

BAHRAIN

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

Sharp escalation of repression epitomised by citizenship revocation

The political and human rights crisis in Bahrain is deepening. The regime is escalating its brutal attacks on people at every front, emboldened by the silence, and in some cases, support, by its Western allies, especially US and UK. The recent escalation reached its peak with the regime's decision to revoke the citizenship of the most senior religious figure in the country. Ayatullah Sheikh Isa Qassim is seen by the dictator as the major obstacles to its attempts to end the people's Revolution that had been launched on 14th February 2011. The Sheikh is also the most senior political figure in the country. He was the figurehead of the Islamic bloc in the Constituent Assembly that had been elected in December 1972 to draw up the only legitimate constitution in the country following the withdrawal of Britain from Bahrain and the Gulf in 1971. He led the Islamic bloc adding to the lively debates associated with the defunct constitution. Subsequently he became a member of the National Assembly (Parliament) that was dissolved by the regime in August 1975. He is thus not only the most religious authority but also the most experienced political player in the recent history of the country. Targeting him is thus viewed as a direct and audacious attack on the suppressed majority that revolted against the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship.

The developments started in June with the deportation of the reputed human rights activist, Zainab AlKhwaja to Denmark. She was warned by the tribal rule through the Danish Embassy to leave the country or face the prospect of another arrest; this time without her son, Abdul Hadi. She was forced to leave the country after her Bahraini passport had been confiscated. Then Nabeel Rajab was arrested only few hours before the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council was opened. It was a calculated slap to the human rights world. The regime's foreign minister went further to tweet that the Human Rights Commissioner is "a powerless person" implying defiance and challenge. This was followed by the Alkhalifa decision to increase the jail sentence of Al Wefaq's leader, Sheikh Ali Salman from four to nine years on trumped up charged. Another decision then led to the freezing

of AlWefaq Society, and the closure of its headquarters and other branches. These draconian decisions were intended to bring the political opposition to its knees. But the decision to persecute Sheikh Qassim was, by far, the most daring decision in the Alkhalifa war on the native majority Shia Muslim population. The aim was to deport him from the country. The policy of deportation of opponents had been established by the British in the fifties. In 1957 they banished three of the opposition leaders, two Sunnis and one Shia, to the island of St Helena in the Atlantic Ocean. They remained there until a British court ruled that their banishment was illegal and ordered their release in July 1961. The British security advisors of the Alkhalifa clan, headed by the defunct Ian Henderson, also deported several opposition figures in the nineties.

Sheikh Isa Qassim's case is the most explosive of all. Since the decision to strip him of his Bahraini nationality, a practice that appears to have the blessing of UK's FCO, the situation has become so volatile that his town of Duraz is under total siege. Thousands of native Bahrainis flooded to his house to prevent his arrest. Even the US State Department expressed "deep concern" at the turn of the events. It appears that John Kerry had ordered his Alkhalifa counterpart to exercise restraint and to delay the implementation of his tribe's decision, called for by the Saudis. The move has infuriated many outside friends of the native Bahraini people. Western news media and human rights bodies have strongly condemned this flagrant persecution of the people and called on their governments to take a stand. For example an editorial of the Financial Times on 1st June titled "Bahrain crack-down fans the sectarian flames" argued that "Appeasement is no answer to the brutal suppression of civil liberties". On 25th June, The Economist published an editorial titled: Brutal king, cowardly allies, to express the extent of the crisis. Regional support of the people came from many places and personalities. The Supreme religious authority, Ayatullah Sayed Ali AlSistani called Sheikh Qassim from the Iraqi city of Najaf to offer his support and pray for his good well being. Several religious authority called the

Sheikh from the Iranian holy city of Qom to do the same. Ayatullah Khamanei himself spoke about the predicament of the Sheikh and offering his support and prayers. So did Sayed Hassan NasUllah of Lebanon who warned the Alkhalifa that the situation would explode if they continued persecuting the Sheikh. This is in addition to the international calls for the Alkhalifa to stop their uncalculated adventurism that would backfire on them.

The message is clear. What the tribal dictatorship is doing in Bahrain is an affront the modern day culture of free speech, democracy, rule of law and free speech. The world must not tolerate the actions of tyrants whose persecution of their citizens has become the core of their policies. The people of Bahrain have been repressed enough that no more persecution against them may be tolerated. This is the message of the world political and religious leaders including the Secretary General of the United Nations. The rogue state run by the Alkhalifa is becoming a great liability to its supporters in London and Washington. It is also becoming a source of instability in the region by embracing the ideology of ISIS that is sectarian dictatorial and extremely violent. The mushrooming of those groups, affiliated with or sympathetic to ISIS, is now recognised to be a result of the ideological and religious extremism, fanned by the Saudis. Yet there is a big vacuum in the world's leadership. While the US is turning blind eyes to the violent practices of the Saudis and Alkhalifa, the UK has been accused of acquiescing in the repression inflicted by the Alkhalifa on the Bahraini people and the persistent policy of targeting pro-democracy activists and human rights defenders. World powers are served a notice that Bahrainis will not cease their active demands of transforming their country into a democracy. Dictatorship is the main cause of evil in the Middle East and unless it is challenged head on, violence will remain rampant and will continue to threaten the peace and security of modern world. Sheikh Isa Qassim is a voice of reason and moderation. Antagonising him is strategic mistake. Alkhalifa must be made to realise the futility of their dictatorship and forced to hand over power to the people of Bahrain.

Saudis murder citizen as Alkhalifa poise for war on native Bahrainis

The Saudi regime has committed another crime, killing an innocent man in the Eastern Province for opposing their dictatorship. The official media said that Abdul Rahim Al Faraj was killed by police fire who raided his home on 27th June. He was taken to Mudar clinic. The fate of his brother, Majed, who was with him at the time is not known. When the police recognised the victim's identity they claimed that he was a wanted person in connection with earlier protests following the execution of Martyr Nimr AlNimr.

The situation in Bahrain is on a knife's edge as Duraz Town remains under siege by regime's forces. Thousands of native Bahrainis have continued their vigil outside the most senior religious figure, Sheikh Isa Qassim after revoking his nationality and threatening to deport him. He is the symbol of the history, culture and religion of the vast majority of native Bahrainis who will not allow Alkhalifa to alter that nature. People are banned from entering the zone and fears are growing of regime's violence. Passions are also running high as Nabil Rajab's health deteriorates the international Yesterday Mr Rajab was transferred to hospital after his condition worsened after two weeks of neglect and abuse in his solitary confinement.

A young native Bahraini mother was arrested on 27th June. Taiba Ismael, a mother of two, was detained for tweeting. Meanwhile the regime has refused to release Fadhel Abbas, the Secretary General of the Wahdawi Democratic Society, who had been sentenced to five years for tweeting against the Saudi war on Yemen. Yesterday his appeal was adjourned. On 22nd June Amnesty International called on the Bahrain authorities to halt its intensified

crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, association and movement after a week which has seen the suspension of the country's main opposition group Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society and the stripping of the nationality of its spiritual leader, and the arrest of prominent human rights defender and prisoner of conscience Nabeel Rajab. The past week has also seen a group of five activists, including human rights defenders, prevented from travelling to Geneva to take part in the United Nations Human Rights Council session.

Last week the US State Department said that Bahrain had fallen short in implementing a series of political and human rights reforms, undermining efforts to stabilize the country after its government crushed Arab Spring protests five years ago. In a report sent to Congress, the department documents Bahrain's implementation of recommendations made by an independent commission after the 2011 uprisings. Bahrain is US ally and hosts the Navy's 5th Fleet. The report says failures in many areas diminishes the improvements and minimizes "popular acceptance of newly established government institutions." Yesterday, The US Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power called for an end to the campaign against the opposition "the government must end crackdown on nonviolent dissenting voices," she stated.

On Tuesday 28th June regime's kangaroo courts passed prison sentences totalling 377 years on 27 native Bahrainis for their anti-regime activities. In one case 11 people were given 3 to 15 years incarceration. Ali AlAradi, Ali AlTaweel, Sadiq AlMahal, Ali Burdestani, Sayed Ahmad Salman AlAbbar, Jassim AlSammak were sentenced to 15 years each. Sayed Mohammad

Hadi AlAbbar, Sayed Mohamad Majid AlAbbar. Reda Khamdan was sentenced to seven years while Mahmood Burdastani was given three years. In another case 16 native Bahrainis were sentenced to 15 years each for protesting against Alkhalifa dictatorship. Another native Bahraini has been deported as the policy of genocide takes root. Taimoor Karimi, a lawyer had his passport confiscated few months ago. On Monday he was forced on an airplane to Iraq via UAE.

A leading Australian intelligence company is selling state-of-the-art surveillance technology to Bahrain amid concerns it could be used to target pro-democracy campaigners, according to an investigation by international human rights advocates. Published on 23rd June, the report by London-based Bahrain Watch found that Sydney-based iOmniscient, has since April partnered with US company Pelco and Bahrain's LSS Technologies to provide the Bahrain Interior Ministry with enhanced surveillance equipment. This includes 2000 CCTV cameras and facial recognition software to scan for "persons of interest" in crowds. "The rollout of this technology means at least one camera for every 650 Bahrainis, allowing nationwide, real-time tracking of the population," said Bahrain Watch's Travis Brimhall, noting prior use of police video to indict protesters in the Gulf kingdom. "Given the government's well-established record of targeting opposition and human rights defenders, we fear this will provide an advanced dissident-capture system where anyone found to be speaking out can be recognised and intercepted on a scale previously unseen."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
29 June 2016

Alkhalifa wage war on natives, revokes nationality of their leader

The situation in Bahrain is slipping further towards an all-out confrontation between the Alkhalifa occupiers and the majority native population. This is a result of more criminal steps by the dictator the latest of which is the revocation on 20th June of the nationality of the most senior religious leader in the country. Sheikh Isa Qassim is not only known for his religious status but also as a politician who had been involved in drawing up the country's only legitimate constitution as an elected member of the Constituent Assembly of 1973 following the British withdrawal in 1971. He was subsequently elected to the National Assembly that was dissolved in August 1975. He has supported the people's strife for their rights and refused to accept the Saudi dictatorship and occupation. Despite protestations from US and UN Human Rights Council, the dictator may now order Sheikh Isa's banishment as it did with many others in the past two years.

Several developments preceded this latest step. First came the forced deportation two weeks ago of Zainab AlKhawaja to Denmark. This was followed by the arrest

of Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. Then Alkhalifa dictator ordered the suspension of AlWefaq Society for not participating in 2014 elections. Then came the banning of Imams from leading the Friday prayers. These are dramatic decisions that have exposed the extent of isolation and rejection of the regime by the people.

The arrest of Nabil Rajab caused a furore in the human rights world. After detaining him for one week, his detention was extended yesterday by eight more days. On 16th June Amnesty International issued an Urgent action calling on people to write to the Bahraini authorities; Calling on the Bahraini authorities to release Nabeel Rajab immediately and unconditionally and drop the charges against him, as they relate solely to his peaceful exercise of his right to freedom of expression; Calling on them to lift his travel ban; and Urging them to uphold the right to freedom of expression and repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly including Article 216 of the Penal Code.

In an unprecedented move, most human rights activists planning to travel to Geneva were prevented from leaving. No one travelling from Bahrain has thus attended the 32nd session of the Human Rights Council. The last human rights defender to be banned was the veteran activist Abdul Nabi AlEkri, 72 who was taken off the airplane at Bahrain Airport. Another activist, Sayed Saeed Isa Hussain was also banned from travelling to Geneva. On 19th June Hajji Majid (known as Hajji Sumood for his steadfastness despite his age) was briefly detained at the airport on his way to Geneva. He was banned from travelling to Geneva.

British MPs have launched a new Early Day Motion expressing disgust at the Government's refusal to make a stand in defence of human rights or to criticise the tribal Alkhalifa regime whose despotism knows no bounds. It states: "That this House is seriously concerned about the suspension in Bahrain of the operations of the main political opposition group, Al-Wefaq, and the freezing of its assets

Continued on Page 3

Saudis antagonise the UN, Alkhalifa escalate war on native Bahrainis

Worldwide indignation at the removal by the UN of the Saudis from the list of children's rights violators is causing political polarisation at a massive scale. While Ban Ki Moon openly criticised the Saudis for their pressures, blackmail and worldwide mobilisation of their lobbies, calls are being raised to punish these bandits and cut them to size. Western defenders of the Saudis are also coming under severe criticism for their apparent connivance in the unprecedented decision to reverse a key decision on international stage. Mr Moon spoke with bitterness about the "hard choice" he had been subjected to when the Saudis threatened to sabotage the world body through financial and political pressures. Democrat Hillary Clinton, speaking in Cleveland on Monday 13th June, called out Saudi Arabia and two other U.S. allies by name for their support of terrorist networks and ideology: "it is long past time for the Saudis, Qatari and Kuwaitis and others to stop their citizens from funding extremist organizations. And they should stop supporting radical schools and mosques around the world that have set too many young people on a path towards extremism." The day before Jordan's official news agency, reported that Saudi Arabia is a major funder of Hillary Clinton's campaign to become the next president of the United States. It published what it described as exclusive comments from Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman which included a claim that Riyadh had provided 20 percent of the total funding to the prospective Democratic candidate's campaign.

Alkhalifa regime has this week escalated the war on Bahrain's native population. Yesterday the dictator ordered the "suspension" of the largest political society, AlWefaq. Its headquarters and all other branches were closed down, its bank accounts frozen and its electronic sites blocked. An order had been issued by Alkhalifa "justice" minister to the court which immediately implemented it. Within few hours similar orders were given to close down The Islamic Enlightenment Society, a religious institution established in early seventies. It was closed by a similar order in 1984 but was reopened in 2001. A third order closed down AIRisalah religious institution. Both bodies had not engaged in politics. This massive attack on the native Shia Muslim population who represent more than 70 percent of the population is part of Alkhalifa plan to eradicate the history of Bahrain which they had occupied with force.

The arrest on 12th June of Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights has outraged the human rights world which reacted angrily against Bahrain's dictator. Mr Rajab who

had been imprisoned twice before was detained in a house raid in the early hours of Monday 13th June and taken to Alkhalifa torture chambers. His arrest followed the deportation last week of Zainab AlKhawaja to Denmark. The 32-year-old rights campaigner left on Tuesday 7th June, less than a month after she was released from prison after being controversially imprisoned for ripping up an image of the country's king. She had been held in prison with her infant son, Abdulhadi. She said that she had received a message from the Danish consulate that a "highly placed" Alkhalifa official told Danish diplomats that she would be re-arrested and face fresh charges if she remained in the country. "The message that came through to me was that basically I would be imprisoned on fresh charges and that this time I would not be able to take my son with me to prison. I would only be able to see him half an hour a week, and I could face, like other Bahraini campaigners, a sentence of up to 100 years in prison." These criminal acts were a clear message to the UN's Human Rights Council which began its 32nd session on 13th June in Geneva.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad Al Hussein, called on Bahrain to halt repression and severe restrictions on freedom of expressions. He made the following remarks during his opening statement for the current session: "At least 250 people in Bahrain have reportedly been

stripped of their citizenship by the Government because of their alleged disloyalty to the interests of the Kingdom. In addition to these severe restrictions on freedom of expression, which contravene Bahrain's international human rights obligations, an indefinite ban on gatherings in the capital has been in place since 2013. Dozens of people – including minors – have been prosecuted for participating in protests. Repressions will not eliminate people's grievances; it will increase them."

