

BAHRAIN

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

Saudi, Alkhlaifa terrorism: challenge to the World

Regional developments point in one direction; fundamental change in the status quo and re-adjustment of centres of powers and political alliances. Several factors contribute to the eventual change. First is the gradual realisation by the Western powers that their regional allies are incapable of adopting policies that help establish social and political peace. Second is that the present Arab regimes have failed to adapt to modern norms of democracy and respect of human rights; thus they have voted themselves to opt out of acceptable modes of political and governmental behaviour. Third; the repression that has been inflicted on the Arab people has been unprecedented. This is coupled by widespread corruption, dictatorship and outdated norms of social and political behaviour. Fourth is the new heights of terrorism especially after becoming serious threat to the West. The latest carnage in Brussels adds to earlier terrorist atrocities in Madrid, London and Paris. Europe is very angry indeed, having failed to stem the rise of terrorism. At the same time the Western failure to address the root causes of terrorism and its financiers is contributing to the inability to have effective policies to eradicate its threats to Europe. One thing is clear. In the aftermath of each of the terrorist tragedy, some media attention has been given to Saudi Arabia as the most important source of the ideology underpinning terrorism. This was the case when the Paris bombing took place last year. This time, Saudis were also pinpointed as the most important single supporter of this bloody phenomenon. The ITN's programme on Tuesday 22nd March on Saudi Arabia and its links to extremism was a strong message to policy makers especially the UK. It likened Saudi practices in chopping heads and limbs to those adopted by ISIS. It depicted a country which is backward, reactionary, corrupt and dictatorial. The next day The New York Times published an article titled: "The Saudi origins of Belgium's Islamist threat". It was another indictment of the Saudi regime for engaging in terrorism and ignoring human rights or democratic values. This Saudi culture is being spread throughout the region in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. The aim is to

induce fear in the hearts and minds of the people for any stand that challenges the authority of the established dictatorships. In light of the clear indifference by the Western powers, other GCC regimes have followed the Saudi pattern and targeted human rights and pro-democracy activists. Bahrain, Kuwait and The United Arab Emirates have all become vicious in their treatment of political activists seeking political change.

While Saudis have adopted the policy of active attack on outside forces and countries seeking to introduce democracy in the Middle East, the Alkhalifa are bogged down in repressing revolutionary forces seeking fundamental political change in the country. In this process of transgressive policies and tactics, terrorism is taking an ugly leap upwards especially in Europe. There is one major hindrance; the unholy alliance of the counter revolutionary forces. The UK's conservative government is determined to continue its alliance with the most repressive autocracies in the Gulf led by the Saudis and Alkhalifa. Terrorism is the most epidemic sickness of modern world. The recent events in Brussels have shaken the peace of the Western world especially in the shadow of other recent bombings in Paris. The European Union now faces a difficult situation as to how to create effective alliances against the reactionary regional powers led by the Saudis. There is a gradual realisation that international efforts be propped up to uproot the evil ideology of extremism, terrorism and sectarianism. The British policy towards those dictators must be reassessed and efforts made to alter them. This is better for all the people of the world who are forced to live in fear, anxiety and disappointment. Their material comfort is not matched by peaceful habitation. Neither is there a beacon of hope at the end of the tunnel unless relentless efforts are made to unseat the aggressors, dictators and enemies of human values.

The destruction of the human conscience is one of the first victims of the Saudi-inspired terrorism. It is a challenge to human values and decency. Islam is itself a victim of this transgression by those nomadic chiefs who commit the most serious crimes against humanity with impunity.

The UN has failed to address the issue of terrorism and has sought to please the aggressors. The Saudi war on Yemen has now continued unabated for one year. The world has failed to take on the Saudis and other aggressors who were recruited to take part in these human massacres. More than 10,000 Yemenis have perished at the hands of the Saudis and their backers. The most ancient country in the Middle East has been reduced to ruins under the daily bombings of the Saudi aggressors who are afforded unlimited supplies of guided missiles and bombs. Last month a team of UN experts said that war crimes had been committed by the aggressors. The reaction of the Saudi backers indicate their indifference to those criminal acts.

