

BAHRAIN

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Wrong political calculations land Saudi, Alkhalifa in deep troubles

The past few weeks have not been glorious for the tribal dictatorship of Bahrain. Their political calculations are likely to backfire on most fronts. While they depend on foreign backers to remain in power, the fortunes of these supporters are dwindling due to disastrous miscalculations. The regime has lives on borrowed time that may soon run out. Without the support of the Bahraini people the regime will not survive for long. This probably explains why it is intent on maximising the damage on the land and people to satisfy their evil aim of "scourged earth policy". Neither that policy, nor the reliance on foreign backing are likely to save Bahrain's dictator. Military power has not led to ultimate solutions in other places. Repression will thus not lead to political settlement. The peaceful civil resistance of the people is likely to be more effective than the bloody approach by the tyrant and his arrogant clique.

As for the fortunes of the Akhalifa and their backers several developments have happened that indicate their bleak future.

The first and most destructive of their misdemeanours is their totally misguided attack on Qatar. The four countries have relied on their military and economic heavy weights. They did not work. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain thought they would have an easy and quick ride before destroying Qatar and its leadership. Instead they have created a political foe which has proven to be more astute in its approach to the crisis. Qatar managed to turn the American table on the big-headed Saudis. While at the beginning Donald Trump appeared to embrace the Saudi evaluation of Qatar, today he had become an arbiter in the conflict rather than giving the kind of support the US had granted the Saudis in their war on Yemen. Qatar has rejected the 13 conditions and forged strong alliances with both Turkey and Iran. If anything the US is more likely to reprimand their Gulf allies for their misadventure. Qatar is clearly the winner of this self-inflicted wounds by those dictators.

The second is the approach to human rights. While the Saudis and their allies have attempted to dominate the Human Rights Council using the petro-dollars as strong leverage, they have gradually lost the initiative as the others realised how cunning they have been. By rejecting an

independent investigation into their war crimes in Yemen, they have solidified the world opinion against their approach. The war has now become one of the biggest liabilities of the Saudi monarchy at a time when the internal situation in the kingdom of fear deteriorated further and threatens the self-appointed crown prince. There are great pressures on the HRC to form an independent inquiry into the conduct of war on Yemen. The Saudi insistence to dominate such inquiry has landed them into more troubled waters. They are being accused of ingoring the basic values of civility and peace, while clinging to arrogance, desire to dominate and evil tendencies to exact revenge on whoever opposes them. Internally they resorted to mass arrests and repression, leading to more executions and detentions. The liberal world of the West has turned firmly against the Saudis to the extent that the Labor Party had banned the Saudis from attending their annual conference held in Brighton. Furthermore the Labour politicians have given an undertaking to alter the foreign policy of UK and to stop arming or siding with them in their aggression on Yemen. This is a serious development that could lead to more isolation of an already hated regime. The Alkhalifa are just implementing Saudi orders without questioning them. Having sold off the sovereignty over the country to the Saudis, they are now considered "traitors".

The third areas where the fortunes of the Alkhalifa and their backers have dwindled is the relations with Iran and the Islamic movements in general. The Saudis had long thought of forging stronger alliance with Israel, The Alkhalifa followed suit. Its dictator had declared that the idea of economic boycott of Israel had not been wise or necessary. He has, single-handedly approached the Israelis and given them assurances to work towards the lifting of Arab sanctions on the occupiers of Palestine. He has been ridiculed by liberal-minded media. The Israelis may look militarily superior but they have been cautious in their approach to the possible military conflicts with other states especially Iran. With the Saudi help they have been lobbying Washington to unilaterally abrogate the nuclear deal signed with Iran. But Eu-

rope, Russia and China rejected that flatly. The Saudis and Alkhalifa had hoped that there would be military conflicts with Iran and the countries that have traditionally supported the Palestinians. It is now clear that America may not push its luck too far. They do not like to adopt unilateral policies that may land them at odds with their traditional allies in Europe. The Alkhalifa have thus lost major component of their policy. They have now resorted to more repression, collective punishment in order to contain the deepening opposition to its political domination. The past few weeks have witnessed an escalation of the attacks on people's religious symbols as the revolutionary zeal refuses to disappear. The peaceful nature of the people's revolt is embarrassing the tyrant and his clique, thus they attempt to smear native Bahrainis with allegations of violence and terrorism. These are signs of a failing regime that is haunted by the spirits of its own victims. As the Israeli-directed alliance ponders its future having suffered irreversible damage to its credibility as a human nature, it is likely to commit more crimes against the innocence. However, the world is beginning to realise the futility of the approach by the four-country alliance led by the Saudis.

