."

On 27<sup>th</sup> November President of The World Medical Association, Dr Xavier Deau, wrote to Bahrain's dictator about the plight of jailed Dr Ali al-'Ekri and, Dr Saeed Al Samaheji and Ebrahim al-Dumestani. He said "The World Medical Association is extremely worried by these on-going practices undermining the fundamental right to freedom of expression of health professionals... We would like to emphasize in particular the Article 19 (2) of the Covenant providing that "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.. We urge that the Bahraini authorities reconsider the cases of these three health professionals in the light of commitments made and recommend their unconditional and immediate release".

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
3rd December 2014

## Lord Avebury on Martyrs Day

Bahrain December 15

As we meet today to commemorate the martyrs who have lost their lives in the long struggle for human rights and democracy in Bahrain, and particularly those killed in custody and on the streets since the uprising began in February 2011, we now see the disgraceful reason why the UK has soft-pedalled criticism of the al-Khalifa despotism.

Bahrain has agreed to construct a £15 million naval base for our aircraft carriers and destroyers, helping to silence us on extrajudicial killings; widespread detentions; denial of the rights to freedom of expression and assembly; the subservience of judges to political authority, and the deprivation of citizenship of those who dare to oppose the regime.

We 'express concern' over these matters but at the same time we show that we don't really mean it. For instance, the Government rejected the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee that Bahrain should be designated a 'country of concern'.

On the contrary, as the Economist pointed out last week, the Government wanted to 'demonstrate Britain's revived commitment to the Gulf monarchies, with whom it maintains substantial trading and investment relationships'.

On Human Rights Day last week the Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond called on governments around the world "to do more to foster the role of civil society in promoting and defending Human Rights". Yet the founder of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Abdulhadi al-Khawaja is serving a life sentence for promoting and defending human rights.

Nabeel Rajab, the current President of the BCHR, was imprisoned for three months for attacking the Formula 1 race in Bahrain; then spent two years in prison for peaceful protests, and is now awaiting a further trial on January 15 for a criticism of the government on Twitter.

On December 1 Maryam al-Khawaja, daughter of Abdulhadi al-Khawaja and a prominent human rights activist herself, was arrested at Manama airport when she arrived to visit her father, who is seriously ill from a hunger strike. She spent 19 days in custody before being released on bail, and was given a year's imprisonment in absentia when she jumped bail, pointing out that Bahrain's judiciary is not independent.

Maryam's elder sister Zainab, who had just given birth to her second child, was sentenced first to three years imprisonment on December 4 for insulting the king by tearing up his photo-

graph, and then to another 16 months on December 9 – a year for insulting a public employee and an extra four months for damaging public property.

If this was North Korea you might believe it, but this is a country where the Foreign Office says

"there is evidence of real efforts being made in areas where human rights concerns remain".

Our Chief Inspector of Prisons is engaged in a project to help establish and promote independent human rights based inspection of Bahraini custodial facilities, presumably because this is still an area of concern; but apparently he knows nothing about custodial deaths, such as that of Hassan Majeed al-Sheikh, who was beaten to death in Jaw prison on November 6.

Nor do we acknowledge that people are still being tortured, and that the visit by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez originally set for May 13, has been 'effectively cancelled', to use the Special Rapporteur's own words. The regime has set up an Ombudsman, who has indeed asked for urgent action to address the problem of overcrowding in cells, with Jaw prison holding 1,608 prisoners at the time of inspection compared with its maximum intended capacity of 1201 only; but the cases of torture raised by victims, such as those in which Prince Nasser was allegedly involved, are said to be committed in locations other than prisons. Nor does the Ombudsman inquire into the many cases of citizens killed or seriously injured by security forces, such as Youssif Baddah who is

in hospital after he was shot point blank by a tear gas canister at a demonstration against the murder of his son at an earlier demonstration.

The chairman of the legal opposition Party al-Wefaq, Khalil al Marzooq and others, met Ann Clwyd MP, chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group and other MPs on November 20, and he told them that UK Ministers had not met Al-Wefaq officials for more than two years. We understand that the Ambassador had met them, but not recently. The FCO was trying to persuade them to engage in the so-called 'political dialogue' and to participate in the elections. There was a severance of contacts in the run-up to the election, so al-Wefaq had no opportunity of explaining that as they saw it, participation would have been seen as legitimising the political and constitutional status quo.

After many months of stalemate in the negotiations, Human Rights Watch said that Bahrain wasn't ready for dialogue when top US State Department official Tom Malinowski was expelled from the country. He sought to engage with members of the unofficial opposition, whose objective is to replace the absolutist monarchy by a government freely elected by the people, in accordance with Article 1 of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Bahrain acceded in 2006. When this idea is not only taboo but to refer to it indirectly means a three year prison sentence, how can we pretend that dialogue is anything but a means of postponing the inevitable?



*This image was taken in August 2005 outside the Parliament. The group had just held a seminar at the House. Among them are four senior figures who are now in jail: Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, Hassan Mushaima, Ibrahim Sharif and Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja*