

BAHRAIN

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

Change of public mood helps to isolate Saudi, Alkhalifa dictators

If Bahrain's dictator had reasonable insight into the political balance in the region he would have realised some time ago that the time of tribal hereditary dictatorship would soon be over. The Saudis and their allies had already started to pump more money into the campaigns of deception, political intrigues and terrorism in order to extend the life span of their antiquated regime. Their supporters in London and Washington had begun to pay the price of defending them and new realities among Western people was beginning to tilt the balance against continued support to Gulf dictators. The various adventures of the Saudis were turning into quagmires and destabilising those regimes. The GCC itself had already started its decline with rising internal bickering. The Gulf leaders, especially those of Oman, Kuwait and Qatar had realised that the Saudis were adopting new policies of regional hegemony. IN 2011 they had proposed what they called "The Gulf Union", an initiative aimed at subjugating other leaders to the Saudi control. It led the Omanis to declare openly at the "Manama Dialogue" to threaten that they would leave the GCC if the proposed union were implemented.

The War on Yemen has laid open the widening differences with the Saudis. It could prove to be the last straw that would break the back of an already exhausted camel in the form of the GCC. The Omanis are openly against the Saudi aggression and had been working to bring a solution to this intractable crisis. Despite their structural and military weakness, the Yemenis have proven to be much more resilient than their foes had anticipated. After twenty months of daily bombing by Saudis and their allies, the situation has remained as it had been before the aggression. It is gradually becoming as fateful as Saddam's adventure in Kuwait and is probably worse. This time, the security of the Saudi kingdom itself is being threatened by the war and the royal household is fragmenting under the leadership of the present king and his son. It is unlikely that the Saudis will be able to get out of the conflict without major wounds to its political and military structures. There is no respect to the Saudis even among their own allies. In the recent

33rd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC), there has been unanimity among NGOs to condemn Alkhalifa regime for its serious human rights violations and to convince the Human Rights Council to debate Bahrain's human rights record. The Saudis however, received most of the criticism for their aggression and war crimes in Yemen. It was only the British strong intervention that stopped a possible resolution calling for investigation of war crimes in that country. The British are clearly worried that such an investigation may establish the logistical link with the Saudis. They have openly admitted that they have been supplying the Saudis with three things; intelligence, guided bombs and missiles and experts manning the command and control centres. It is clear that the UK establishment does not learn from lessons of recent history especially those that led to catastrophic results. The three recent wars in which the British were involved have not led to good results; Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. In Afghanistan UK withdrew its forces without defeating Taliban. The country is bleeding and is a failed case. UK lost many men in its war efforts in that country alongside the Americans but no tangible results have been achieved. Iraq war is still haunting Tony Blair who misled the Parliament and the country and has recently been condemned by the Chilcot Report. It is a moral indictment that place Blair among the most hated Western leaders among the people who had elected him. The war in Iraq led to more than 150,000 deaths and the country has become hot bed for terrorism. Mr Cameron did not do better in Libya. He chose to bomb the country in alliance with France and hastened the downfall of Gaddafi without preparing for his absence from the scene. The country has become hotbed for ISIS and other terrorist group and is facing the prospect of partitioning.

These facts point to an important fact. Aggression does not pay. Dictatorship often leads to disasters and instability. Supporting tyranny amounts to complicity in its crimes. The US and UK alliance has led to incalculable suffering of the region, especially in countries like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The failure of the international community to force a resolu-

tion by the Human Rights Council to form an independent inquiry and investigation in Yemen to establish the extent of Saudi war crimes is another slap to justice, descent human behaviour and justice. The failure of the "Free World" in upholding human rights or defending self-determination of people especially in Bahrain is another sad episode of hypocritical political behaviour. Corruption has spread to the politicians of the Free World as they accepted the advances of the PR companies employed by the oil-rich tribal regimes. In addition many parliamentarians and media men were either co-opted or silenced by the petero-dollars. But these are only short term steps to stifle the opposition to those dictatorships.

Today, the ordinary citizens in the Western countries have started to feel the result of the corrupt policies of their leaders in the form of political and economic insecurity. The rise of noble politicians, like Jeremy Corbyn who won the leadership of the Labour Party twice is an indication of the extent of rebellion against the long-standing established political order. The temper of the people has changed; they are turning away from the colonialist imperialist politicians who still live in their old dreams while milking Gulf dictators. This has led to the emergence of super rich in Western capitals especially London, while the majority population has become poorer. This is why the slogans of people like Corby resonate with the feelings of the majority. These are the beginnings of big changes in the Western world that could herald the end of dictatorships like those of the Saudis and Alkhalifa. This means that hope is beginning to replace pessimism. The thousands of prisoners languishing in the jails of these two regimes have made the case for political change much more resonant with the rising tide against the blood suckers of nations and those with extremely corrupt and opportunistic behaviour. Change is not a mirage but a reality awaiting the end of the long dark era of tyranny and dictatorship. Bahrainis are nearer than ever to realising their dreams of swift transformation from hereditary dictatorship to democracy. Despite the resistance to change by Alkhalifa and their backers, that change will happen soon.

JASTA angers Saudis, Obama urged to move 5th fleet from Bahrain

Tension is rising between Washington and Riyadh in the wake of the approval by the Senate of the JASTA law. It allows families of victims of 9/11 to ask for compensation from Saudi Arabia after its role in the terrorist atrocities was uncovered by the 28 pages of the Congress investigation in those events. On Friday 23rd September President Obama vetoed the resolution in order not to provoke the Saudis. But the Congress is planning to over rule the president's veto. It needs to secure two thirds of the votes of its members.

The medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has released two reports describing attacks on medical facilities it runs or supports in Yemen. The attacks on a hospital in Abs on 15 August 2016 and another in Taiz on 2 December last year resulted in the deaths of 20 people and injuries to 32 others. The charity says that as a result of the Abs bombing, it withdrew from six hospitals in the north of the country. The Saudi campaign to reinstate the former president, Mansoor Hadi has provoked widespread condemnation for the impact on civilians. MSF's reports, released ahead of a UN security council closed session on protection of medical missions, show that the hospitals had been identified to the Saudi-led coalition with both GPS coordinates and logos and that there was "no legitimate reason" to attack them.

In the past week (20-26th September) the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights documented at least 22 arbitrary arrests including one child. At least 12 native Bahrainis were snatched from their homes by plain clothes members of the Death Squads from Sitra. In the early hours of Monday 26th September a helicopter hovered in the skies of Sitra for five hours, depriving the people of sleep as the brutal mercenaries carried out their outrageous crimes.

From the town of Sfalah in Sitra the victims of Alkhalifa raid are: Mohammad Abd Ali Khazzaz, Khalil AlHanan, Hussain Ali Ibrahim, Ali Khamis and his brother, Mohammad, Mohammad Hassan AlAsfoor and Moosa Jaffar Mohammad Hussain. From Alkharijyah town the victims were: Jaffar Taher, Abbas Abd Ali AlAkrawi. From Markooban: Reda Ahmad AlDurazi, Muntadar Abdul Hussain and Mohammad Saleh AlAttar. From Wadyan; Hassa Kadhem and his brother, Hussain. From Bani Jamra three people were detained. Mahmood Abdulla MalAlalah was pulled away from his house at Saar Town after it was raided by regime's Death Squads. Last week there were at least 24 marches in 17 towns. Nabeel Rajab has been transferred to solitary confinement before dictator decides his fate on 6th October.

Human rights campaigners have criticised Prince Charles over a visit to Bahrain. The Prince of Wales is due to make an official visit to Bahrain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates on behalf of the British Government in November to "help strengthen the United Kingdom's warm bilateral relations", according to a statement released by Clarence House. But the trip has been attacked as "totally inappropriate" by anti-arms trade campaigners, and Human Rights Watch have described the visit as "extremely disappointing". Nicholas McGeehan, Bahrain researcher at Human Rights Watch, told The Independent: "Prince Charles has taken a free-thinking, principled stance on many important issues, so it's difficult to credit that he's not aware of the serious and worsening human rights situation in Bahrain. "It's extremely disappointing that he's agreed to help the British government ingratiate itself further with such an abusive government."

On 22nd September Bahrain's dictator, through his court, confirmed the dissolution of AlWefaq Society. In response to this decision Amnesty International's Research and Advocacy Director, Philip Luther said: "The decision to uphold the dissolution of Al-Wefaq is a flagrant attack on freedom of expression and association and a brazen attempt to suppress criticism of the government in Bahrain. He added: "The Bahraini authorities have not presented any credible evidence that Al-Wefaq is anything but a peaceful opposition movement which has been seeking reform in the country in the face of increasing government repression. He concluded that: "Silencing critical voices encourages further human rights violations and abuse of power."

An article by Richard Sokolsky of the Carnegie Middle East Centre was published yesterday, titled: "It could be time for America to close its naval base in Bahrain". The author said: There is no doubt great resistance within the U.S. government to rocking the boat with Bahrain. It should require the Defense Department to report to Congress on contingency planning to leave Bahrain, including options to fund the costs of relocation. This step would send a strong signal to the Bahrainis that it is not going to be business as usual. He concluded the article arguing that: An unstable ally is of little value to the United States. It is both necessary and possible to construct a different American force posture for the Persian Gulf that better protects U.S. regional interests over the next decade, with fewer risks and costs. The government of Bahrain is driving toward a cliff with its foot on the accelerator. The United States should not go along for the ride."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
28th September 2016

Saudi crimes haunt Obama as HR chief criticises Alkhalifa abuses

Two recent developments threaten to cause further strain on the Saudi-US relations. The first is a bill allowing families of 9/11 victims to sue Saudi Arabia in U.S. courts. It passed the House and Senate by a voice vote, and would give families of 9/11 victims the ability to sue Saudi Arabia for involvement in the 9/11 terrorist events in 2001, The House passed the bill last Friday just before the 15th anniversary of the attacks. The Senate had approved the measure in May. Prior to its passage, the White House had indicated that the president would veto the legislation. The second is a joint resolution to block arms deal with the Saudis. Senators from both sides of the aisle introduced the joint resolution on 8th September, hoping to block a large U.S. arms deal with Saudi Arabia. S.J.Res 39 was introduced by Senators Chris Murphy (D-Conn.), Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Al Franken (D-Minn.) and Mike Lee (R-Utah). Explaining their motivation, all four cited the atrocities committed by the

U.S.-backed, Saudi-led coalition in Yemen. Murphy warned in a statement that the "war in Yemen, funded by the U.S., has become a disaster that is making our country less safe every day." "Thousands of civilians are being killed, and terrorist groups inside the country, like al Qaeda and ISIS, are getting stronger," he added. "Until the Saudis' conduct changes, the U.S. should put a pause on further arms sales." The arms deal they are hoping to block includes \$1.15 billion worth of tanks and other military equipment. It was announced by the Pentagon in August.

In his opening speech of the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council, Zeid bin Ra'ad, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights lambasted Alkhalifa regime for its dismal record of human rights. He said: "I am concerned by harassment and arrests of human rights defenders and political activists, and legislation which enables revocation of citizenship without due process." He pointed out the bleak record of

the Bahraini regime in its treatment of native citizens adding: "The past decade has demonstrated repeatedly and with punishing clarity exactly how disastrous the outcomes can be when a Government attempts to smash the voices of its people, instead of serving them." He ended advising the regime to change its policies: "The authorities of Bahrain would be well advised to comply with the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms and UPR, and engage more productively with my Office, as well as with this Council's Special Procedures." Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) said: "Bahrain should take the warnings of the High Commissioner seriously and end the repressive campaign against its people. Its allies, namely the UK and US, must also voice support for the High Commissioner's comments at a time when Bahrain has used every opportunity to insult him and his office." *Continued on Page 4*

Calls from UK, US to stop arming Saudis, sanction Alkhalifa

In a bizarre move the British foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, has defended UK arms sales to Saudi Arabia, saying the Saudi-led bombing campaign in Yemen is not "in clear breach" of international humanitarian law, despite turning the country into rubble and killing more than 10,000 civilians including over 2000 children. Yesterday The Parliamentary Committees on Arms Export Controls (which is made up of four parliamentary committees - business, innovation and skills; defence; foreign affairs; and international development) issued a draft report that said: "The weight of evidence of violations of international humanitarian law by the Saudi-led coalition is now so great, that it is very difficult to continue to support Saudi Arabia." The committee said it seemed "inevitable" that such violations had involved arms supplied by the UK which would mean it was in violation of its own legal obligations. The draft report concluded that Saudi assurances were not sufficient and the UK should suspend exports until an international and independent inquiry could establish the facts. His statement came after a bipartisan group of 64 Members of US Congress led by Ted W. Lieu (D | Los Angeles County) sent a letter to President Barack Obama urging him to postpone the sale of new arms to Saudi Arabia. The letter cites Amnesty International's documentation of at least 33 unlawful airstrikes by the Saudis across Yemen, missions that "deliberately targeted civilians and civilian facilities, such as hospitals, schools, markets, and places of worship." "The attacks may amount to war crimes," the letter cautions. It also came few weeks after the UK's FCO had explained that it did not carry out an assessment of whether the Saudis had committed war crimes in Yemen.

Meanwhile today's editorial of the New York Times called for a serious change in US policy towards the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship. It said: "Bahrain's unrelenting repression of critics, including the dissolution of the main opposition bloc, Al Wefaq, in June, should prompt the Obama administration and the next American president to seriously consider finding alternative hubs in the region for its military personnel. There may be no ideal options. But continuing to rely on rulers who have responded to dissent with torture, tear gas, jail cells and travel bans is not a defensible long-term strategy." This powerful stand came two days after the newspaper had published an article by Nabeel Rajab, the President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights titled "A Letter from Bahrain's jails". This letter has added one more charge to his long list of accusations; writing an article in The New York Times. In the

letter, Nabeel presented a chronology of abuses by the regime for tweeting against the Saudi-led aggression on Yemen, meeting US Secretary of State, John Kerry and criticising the dictator. In the early hours of Monday morning he was taken by the torturers and interrogated harshly about the article and told that an additional charge would be levelled against him for exposing Alkhalifa crimes to the world. The human rights and media worlds reacted angrily and called on the main supporters of the regime in US and UK to lift their support of this antiquated, un-reformable, reactionary and dictatorial rule. When he appeared at the court on Monday on charges relating to his rejection of the Saudi, Alkhalifa war on Yemen his case was postponed until 5th October. 35 NGOs have signed a letter calling for Nabeel's immediate and unconditional release.

For the week 29th August to 4th September The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights documented at least 18 arbitrary arrests. The Alkhalifa courts sentenced 38 native Bahraini to a total of 197 years in 11 politically-motivated cases. From the town of Jufair three young men on Monday 5th September: Mohammad Dhahi, Jassim Mohmmad and Muhsin Abdulla. From Duraz Town 15 years old Mustafa Jaffar AlMutaghawwi was snatched by masked men and remanded in custody for 15 days. Yesterday Ali Mohammad Ali also from

Duraz was snatched by masked Death Squads and taken to the notorious CID torture chambers. Continuing the crack-down on peaceful expression regime's court imposed one year sentence on Tayba Ibrahim for tweeting. She is a mother of two and has been languishing behind bars for few weeks. Two clerics, Sayed Yassin AlMosawi and Sheikh Aziz AlKhadran have also been given one year jail sentence for attending the peaceful congregation outside the home of Ayatullah Sheikh Isa Qassim. Alkhalifa court also sentenced film producer, Yasser Nasser to one year imprisonment for his participation in the sit-in.

