

# BAHRAIN

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

## Hats off to Bahrain's Revolution in its sixth year

Five years of constructive endeavour to achieve liberty, rights and humanity. This is how the Bahrain's Revolution may be accurately described by fair-minded people. It is an arduous path to liberation, but it is both necessary and responsibility. Decades of political stagnation dominated by an illegitimate, tribal and oppressive regime have left the people no alternative but to rise against tyranny and dictatorship. In the process, many lives were lost; men, women and children. Some were killed by "systematic torture"; others by police bullets in peaceful protests; and the rest had to endure slow but painful death as a result of illegal chemical and tear gas weapons. Thousands have been jailed; at least 3500 remain behind bars in most inhumane conditions. Iron-fist policies by one of the most vicious dictators of modern times have transformed Bahrain into a fascist state controlled by un-elected, British-backed reactionary political system that is beyond reform or modernisation. Tribalism cannot be transformed into modern statehood. Unelected dictators can never be changed to democrats. These conclusions were arrived at after decades of continuous struggle spanning over generations of freedom-loving activists, some of whom had endured torture, execution, imprisonment and banishment to foreign lands as far as St Helena in the Atlantic Ocean. How can the present situation be evaluated? In light of the tragic ends for all other revolutions within the Arab Spring, the Bahraini case stands out as a beacon of peaceful activism that has solidified the conviction that peaceful resistance is most valuable in Arab and Muslim countries. The experience of the past five years has shown that violence could only lead to bloodshed and eventual breakdown of law and order. The human cost of such endeavour is beyond what the Bahraini revolutionaries could sustain or identify with. Those who have been taking part in the popular uprising have also reached the conclusion that peaceful approach to political transformation is contrary to what dictators wanted. They thrive in situations infested with violence, terrorism and military confrontations. Regimes always maintain the upper hand in those situations with state authority, power and mercenaries at hand to enable them to challenge their foes. The case of Bahrain is no different.

When the political strife spread to almost all corners of Bahrain, the Saudis were drawn into their most controversial military adventure to date. In mid-March 2011 their troops rolled across the causeway linking Bahrain with Saudi Arabia. Their aim was to crush the Revolution and prevent it from spreading to the Arabian Peninsula. They wreaked havoc on the country and Bahrainis paid heavy price as they resisted the Saudi occupation. Crimes were committed by the invading troops which failed in their mission to bring the revolutionaries to their knees. As Bahrainis celebrate the end of the fifth year of their political movement, they have cause to be content with their achievements. First they were able to continue their revolution with the power and pace of their own choice. Second, they have remained faithful to their civil resistance principles and refused to be drawn to violence as the regime and its supporters wished. Third, they remained dependent on God Almighty and themselves to continue their daily protests and demonstrations. They had to pay dearly in human and material terms but they remained adamant on pursuing the main goal of achieving fundamental political change and end the Alkhalifa reign of terror, tribalism and dictatorship. Forth, as the political strife continued the regime became more vicious, committing horrendous crimes against humanity. It was proven by its own commission of investigation (BICI) of engaging in "systematic torture", destroyed scores of mosques and pursued their core policy of genocide against the natives. Fifth, despite the detention and maltreatment of almost all field leaders and activists, the momentum created by the revolution created new leaders and activists who ensured that the banner of change is never defeated. Sixth; the resilience of the people has helped the other Arab people who had risen for change within the Arab Spring to remain vigilant, not to lose hope and to stay faithful to the ideology of peaceful political change in the Arab world.

Today, the beacon of hope is still glimmering among the youth, the parents and the intellectuals in the country. The regime may have been initially successful in keeping at bay large section of the Bahraini society, having falsely convinced them of hidden dangers of change, sectarianism and fear of reprisals. But with the economic

crisis looming in the horizon, the ruling tribal regime has imposed austerity measures, raising the prices of essential commodities to new levels unheard of before. Petrol, meat, water and other consumer goods have seen sharp rises while members of the ruling tribe have remained outside the community of citizens. The impact of those new hikes in commodity prices has been shocking. There are signs of mutiny against the hereditary dictatorship especially among the Sunni citizens whose livelihood has now been threatened. The myths propagated by the Alkhalifa dictatorship have begun to evaporate as the people realised the extent of corruption and deception of the regime. With thousands of political prisoners, hundreds of exiles and scores of martyrs, the world is beginning to appreciate the peaceful nature of the Bahraini revolution and how it has managed to remain as others crumbled unceremoniously as they were deflected to take up arms, adopt sectarian agenda and lose revolutionary credibility.

What is next for Bahrain? First there is the internal factor which does not favour settlement with the Akhlaifa hereditary dictatorship. This will continue despite the odds and difficulties. Second is the regional changes including the heavy political and military defeats suffered by the Saudis in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. This is bad news for Bahrain 's dictators who had rescinded sovereignty to the Saudis. Third, the international change of heart with vis-à-vis the Saudis. There are now rising concerns about ISIS, its crimes and challenges to the West. Saudis are seen as their main backers, financiers and providers of their destructive exclusionist ideology. With the erosion of the Saudi economic worthiness due to the rapidly falling oil prices, they are seen as being more of a liability to the West. That is likely to extend to the Alkhalifa who are losing ground in the country, becoming poorer and more submissive to the Saudis. Combined together the conclusion is that the future of these hereditary sheikdoms and regimes are no longer guaranteed leases of life beyond 2016, as predicted by Christopher Davidson in his book "After the Sheikhs". UK must take note of the horrible nature of these regimes and start to disengage from their support to the hereditary dictatorships of Al Saud and Alkhalifa.

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## Saudis bribe world politicians; Alkhalifa revenge from opponents

The "mystery" of hundreds of millions of dollars of corruption money in South East Asia has been "solved". The Saudi royal family was the source of a \$681 million "donation" that has engulfed Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak in scandal, his attorney general said on 26th January. Mohamed Apandi Ali said a review of evidence compiled by the country's anti-graft agency showed that the money received in 2013 was a "personal donation from the Saudi royal family," giving no further details on the source. He said \$620 million was returned to the Saudis a few months later, without specifying why. Similar sums were given other dictators such as that of Sudan and Somalia in return for cutting diplomatic relations with Iran to show support to the Saudis, or adopting sectarianism and fighting Shia Muslims. Last year Saudis used their petro-dollars to lure thousands of mercenaries from Senegal and Sudan to fight on their behalf against the people of Yemen.

An article by Jason Abeattie was published by the Mirror newspaper in UK on 22nd January, titled "Sandhurst academy is training officers from brutal Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE regimes". It said: "Since 2006, Sandhurst has offered taxpayer-subsidised training to 843 officers from other countries including some of the worst for human rights abuse, The British military is training hundreds of officers from regimes with appalling human rights records, figures reveal. Recruits from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE have received officer training at the elite Sandhurst military school...All these countries have been criticised for

their human rights records with some using the military to suppress opposition and dissent. These include 66 recruits from Bahrain which is accused of engaging in systematic torture, extra-judicial killing and enforced disappearances.

More native Bahrainis have been detained in the past week. On 24th January, Zakaria AlAlqami was snatched by plain-clothed members of the Death Squads. Yesterday he was spotted on a wheelchair after two days of relentless torture. No news have been received about Sayed Qassim Helal Nasser, from Karranah Town, since his abduction on 8th January. From Duraz Town three youths were arrested on 25th January: Yousif Abdulnabi AlShehabi Mohammed Habib AlAadhab and Jafar Aqeel AlMadani. From the town of Buri seven people were arrested in raids on their homes in the early hours of Sunday 24th January. Under-aged, Fadhel Khalaf, 13, was snatched by regime's Death Squads on 14th January and was remanded in custody for one week. He is still behind bars. His two brothers, Jassim, 16 and Hassan, 14 have been in detention since 21st December.

The extent of torture inflicted on two UK-educated brothers has begun to emerge in the past few days. Mohammad Ahmad Fakhrawi and his brother, Ali were subjected to different methods of torture for three months after their arrest in October. They were beaten regularly, punched, electrocuted, deprived of sleep and shackled for at least 70 days. After this horrific treatment they were forced to sign false confessions prepared by their torturers. They were then paraded on official TV

screens reading out those 'confessions'. Their lawyers tried but failed to reach them in that period. The British-trained torturers denied them access.

In a shocking development Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship sentenced 57 native Bahrainis to 15 years imprisonment for protesting against the ill-treatment at the notorious Jaw Prison. Last March they were involved in protests inside the jail and were subjected to horrific treatment by Jordanian troops who were sent to crush them. Many of them sustained serious injuries; some have had operations in various parts of their bodies. It was one of the worst episodes of Alkhalifa cruelty meted out on natives. On 20th January, 23 native Bahrainis were sentenced to ten years jail for protesting against the Alkhalifa illegitimate regime.

On 21st January the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) wrote to FIFA's eight leading sponsors raising serious concerns regarding one of the candidates for the FIFA presidency. He is a member of Bahrain's ruling tribe and is Asia Football Confederation president. He has been under media scrutiny since submitting his candidacy for the presidency for his conduct as Bahrain FA president in 2011, when the country witnessed Arab Spring protests. The NGO's letter to FIFA sponsors; Coca-cola, McDonalds, Visa, Adidas, Budweiser, Gazprom, Hyundai and KIA lays out evidence that he, as Bahrain FA president in 2011, had been involved in the administration of politically-motivated sanctions against footballers, athletes and clubs in Bahrain.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**

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## Calls to expel Saudis from HRC and Alkhalifa from FIFA presidency

As international anger against the Saudis escalates following the cold-blooded beheading, execution and crucifixion of 47 people, calls have been made for their Western backers to take action against their pariah state. Fifty Arab human rights bodies have signed a letter directed to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights asking him to expel Saudi Arabia from the Human Rights Council. Pressure is also mounting on the UK Government to disengage from its pro-Saudi policies and show real commitment to human rights and democracy in the Middle East. The FCO has now announced that it is allocating an extra 10 million pounds to promote human rights and democracy worldwide. However, activists are sceptical about the announcement as Saudi bribes have reached senior figures in Whitehall.

The treatment of the political prisoners at Jaw Torture Centre is deteriorating. Bottled water has been banned since the attack on inmates last March. They are now forced to drink filthy and salty water avail-

able to them from the old coolers. They are infested with algae. Many of them like the lawyer Ahmad Al Samahiji are suffering kidney diseases. They often urinate blood. Several families told the regime's "ombudsmen" offices but their complaints were thrown in dustbins. Last week inmates at Wing No 10 were subjected to severe torture for complaining about their conditions that are not suitable for human habitation. In the week 12-18<sup>th</sup> January at least 28 native Bahrainis were detained, including 8 children. On 18<sup>th</sup> January Ali Ahmad AlAsfoor, 27, was abducted by plain-clothed members of the Death Squads, near Albandar roundabout. The number of the "disappeared" is mounting. Yousuf Ahmad from Aali Town was abducted by regime's forces last week, but his whereabouts are not known. Sayed Qassim Moosa, from Karrana was also snatched at the Bahrain-Saudi causeway ten days ago.

Meanwhile, the regime's kangaroo courts have been meting out heavy sentences on native Bahrainis. The under-aged Ahmad

AlArab has now accumulated prison sentences totalling 130 years for protesting against Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. On 18<sup>th</sup> January, Ali Mohsin Baddaw and Ahmad Mohammad AlGhasra were given life sentences for opposing the regime.

Mark Pieth, the academic employed by Fifa originally to oversee its reform efforts, has called for an "outcry" from voters against Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim al-Khalifa succeeding Sepp Blatter as president of the crisis-hit governing body. With pressure building in Germany against the Alkhalifa candidate, Pieth said he was not an appropriate figure to oversee reform. "We need an outcry from the 209 FAs. They should ask: Is this what we want? Really? Is Salman a credible agent of democracy and a fresh start? Is he suitable?" the Basel professor and governance expert told Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Pieth also questioned whether a member of an "autocratic dynasty" should be eligible to lead Fifa out of a crisis.

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## Worldwide condemnation of Saudi mass executions, Alkhalifa terror rises

Worldwide anger at the mass executions, beheadings, crucifixions by Saudis is mounting after 47 Saudis were slaughtered by the Al Saud dynastical rule. In addition to some EU leaders who have expressed outrage at this state crime, media and human rights bodies have focussed on the need to take action against this most reactionary dictatorship. While memorial services have been held in many countries for the victims, Saudi embassies have been picketed by protesters angered by the Saudi crimes. Meanwhile the people of the Eastern Province have come under increasing scrutiny with more arrests and threats to behead and crucify more.

The Alkhalifa of Bahrain have also sunk to new lows in their treatment of the native majority population. In 2015 at least 1883 native Bahrainis were arrested by Alkhalifa torturers, including 237 children and 34 women. In the week 4-11th January at least 42 cases of arbitrary arrests were made including five children. In the early hours of 3rd January, Dr Sa'eed al-Samahiji was arrested from his home in 'Issa town. His home was searched and his electronic devices were confiscated. At 5am on the same day, Dr Sa'eed al-Samahiji called his family and told them he was being held at the notorious Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) before the line was cut off. He is accused of tweeting comments against the execution of the prominent Saudi Shi'a cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr by the Saudi regime. Dr al-Samahiji has not had access to his lawyer since his arrest. He is accused of "misusing electronic networks to insult a brother nation". On 8th January Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action calling for his release. It said: "Dr Sa'eed al-Samahiji, a Bahraini activist, was arrested on 3 January for posting on Twitter and is being held for interrogation. He is a prisoner of conscience and must be released immediately and unconditionally."

The cases of three prominent opposition figures charged for peacefully expressing their views have been adjourned. Ibrahim Sharif's case was brought to a kangaroo court in first week of January and was postponed until 24th February. Sheikh Hassan Isa's case has been adjourned until 28th February. Fadhel Abbas's case was postponed until 3rd March. This is sheer misuse of power as the regime seeks to exact revenge from those people by extending their illegal imprisonment.

On 11th January, Ali Taher AlAsfoor, 23, was snatched by plain-clothed members of Death Squads from his town of Sitra on his way to the mosque. On 9th January Ahmad AlZaki was arrested at his town of Daih. He is a religious orator. An elderly native Bahraini, Ali Abdulla AlWazir was arrested with his son in a

raid on their home in Muharraq. From Al Ekr town eight people were arrested: Hussain Abd Ali Moosa, Shaheed Radhi Abdull Rasool, Nasser Ismail AlWazir, Habib Jaffar Habib, Ali Ibrahim Abbas, Talib Ahmad Hassan, Mohammad Abdul Jalil AlWanni and his brother Hussain. From Duraz Town eight people were also arrested: Mahmood Saleh, Abdulla Saleh, Saeed AlBasha, Hussain AlUbaidi, Yasser AlAjami, Ahmad Jassim, Ali Mohammad Ali and Jaffar Mohammad Ali.

Yesterday Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action to save the lives of two native Bahrainis chosen by Alkhalifa killers for execution on trumpeted charges. It said: "Mohamed Ramadhan 'Issa 'Ali Hussain and Hussain 'Ali Moosa Hussain Mohamed did not receive a fair trial. Hussain 'Ali Moosa's "confession", which

he said had been obtained under torture, was used as the main evidence in his trial and was also used to incriminate Mohamed Ramadhan." It added: "No investigation into the men's allegations of torture is known to have taken place. They are both held in solitary confinement in Jaw prison, south of Manama." People were urged by AI to write to Alkhalifa killers: Urging the authorities to commute the death sentences imposed on Mohamed Ramadhan and Hussain 'Ali Moosa, order a full retrial where no evidence obtained under torture is used and investigate their allegations of torture; Acknowledging that the Bahraini government has a responsibility to protect the public and bring to justice those who commit crimes, but insisting that this should always be done in accordance with international law and Bahrain's international human rights obligations; and Urging them to commute all death sentences and declare a moratorium on executions.

Freedom House issued its 2015 report on Freedom on the Net, assessing 65 countries. Bahrain was listed as "Not Free" and given the rank of 59 out of 65. The least free is China with the lowest rank of 65. Iceland is given rank 1.

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
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## HRW: Torture Allegations Expose Sham Reforms

(Beirut) – Credible and consistent allegations of torture and mistreatment of detainees in Bahrain during 2015 undermined claims of reform, Human Rights Watch said on 27th January, in its World Report 2016. The Bahraini government and its allies, chiefly the UK, have contended that new institutions established by Bahrain are effectively protecting detainees from abuse during interrogation.

Authorities prosecuted rights activists and political opposition figures during 2015 solely for speech-related offenses and subjected them to unfair trials. The government used repressive new legislation to arbitrarily strip dissidents of their Bahraini citizenship, in some cases leaving them stateless.

"Bahraini authorities have failed to stop torture and failed to address the culture of impunity that fosters torture," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director. "The much-ballyhooed reforms will remain false advertising until Bahrain stops jailing activists and opposition leaders, holds officers accountable for serious abuses like torture, and gets serious about judicial and security service reform."

In the 659-page World Report 2016, its 26th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory

essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that the spread of terrorist attacks beyond the Middle East and the huge flows of refugees spawned by repression and conflict led many governments to curtail rights in misguided efforts to protect their security. At the same time, authoritarian governments throughout the world, fearful of peaceful dissent that is often magnified by social media, embarked on the most intense crackdown on independent groups in recent times.

People who had been detained at the Criminal Investigations Directorate between 2013 and 2015 described a range of torture methods, including electric shock, prolonged suspension in painful positions, severe beatings, threats to rape and kill, forced standing, exposure to extreme cold, and sexual abuse.

Bahrain established new institutions designed to curb the use of torture in response to a report commissioned by the government to examine abuses of protesters during demonstrations in 2011 related to the upheaval throughout the Middle East. But the government is still failing to hold security forces and high officials accountable for torture and serious mistreatment of people in custody.

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# Britain doesn't just sell arms to dictatorships - it sells our silence, as well

By Diane Abbott  
New Statesman, 20th January 2016

Britain's arms trade is undermining the humanitarian efforts of its Department of International Development.

Armed with British planes and British bombs, the Arab world's richest country has been indiscriminately bombing its most impoverished.

Saudi Arabia, which buys at least a third of our arms exports, has been bombing Yemen for nine months now.

The results have been, in the words of the UN's Yemen envoy Johannes van der Klauwe, "a humanitarian catastrophe".

The question is, to what extent are David Cameron and the Conservative government morally and legally complicit?

At the last official count in November, the UN said 5,878 people had been killed and 27,867 wounded.

Those who survive do so in a living hell: 82 per cent (more than 21 million people) need aid, 50 per cent (12m people) lack regular access to water; 57 per cent (14.4m people) are "food insecure"; 31 per cent (7.6m people) are starving and 10 per cent (2.5m people) have fled their homes.

In December, Save the Children assessed that the conflict had put 1.8 million children out of school and put 1,000 schools beyond use.

Saudi Arabia now stands accused of war crimes. Rights groups, the press and the UN report regular indiscriminate killings. Three Médecins Sans Frontières hospitals have been hit across Yemen. In September last year, UK-made cruise missiles struck a ceramics factory and a water bottling factory, killing dozens of workers, whose bodies melted into the machinery. In Saana on one day alone this month, a wedding hall, a hospital for blind students and the Chamber of Commerce were hit.

These incidents are notable only because they are well documented.

And while Saudi Arabia pulls the trigger, it is Britain which ever-faithfully reloads and replaces its weapons.

Since March 1 2015, we have granted over 100 requests for military equipment, suspending only a handful. In the first three months of the war alone, UK business made £1.7 billion in turnover by selling arms to the House of Saud - £400 million more than the total global aid given to Yemen since the start of the war.

Britain's arms trade is undermining the humanitarian efforts of its Department of International Development (DFID), which gives £106m a year (2015/2016) in aid to Yemen.