In light of these facts isn't it plausible to suggest, as the New York Times argued, that the Brussels bombings had their origins in Saudi Arabia? How, then, can terrorism be addressed in a serious way and bring it to an end? How can the world safeguard the interests of the Western people, their safety and well-being? Pro-democracy activists have, for a long time, called for international efforts to address the problem of terrorism and to deal with the cultural and religious environments that provide incubation for those destructive ideologies. This means challenging the Saudis on the issue and building a dedicated alliance against those who are instrumental in this process. It is now clear that the hesitation to undertake this mission is causing more deaths and destruction. Democratization is what the people of the Middle East want in order to build modern statehood to replace the antiquated ideologies based on sectarianism and extremism. Before the next European capital is targeted by ISIS terrorists, hard choices must be made as a matter of urgency. The Saudi and Alkhalifa monarchs must be held accountable for those criminal acts that have claimed the lives of hundreds of young men and women. There is no time to dither or hesitate as this will only encourage terrorists to push forward their agenda and political programme. The only time available is to tackle terrorism and deal it destructive blows and a programme to annihilate it.

To stop terrorism in Europe refrain from arming Saudis, Alkhalifa

The bloodbath in Brussels is despicable act by ISIS terrorists. It is evil butchery which contradicts basic teachings of Islam and human values. To stop these atrocious crimes the world must address the sources of these groups, schools that promote extremism and the sources of their finances. Saudis and Alkhalifa must be challenged for their unquestionable role in the rise of modern day terrorism.

Calls to stop arming Saudis have intensified in recent days as their aggression on Yemen approaches its first anniversary. Yesterday Amnesty International (AI) called on Washington and London to halt arms deliveries to Saudi Arabia which is leading military coalition in an aggressive war on Yemen. In a statement released one year into the Saudi-led aggression AI said: "Saudi Arabia's international partners have added fuel to the fire, flooding the region with arms despite the mounting evidence that such weapons facilitated appalling crimes and

the clear risk that new supplies could be used for serious violations" said James Lynch, AI's regional deputy director. The group said it had "documented since the beginning of the conflict at least 32 air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition "that appear to have violated international humanitarian law". The strikes killed almost 361 civilians including at least 127 children. On 25th February the European Parliament called for an EU-wide arms embargo against Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile concern is rising for the safety of at least three youths from the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia after reports circulated of their imminent execution including Ali Al Nimr. UK's Foreign Minister said last year after his Saudi visit that he would not be executed. The situation in Eastern Province is tense especially after the arrest this week of most prominent senior cleric, Sheikh Hussain Al Radhi after calling for reforms.

On 18th March The United Nations Spe-

cial Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, called on the Government of Bahrain to immediately release prominent Bahraini women's rights and social media activist Zainab Al-Khawaja, and urged them to drop all charges for having exercised her right to free expression. "Ms. Zainab is detained purely for her critical views against government authorities," he said. "Such criticism is not only fully legitimate according to Bahrain's obligations under human rights law. "The ongoing harassment and criminalization of activists in Bahrain should stop," the human rights expert stressed. "I urge the authorities to cease such persecution and immediately drop all the charges against Zainab Al-Khawaja." Furthermore, Index on Censorship called for the immediate release of Zainab Al-Khawaja, who was arrested on Monday 14 March 2016 with her one-year-old son Abdulhadi. "Zainab Al-Khawaja is facing retaliation for exercis-

Obama attacks Saudis, Alkhalifa criticised by HR Commissioner

The Saudis were lambasted by their strongest ally, the United States. In one of the most outburst of frustration, President Obama referred to the Saudis and other allies as “free riders” who push the United States to act but contribute little themselves. He was speaking to Mr. Jeffrey Goldberg published on 9th March in The Atlantic magazine, Obama has long been cooler toward the Saudis and other Arab allies than his predecessor, but his willingness to forcefully criticize them stunned Washington’s foreign policy makers. Mr. Obama has long viewed Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries as repressive regimes obsessed with sectarian issues whose principal export, oil, warms the climate and whose strict interpretation of Islam contributes to violent extremism. “The Saudis and other Gulf Arabs have funnelled money, and large numbers of imams and teachers, into the country. In the 1990s, the Saudis heavily funded Wahhabist madrassas, seminaries that teach the fundamentalist version of Islam favoured by the Saudi ruling family.”

The Saudi regime is, once again, poised to murder more victims, using beheading, crucifixion and other forms of killing. Three young boys from the Eastern Province are among a group of citizens destined to die at hands of the Saudi sword men. They include Ali AlNimr, the nephew of Martyr Sheikh Nimr AlNimr who was executed in January. UK’s Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, had given assurance after his trip to Saudi Arabia in December that Ali AlNimr would not be executed. His intervention came at the height of an international outcry. Now Mr Hammond’s credibility and integrity would be severely compromised if his statement had been intended to give Saudis breathing space. Meanwhile the French President is facing a storm after granting French medal to Saudi crown prince, Mohammad bin Nayef. The rightist party has attacked the president for his hypocritical action. Prominent actress Sophie Marceau has refused to accept the highest French accolade “Legion d’Honneur” after it was given to the Saudi crown prince.