Bahrainis human rights activists were banned from attending the current 32nd session of the HRC in Geneva. On Sunday 12th June three of them were taken off the aircraft as it was preparing to take off. Hussain Radhi and Ibtisam Al-Sayegh, of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and Abdul Hadi Mushaima, father of the first martyr of the Revolution, were prevented from travelling to expose Alkhalifa crimes to the world. On 8th June Global Peace Index 2016 said that three of the five biggest country declines in peace occurred in the Middle East and North Africa: Yemen, Libya and Bahrain. Bahrain's ranking deteriorated from 107 in 2014 to 132 in 2015. The index is produced by Institute for Economics and Peace, a global think tank headquartered in Sydney, Australia with branches in New York, Mexico City and Oxford.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
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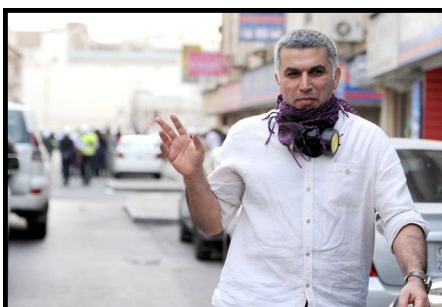
Alkhalifa wage war on natives, *Continued from page 2*

following a request to the Bahraini Courts from the Bahraini Ministry of Justice, which alleged the action was necessary to safeguard the security of the kingdom; is dismayed by the increase of the jail sentence of Al-Wefaq's leader, Sheikh Ali Salman, from four to nine years for matters relating to his right to peaceful expression, at appeal proceedings in May 2016; is worried about what appears to be a further crackdown on political opposition and civil society in Bahrain, with the arrest of Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights and the departure of human rights defender Zainab Al Khawaja from the country after facing further threats from the government; deplores the continuing revoca-

tion of nationality of Bahraini citizens, rendering many of them stateless; fears that if the Government does not clearly and publicly express its disappointment and concern about these developments, the Bahraini government will continue further down the path of repression which could result in growing conflict, increasing radicalisation and, possibly, even further violence; and calls on the Government therefore to make a statement and to reconsider its technical co-operation programme with the Bahraini government."

In a separate development the regime's courts have issued mass jail sentences on native Bahrainis as part of its policy of genocide. On 16th June. Eight people were sentenced to 15 years in jail and had their nationality revoked. Two others were given three years for participating in anti-regime protests. Among them were: Ali Qambar, Ali Farhood, Majed Ahmad, Hassan Najib and Ahmad Hassan Jaffar. From Duraz Town several young people were given 15 years for anti-regime protests; Among them are: Rajae'I Baddao, Mohammad Baddao, Abdulla Ahmad, Mohsin AlBasha, Mohammad Al Banna and Sadiq Abdul Wahed. Seventeen others were each given three years.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
22 June 2016



Bahrain's crackdown: Brutal king, cowardly allies

The authorities in Bahrain try to crush dissent, as America and Britain look on

The Economist, Jun 25th 2016

OVER the past decade, Britain has stripped 27 people of their citizenship on national-security grounds. Bahrain's native population is 1% of Britain's, but since 2014 the kingdom has revoked the citizenship of over 300 people for supposedly similar reasons. The latest is Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassim, regarded as the spiritual leader of the country's Shia majority. On June 20th the Sunni-led government said he had been promoting extremism and sectarianism. He was also an outspoken critic of an increasingly ruthless regime.

This is merely the latest example of a crackdown on peaceful dissent. On June 14th the authorities banned the biggest opposition group, al-Wefaq, having extended the prison term of its leader, Sheikh Ali Salman, from four years to nine. A day earlier they detained Nabeel Rajab, a human-rights activist. Another prominent dissident, Zainab al-Khawaja, fled the country in early June after being told that she would be rearrested.

The government, which is dominated by the royal family, claims the opposition is sowing discord. But activists blame the authorities themselves. During the Arab spring in 2011, a large portion of the population took to the streets to demand wide-ranging political reforms. The regime, backed by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, also Sunni-led monarchies, responded with violence. Amid calls for his overthrow, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa did create a commission that documented the state's human-rights abuses. He even made some changes, with British assistance, such as setting up a prisons inspectorate. Yet the repression continues.

Protests are now banned in Manama, the capital, while new laws have made it easier to lock up and revoke the citizenship of critics. Ms Khawaja says she has been arrested 11 times, once for ripping up a picture of the king. Her father, Abdulhadi, a human-rights activist, was arrested in 2011 and sentenced to life in prison for plotting against the state (ie, calling for democracy). "Building 10 in Jaw prison has become known as the torture building, and I have personally been hearing the screams of the victims," he wrote last year.