Some argue that, when compared to the billions made from selling arms to the

aggressors, our aid to the Yemeni people is a drop in the bucket, no better than blood money.

It is ironic that while Matthew Rycroft - our own government's envoy to the UN - reports that "Yemenis are in the midst of one of the very worst humanitarian crises in the world", we are complicit in the crime of exacerbating that very crisis.

I use the word "crime" advisedly. In a legal opinion commissioned by Amnesty UK, Professor Philippe Sands QC said that Britain is in breach of its own Export Control Act 2002, the EU Common Position and its international obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) for selling arms to a state at risk of violating international law or committing human rights abuses.

It is shocking that Britain cannot even adhere to its own arms export law - even though the consolidated rules to which the law refers were already weakened in March 2014. In a move criticized by a former Tory defence minister, the government watered down official advice to suspend arms exports at risk of being used for internal repression. In October 2014, Sir John Stanley, then chair of the Committee for Arms Export Controls, told Parliament that the decision "significantly weakens the test for arms exports", asserting that the government had a "more relaxed approach to arms exports that could be used for internal repression".

I have today tabled parliamentary questions to the FCO asking if it considers the UK in breach of domestic, EU and international law. Labour has also called for the committee on arms export controls, which has not met once since Saudi started bombing

Yemen, to be reconvened.

Our disregard for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) is particularly saddening. Signed and ratified by the UK on Christmas Eve 2014, the ATT was fought hard for by stakeholders working with one another across the political spectrum: Labour's Shadow Foreign Secretary Douglas Alexander, Conservative MP Alistair Burt, the TUC and, notably, the Defence Manufacturers Association (DMA).

When the arms industry's own workers lobby the state for a treaty which is then routinely broken by that state, the government cannot claim, as it does, that we must sell arms to war criminals because British jobs depend on it. British workers do not want arms sold in their name if they are used to break humanitarian law. It is not workers but the government that is determined to sell arms come what may, fueling and legitimizing human rights abuses across the world in the process.

Successive governments have lobbied hard internationally for British arms manufacturers have on more than one occasion invoked national security to scupper investigations into their alleged fraud. Despite this cozy relationship, manufacturers' profits are protected from public disclosure on the basis of confidentiality. It is however safe to say that UK arms firms such as BAE Systems, and Rolls-Royce are - quite literally - making a killing. When Saudi Arabia, Israel, Bahrain or Egypt buy our arms, they also buy our silence on their human rights abuses. We must have the moral courage to end this silence.

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## Calls to expel Saudis, *Cont from P 2*

On 18<sup>th</sup> January Amnesty International issued a statement titled "Bahrain starts the New Year by tightening the grip on freedom of expression". It said: The Bahraini authorities have tightened its grip on political dissent in Bahrain with new arrests of individuals at the beginning of 2016 for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression, including on social media, following the execution of prominent Saudi Arabian Shi'a cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr on 1 January. The New Year also saw the resumption of trials of three leading political opposition figures, all prisoners of conscience. The organization has today urged the authorities to release all prisoners of conscience in Bahrain and to uphold the right to freedom of expression. Amnesty International has also called on the Bahraini authorities to drop the charges against Ibrahim Karimi for comments posted on a twitter account considered "insulting" to the Kings of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, ahead of the opening of his trial on 19 January. Amnesty International is concerned that these charges are politically motivated and undermine the right to

freedom of expression, which includes expressing views that are critical of the government." More than 50 human rights bodies have signed a statement titled: "Bahrain must end harassment of human rights defender Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman". IFEX members and other groups from around the world have urged the Alkhalifa tribal regime to respect the rights of internationally renowned interfaith leader and human rights advocate.

On 16<sup>th</sup> January the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, called the notorious Alkhalifa foreign minister asking him that his tribe implemented real reforms. He encouraged "further measures to foster peaceful political dialogue amongst all Bahrainis and to fully comply with the Kingdom's international human rights obligations, including by upholding freedom of expression, assembly and other fundamental freedoms. Such measures will not only promote peace, security, reconciliation and prosperity in Bahrain, but will also contribute to defusing tensions in the region."

**Bahrain Freedom Movement**  
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