On 1st September Amnesty International issued a statement calling on Alkhalifa to halt immediately their heightened crackdown on peaceful critics and opponents. The call comes after scores of protesters and at least 60 Shi'a Muslim clerics were summoned and arrested in relation to the sit-in in the village of Duraz. Four clerics have been sentenced to between one and two years in prison in relation to the sit-in and nine others remain in detention and are facing trial. Several human rights defenders have also been prevented from travelling outside of Bahrain to take part in human rights advocacy work.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
7th September 2016

Prince Zeid: Bahrain is smashing voices of dissent

In his opening remarks for the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council, the UN Human Rights Commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad AlHussain had this to say about the human rights situation in Bahrain:

In Bahrain, I am concerned by harassment and arrests of human rights defenders and political activists, and legislation which enables revocation of citizenship without due process. I urge greater attention to this situation. The past decade has demonstrated repeatedly and with punishing clarity exactly how disastrous the outcomes can be when a Government attempts to smash the voices of its people, instead of serving them. he authorities of Bahrain would be well advised to comply with the recommendations of the human rights mechanisms and UPR, and engage more productively with my Office, as well as with this Council's Special Procedures. -

In support of High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini's comments, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) calls on the Bahraini government to: Immediately and unconditionally release all arrested human rights defenders and political activists, including BCHR's founders Nabeel Rajab and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, who are detained for expressing their opinion;

Adhere to international human rights standards by respecting as well as upholding the right to freedom of expression without any restrictions;

End the practice of arbitrary citizenship revocation and reinstall all citizenships revoked for politically-motivated purposes; and
More actively engage with the Human Rights Council and UN mechanisms, including the upcoming



Letter From a Bahraini Jail

NABEEL RAJAB, SEPT. 4, 2016

Riffa, Bahrain I write this from a Bahraini jail cell where I have been detained, largely in isolation, since the beginning of summer. This is not new to me: I have been here before, from 2012 to 2014, in 2015, and now again, all because of my work as a human rights defender.

Nor am I alone: There are some 4,000 political prisoners in Bahrain, which has the highest prison population per capita in the Middle East. This is a country that has subjected its people to imprisonment, torture and even death for daring to desire democracy. My close colleague Abdulhadi al-Khawaja was tortured and sentenced to life in prison in 2011 for his human rights work.

No one has been properly held to account for systematic abuses that have affected thousands. In 2015, I was arrested on new charges of “insulting a statutory body” and “spreading rumors during a time of war” for posts on Twitter. The police held me from April to July last year. I was released only after the king of Bahrain issued a pardon in an earlier case, also related to views I had expressed.

Despite the pardon, the 2015 charges and a travel ban remained in place, and I was threatened with further action. The head of the cybercrimes unit at the Criminal Investigation Directorate in Bahrain summoned me and my family to a meeting, where — in front of my children — he warned me that if I didn’t stop my advocacy work, I would face up to 15 years in prison.

That threat became reality when I was arrested in June. The warrant came from the same cybercrimes unit chief who threatened me last year, and I now face prosecution for my work exposing human rights abuses. The authorities even added a third charge of “insulting a neighboring country,” meaning Saudi Arabia. They have also laid a new charge against me of spreading “false news,” in relation to interviews I’ve giv-



en to the news media. It’s quite the rap sheet. My supposed “insult” to Saudi Arabia relates to tweets I posted calling for an end to the war in Yemen, a war escalated by the Saudi-led coalition to which Bahrain belongs and for which the United States provides support. The United States has authorized multibillion-dollar arms sales to the Saudis since the war began last year.