Critics of the government are often accused of serving "foreign interests". That usually means Iran, which officials say fomented the uprising in 2011. The claim has been debunked; but it wins support in the region. Ayatollah Qassim and al-Wefaq are accused of having ties to foreign powers. Al-Wefaq, which is mainly Shia and seeks a constitutional monarchy, upset the regime by boycotting the general election of 2014. Bahrain paid millions of dollars to Western PR

firms to clean up its image after 2011. Now it seems contemptuous of foreign opinion. After the authorities prevented opposition members from attending a meeting at the UN this month, the body's high commissioner for human rights said that "repression will not eliminate people's grievances; it will increase them." Bahrain's foreign minister responded on Twitter: "We will not waste our time listening to the words of a high commissioner who has no strength or power."

Juan Méndez, the UN's special rapporteur on torture, has said that Bahrain considers itself shielded from scrutiny due to its relations with Britain, which is building a naval base in the kingdom, and America, which keeps its Fifth Fleet there. Last year

America lifted restrictions on arms sales to Bahrain, in place since 2011, citing progress on human rights. But at least it has condemned the recent crackdown. When Philip Hammond, Britain's foreign secretary, visited the kingdom last month he wrote approvingly of its "commitment to continuing reforms".

America and Britain view Bahrain as a steady ally in a tough neighbourhood. But the kingdom's stability may be illusory. The state's actions have provoked the opposition, in particular Shias, who have long complained of discrimination. Left with no other choice, some may become violent or even turn to Iran for help. Bahrain may be bringing on itself exactly what it claims to be preventing.

Darkening skies over Bahrain for human rights

The Washington Post: June 24

WHEN BAHRAIN announced a decision Monday to strip the citizenship of a leading Shiite cleric, Sheik Isa Qassim, it accused him of "creating an extremist sectarian environment" and claimed he had "encouraged sectarianism and violence." In fact, Bahrain's ruling monarchy and government are the ones fomenting division. In recent weeks, they also dissolved the main Shiite opposition group, al-Wefaq, of which Sheik Qassim was the spiritual leader.

These and other repressive measures taken lately are likely to backfire. Bahrain, a Sunni monarchy in the Persian Gulf that hosts the U.S. 5th Fleet, has been cracking heads of the opposition ever since the Arab Spring broke out five years ago and has harshly repressed those who sought a greater political voice for the country's Shiite majority. The latest actions take the ruling al-Khalifa family still farther down the road of despotism and could trigger new waves of protest. The leader of Iran's elite Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guard Corps immediately vowed to stir up an armed revolt.

Bahrain's decision means that Sheik Qassim could be deported. Human Rights Watch said the authorities have produced no evidence to support the charges against him. Since July 2014, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Bahrain has stripped more than 250

people of their citizenship, a pernicious form of punishment. At the same time, on May 30, a court in Bahrain more than doubled the prison sentence imposed by a lower court on opposition leader Sheik Ali Salman, from four to nine years. As secretary general of the now-defunct al-Wefaq, which was the country's largest legally recognized opposition political group, he had given speeches explicitly repudiating the use of force and calling for nonviolence, but he

was nonetheless found guilty of having "justified acts of violence and sabotage, provoking regime change and calling for Jihad as a form of religious duty." Human Rights Watch said the court ignored videos of his speeches and may have relied instead on a government report that misrepresented what he said.

Also alarming, the authorities on June 13 detained the prominent human rights activist Nabeel Rajab and on June 21 extended his imprisonment for eight days, on charges of "spreading false news ... in a bid to discredit Bahrain." The kingdom had promised reforms after the crackdown of 2011 but largely failed to deliver. A report by the State Department just sent to Congress says that Bahrain did establish some institutions of accountability and oversight but has fallen down on the vital issues of allowing free speech and assembly, and establishing due process. Last year, the Obama administration lifted some holds on military sales to Bahrain. Perhaps this sent a signal to the king and his regime that there would be no further consequences from Washington if they pummeled the opposition again. At the very least, it is time to send a different signal — if necessary by holding up U.S. military sales — that Bahrain's contempt for dissent and basic human rights is intolerable.