As the native Bahrainis prepared to mark the fifth anniversary of the Saudi aggression (14th March 2011) against their country Alkhalifa regime intensified its crackdown, with more raids on houses, arrests, torture and deportations. Demonstrations erupted in most areas over the past two days to mark the anniversary and demand an immediate end to Saudi occupation. There is widespread belief that the Saudis would eventually be defeated in their military campaigns against Bahrainis and Yemenis. They have already been forced to accede to the Houthis demand that any negotiations on

Yemen would only be conducted with the Saudis, not their Yemeni cronies headed by former president Hadi.

Yesterday British-supported Alkhalifa tribal authorities arrested Zainab AlKhawaja and her 15 months old baby, Abdul Hadi. There has been an outburst of international anger and disgust at this criminal move by this terrorist regime. Her mother, Khadija AlMosawi said in a tweet: “They cannot silence your voice”. Amnesty International issued News Flash calling on the Bahraini authorities to immediately release human rights activist Zainab AlKhawaja, and her baby. “Zainab AlKhawaja and her family have been relentlessly targeted by Bahraini authorities for speaking out against human rights violations,” said James Lynch, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Middle East and North Africa Programme. “Her convictions are for nothing more than tearing up photos and seeking to visit her father in prison. If this arrest means the start of her prison sentence, she will be a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for peacefully exercising her right to freedom of expression.”

On 15th March Ahmad Hassan AlMadhoon, 17, from Karzakkan was arrested from the street. On Monday six people were detained from Muharraq, one

from Karbabad and one from Aali. Former Councillor, Sadiq Rabi’ was detained, interrogated and abused before being released after 24 hours. On Monday a native Bahraini was arrested, tortured and charged with possessing a picture of Sayed Hassan Nasr Allah, the Hezbollah leader. Ali Abdul Hassan was taken away from his shop in Manama and subjected to horrific treatment before he was charged. Last week the Saudis initiated a move to label Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation. The foreign ministers of Arab countries subservient to the Saudis approved the move.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ra’ad ibn AlHussain has criticised Alkhalifa tribal rule for its continuing abuse of Bahrainis. He said that political opponents are silenced and targeted, and citizens are punished by revoking their nationality. Journalists, human rights defenders and political opponents are gagged by arrests and revocation of citizenship. He added that “profound reforms” are needed to stem the crisis. Alkhalifa foreign ministry has attacked the Higher Commissioner.

The Special Rapporteur on Torture whose term is approaching its end said that his queries to the Bahraini authorities have never been addressed and that he had

Sen. Wyden on the 5-Year Anniversary of Popular Protests in Bahrain

Monday, February 29, 2016

Sen. Wyden submitted the following statement for the record on the 5-year anniversary of popular protests in Bahrain

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, this month marks five years since Bahrainis of all backgrounds took to the streets in Manama in peaceful protest, calling for reform in their country. As Senators have heard me recount here before, the government of Bahrain responded with violence and repression, torture and retaliation. In response, the monarchy set up an independent commission: the so-called the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, or BICI. And I say this is important to recall because many of the BICI's 26 specific, concrete recommendations remain unfulfilled five years later.

That certainly isn't what the government of Bahrain wants you to believe. In fact, the regime's representatives continue to insist that they have fully implemented all of the BICI recommendations. As they tell it, they've turned the page on that chapter of Bahrain's history.

But members of Bahrain's peaceful opposition feel trapped in a never-ending story. Non-governmental organizations like Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, Amnesty International, Human Rights First, Human Rights Watch, and the Project on Middle East Democracy have all documented the regime's ongoing repression. The State Department's most recent annual human rights report for Bahrain states that protestors face "arbitrary deprivation of life," "arrest and detention of protesters...occasionally leading to their torture," and "restrictions on civil liberties, including freedom of speech, press, assembly association, and religion." And as some colleagues know, the State Department could last certify that Bahrain had only fully implemented five of the 26 BICI recommendations. That's a pretty far cry from full implementation.