From the beginning, I was against the war. The civilian death toll was immediate and catastrophic, and I spoke out against the unfolding humanitarian crisis, calling for peace. Now, I am paying the price.

I met Secretary of State John Kerry on his visit to Bahrain earlier this year and was glad to talk with him about our difficult situation. Mr. Kerry criticized the boycott of the 2014 election by opposition parties, although the opposition’s demand was simply for a constitutional monarchy in place of Bahrain’s autocratic system. Since that election, the leader of the largest opposition group, the Wafaq National Islamic Society, was sentenced to nine years for “promoting violence,” and the society was suspended and its assets frozen.

I would like to ask Mr. Kerry now: Is this the kind of ally America wants? The kind that punishes its people for thinking, that prevents its citizens from exercising their basic rights?

The government has gone after me not only for my comments on Yemen, but also for my domestic activism. One of my charges, “insulting a statutory body,” concerns my work shedding light on the torture of hundreds of prisoners in Jaw Prison in March 2015. The State Department has highlighted the same problem, but last year lifted the arms embargo it had placed

on Bahrain since the repressions that followed the 2011 Arab Spring protests, citing “meaningful progress on human rights reforms.” Really?

After I met Mr. Kerry, I was interrogated at the Interior Ministry by the chief of the cybercrimes unit, the one who later ordered my arrest. He wanted to know everything about my conversation with the secretary of state. That official interrogated me again in April after I signed an open letter, with 25 other activists, calling on President Obama to discuss human rights and the plight of activists in the Middle East when he visited Saudi Arabia earlier this year.

The Bahraini government tried to pressure me into publicly disavowing the letter. I refused.

Recent American statements on Bahrain’s human rights problems have been strong, and that is good. But unless the United States is willing to use its leverage, fine words have little effect. America’s actions, on the other hand, have emboldened the government to detain me and other rights advocates: Its unconditional support for Saudi Arabia and its lifting of the arms ban on Bahrain have direct consequences for the activists struggling for dignity in these countries.

Instead of fanning the flames in Yemen by supplying arms to the Saudi coalition, Mr. Obama’s administration should use its leverage to resolve the conflict. Working to secure the release of people who call for peace, and are trying to build democracy in the region, would serve that aim.

Nabeel Rajab is the president of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights and an advisory committee member for HRW’s Middle East and North Africa Division.

Saudi crimes haunt Obama, *Continued from P2*

The Alkhalifa kangaroo courts have confirmed a one year prison sentence on Dr Saeed Al Samahiji on charges including “insulting a brotherly state” and “calling for illegal demonstrations”. Amnesty International has urged people to; call on the authorities to quash Dr Sa’eed al-Samahiji’s conviction and release him immediately and unconditionally as he is a prisoner of conscience, imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression; to call on them to ensure that he is protected from any torture or other ill-treatment and that he receives any medical attention he may require; and to urge them to repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression, in line with Bahrain’s obligations under Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In the week 5-11th September at least ten native Bahrainis were detained by the Alkhalifa occupiers including one child. There were at least 47 marches in 25 towns and villages, some of which were mercilessly attacked. Four native Bahrainis were sen-

tenced in the period for a total of 52 years for expressing their opinion. Two native Bahrainis have been given life imprisonment for opposing the hereditary dictatorship. Hussain Ali Makki and Mohammad Ali Hubail from Sitra were sentenced after a brief appearance at the tribal court. A criminal complaint by a Bahraini victim of torture has been made to the Gardaí (police in Ireland who commenced an investigation headed by Detective Inspector Paul Costello. A separate complaint was rejected by The Dublin District Court yesterday seeking a summons for prosecution of Bahraini Attorney General for his role in the torture of Mr Jaffar Al Hasabi. He had been subjected to beatings, electric shocks and other forms of abuse while in detention in Bahrain in 2010. More cases against Alkhalifa torturers are expected in several countries as the regime has failed to convict torturers. As this heinous crime against humanity continues, so is the drive to end it.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
14 September 2016