These developments lead in one direction; that of change which has become necessary. The Arab world does not accept substandard levels of dignity, honour, rights and human rights. It is not far from reality to suggest that the present day circumstances resemble very much those that had preceded the Arab Spring in 2011. This time there is no way back. Six years ago some people preferred to test the violent approaches to political change and democratic transformation. They have miserably failed. So have the powers that pushed the agenda of violence to the forefront. What is necessary now is the rebuilding of people's trust and their determination to achieve modern statehood to replace the rentier states that long gone. The Bahrainis are confident that their struggle cannot go in vain but must be channelled towards more productive end. The recent Human Rights Council altercations with the Alkhalifa regime indicates its fragility and lack of vision and noble mission. The natives of Bahrain are well-positioned to achieve victory than before.

WP: Saudi Arabia is a dungeon, Alkhalifa heavily criticised at HRC

The UK's relations with Saudi Arabia were criticised by senior figures of the Labour Party at the ongoing annual conference in Brighton. Shadow Foreign Secretary Emily Thornberry criticized the ruling Conservative government for turning a blind eye to Saudi Arabia's deadly war against Yemen, and selling Riyadh new weapons that would be used against Yemeni civilians. "It is rank hypocrisy," she said. "But it also illustrates a basic fact that the world we want to see – a world governed by ethics and values, a world based on rules and laws will never truly exist as long as governments and world leaders get to decide for themselves when it suits them to play by the rules and when the rules can be safely ignored." Last week it was announced that Saudi Arabia was not welcome to attend the conference because of its destructive war on Yemen. Pro-democracy, human rights and anti-war activists have welcomed these steps which come at a time when the Saudis are wreaking havoc not only in the region but the world over for their role in the mushrooming of extremism and terrorism. The Saudi war on Yemen has surfaced repeatedly at the Human Rights Council session in Geneva where an independent inquiry into Saudi crimes is demanded.

In an attempt to dampen the criticism of their tribal regime, the Saudis announced that they would allow women to drive cars after 28 years of struggle by women activists. The move is seen as a cunning move to stifle the international criticism of the kingdom's dismal human rights record. Yesterday a prominent writer was arrested for his mild criticism of the regime. Jamil Al Farisi joins hundreds of prisoners of conscience languishing behind bars in the kingdom of fear. On 20th September The Washington Post's editorial was titled:

"The 'new' Saudi Arabia is still a dungeon". It said: ONCE AGAIN, news from Saudi Arabia points toward the old thinking and not the modern society promised by the new crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. Despite the lofty rhetoric of the crown prince's "Vision 2030" declaration, he increasingly resembles an earlier generation of leaders with authoritarian methods. Saudi Arabia has been, and seems determined to remain, a dungeon for those who want to practice free speech."

On 20 September 2017, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Andrew Gilmour presented the office's eighth report on reprisals at the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC). He said that the Bahraini regime has engaged in an "ongoing trend of major harassment and intimidation against human rights defenders; the imposition of travel bans on selected individuals; the arrest, detention, and ill-treatment of targeted individuals; and one particular case involving sexual assault and torture as a form of reprisal," referring to human rights defender Ebtisam al-Saegh, In Bahrain, reprisals function as part of an "orchestrated crackdown on civil society," and "the authorities have resorted to drastic measures to curb dissenting opinions." The report expressed particular concern about the government's consistent use of mass travel bans as a "politically motivated strategy to prevent human rights defenders" from travelling to international events such as HRC sessions. It names activists Hussain Salam Ahmed Radhi, Ebtisam al-Saegh, Ebrahim Al-Demistani, Abdulnabi Al-Ekry, Mohammed Jawad, Nedal Al-Salman, Enas Oun, and human rights lawyer Mohammed Al-Tajer as examples. Echoing the spokesperson for the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the report expresses grave concern that the Bah-

raini government's repeated targeting of Nabeel Rajab is "connected to his engagement with the Human Rights Council."

On 22nd September Amnesty International (AI) issued an Urgent Action calling for the release of Nabeel Rajab. It said that he is being tried in relation to comments posted and retweeted on his Twitter account about the war in Yemen and allegations of torture in Jaw prison is. If found guilty, Nabeel Rajab faces up to 15 years' imprisonment. AI urged people to call for his immediate and unconditional release, ensure he is not tortured, urge Alkhalifa to uphold the right to freedom of expression and repeal laws that criminalize the peaceful exercise of those rights. Over the past two weeks the native Baharna majority have been harassed as they prepared to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain ibn Ali. ISIS-style masked members of regime's Death Squads roamed towns and villages tearing banners and firing on people. A total of 43 attacks were recorded by AlWefaq prior to the start of the public mourning.