As the son of a journalist, I want to take a minute to highlight one particular aspect of the regime's repression: the crackdown on speech and expression. As recently as this month, a Bahraini court sentenced an internationally-known photographer to serve jail time for participating in an unlicensed protest. The regime has similarly targeted bloggers as well as prominent and award-winning photo-journalists for merely capturing Bahrain's ongoing unrest. And just this month, a Bahraini court sentenced a Sunni opposition leader to one year in prison for giving a political speech.

Despite these concerns, the Obama administration chose last year to resume selling or transferring certain arms to the

government of Bahrain. I was one of the biggest proponents of the arms ban dating back to 2011 and I saw no reason to revisit the policy last year. In fact, I introduced the bipartisan BICI Accountability Act, legislation that would block the administration's decision to overturn the weapons ban until the State Department could certify that all 26 BICI recommendations were fully implemented.

I'm not here to make broad pronouncements about what the government of Bahrain should look like—that's very much a conversation for Bahrain's people and its rulers to have. But as President Obama said in 2011, "you can't have a real dialogue when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail." For Bahrain to move forward, the government will need to release the opposition leaders still languishing in its prisons.

The United States and Bahrain have ties that go back decades; our countries are partners and allies. Indeed, I am not disappointed with the government of Bahrain despite our bilateral relationship, I am disappointed with the government of Bahrain because of our bilateral relationship. The United States of America has an obligation, it strikes me, to ask more of her friends and allies around the world. And when they falter or fail, the U.S. has a duty to help them live up to their potential. And of course there is always the real danger that continued unrest or even greater instability could impact the safety of our soldiers in Bahrain or the future of the American presence there. For these reasons, Mr. President, I speak out today against further oppression and I call again for reconciliation and reform in Bahrain.

Zainab AlKhawaja writes from behind bars

I sit here in the dark in prison cell 19, I look past my baby at the shining prison bars. This is a new prison, new walls, new paint and new metal bars
Zainab Alkhawaja

I was arrested a few days ago after being sentenced to three years in prison for several political cases; one of which was tearing a picture of Hamad, the king of Bahrain.

As I walked up to the prison door carrying my baby, I realized that I had walked through that door on crutches, I had walked through that door pregnant, and I had been carried through that door by police. Five years have passed since the start of the revolution in Bahrain; five years of systematic aggression on the people of this country whose only wish was to seek equal rights and democracy. Five years of criminal acts by the regime. Killing peaceful protesters, arresting thousands, torturing thousands. Years filled with heroism, bravery, sacrifice, filled also with pain, anger and loss. And it seems to me, after all this time, the government's only strategy here is to simply distract the world from the crimes taking place. Instead of improving the human rights in the country, they seem to be thinking, lets create GONGOs (Government Organized Non-Governmental Organizations). Instead of hearing the peoples' grievances, lets silence them. Instead of fixing the problems, lets contain them so they're less visible. Instead of releasing prisoners of conscience, lets build bigger, better looking prisons. Contain the protests to the villages and let the world only see the cities and the malls. Contain the activists in jails and let the world hear government mouth pieces who speak of reform. Basically contain, bury, the truth and spread a lie.

What's more shocking than the government's plan on how to deal with the biggest revolution the country has witnessed, is that

they apparently think it could work.

I sit here in the dark in prison cell 19, I look past my baby at the shining prison bars. This is a new prison, new walls, new paint and new metal bars.

All the government is doing is shining those metal bars. Making them as shiny as possible so the rest of the world would be so busy looking at the shiny metal that they are blinded to what is behind it. I don't believe they can succeed.

I invite the world to look beyond the shining metal bars. To see my one-year-old baby holding on to them during the day and calling out. To see my 50-year-old father hunched over a book, deep in thought. To see hundreds of tortured bodies and thousands of wounded hearts. Fathers who dream of raising their children, husbands who wish they could support their wives, young boys with lost futures. All living through this pain, every hour of every day, hoping this silence speaks louder than anything they could say.

It's hard to look pain in the eyes and acknowledge it, but that's exactly what I ask everyone to do. Yes there are governments willing to turn a blind eye to our suffering and shake hands with those who oppress us, but I also believe that there are enough good people in the world who recognize the good fight, who admire a people who sacrifice in the hope for a better future, and who can't stand by silently in the face of oppression.

I hope this letter finds its way out of this prison and into the heart and hands of all freedom loving people.

Love from Bahrain

Zainab Alkhawaja

Prison cell 19, Isa Town Women's Prison