As the attacks on the political inmates at the notorious Jaw prison continued, reports are circulating of serious illnesses among inmates. Among the names are Qassem Ali Aradi from Samaheej and photojournalist Sayed Ahmad Al Mousawi from Duraz who have been vomiting blood but receiving no adequate medical care. On 22nd September Mrs Rowan Sangoor was jailed for 30 days. She had complained to The Red Cross of the prison conditions and deteriorating health of her brother, Ali who had posed in 2011 with his blood-soaked body after regime's forces had fired on peaceful protesters.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
27th September 2017

Labour Party praised for banning Saudis; Bahraini HR activists targeted

In a blow to Saudi Arabia the UK's Labour Party has barred the kingdom from attending its conference in Brighton next week. Sudan has also been barred. This is in protest at the continuing aggression on Yemen which has killed thousands of women and children. Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leader, has called for the Government to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia, arguing they are being used in Yemen's civil war. "We are selling arms to Saudi Arabia... and at the same time we are sending aid in, we should not be doing both," he told the BBC's World at One programme. Mr Corbyn went on to say it was important to ensure there is "a political process to bring about a ceasefire" in Yemen. The Saudis immediately ordered the Arab League not to attend the conference. The courageous decision by the Labour Party has been praised by human rights and anti-war activists. It is seen as a new ethical foreign policy in line with British democratic values.

On Friday 15th September the campaign group Human Rights Watch condemned

the arrest by Saudi authorities of some 30 clerics, intellectuals and activists last week as a "coordinated crackdown on dissent", and Amnesty International echoed the sentiment. The arrests were made after exiled opposition figures called for demonstrations following Friday's afternoon prayers, which did not appear to attract much support amid a heavy security deployment. Activists circulated on social media lists of people detained. They included prominent Islamist preacher Salman al-Awdah, as well as some people with no clear links to Islamist activity or obvious history of opposition. The detentions come amid widespread speculation, denied by officials, that King Salman, 81, intends to abdicate in favour of his son, Crown Prince Mohammed, who dominates economic, foreign and domestic policy.

In Bahrain Alkhalifa regime's desperation has led it to escalate its attacks on civil liberties and punish people for their views. Several prominent people have been summoned to appear at the notorious torture centres. Farida Ghulam the wife of Ibrahim

Sharif was handed a summons to attend interrogation session today. She has now been charged with taking part in a peaceful protest at Bilad Al Qadeem, and banned from travel. Human rights activist Enas Oun was summoned on 17th September, interrogated and charged with participating in a peaceful protest at Duraz on 21st May. She has also been banned from travel. Another human rights activist, Ahmad Al Saffar has been charged with illegal gathering and taking part in a protest in Duraz. A travel ban has also been enforced on him. Ms Nidal Al Salman, of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights has been summoned to appear at the torture chambers of the notorious CID headquarters. Dr Taha Al Durazi, a prominent neurosurgeon has also been summoned for today. He had been jailed for his part in treating injured protesters in 2011.

In addition to intimidating human rights activists, the tribal regime aims at preventing human rights activists from attending the ongoing session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. *Continued on Page 3*

Saudi Arabia on brink of flare up as HRC chief blasts Bahrain

The situation in Saudi Arabia is deteriorating sharply due to the ill-conceived policies of the ruling Al Saud family. In the past week, the regime arrested scores of prominent figures including religious scholars who had supported the regime in the past. They include Salman AlAwdah and Aa'edh Al Qarni. Also, the prominent scholar, Sheikh Hassan Farhan Al Maliki, was detained. The regime claims that some of those detained are "agents of two foreign countries", presumably Qatar and Iran. There are also widely circulated reports that scores of Al Saud family members have been rounded up including Abdul Aziz bin Fahad, the king's nephew. There has been deepening turmoil within the rank and file of the house of Saud since Mohammad bin Salman staged a palace coup against his cousin, Mohammad bin Nayef and replaced him as the new crown prince. The regime has panicked after calls were made for country-wide protests on 15th September. This is a rare call that may herald a new period of instability in the kingdom. Since the Arab Spring in 2011 they led the bloody "counter-revolution" to crush the people's revolt, invaded Bahrain to put down its people's revolution, groomed and financed terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq, launched a destructive war on Yemen and recently targeted the state of Qatar with sanctions and blockade. None of these acts has produced results. It appears that time is over for this reactionary regime. On 11th September the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the Government of Bahrain's crackdown on civil society and its use of torture, stating the people of Bahrain "deserve real respect for their human rights." The High Commissioner criticised the Bahraini gov-

ernment's "unreasonable" attempts to block UN missions to the country and said, "no public relations campaign can paper over the violations of being inflicted on the people of Bahrain."

On the first day of school, regime's Death Squads snatched 16 year old Adam Ibrahim in a raid on his house at Demstan town. On 6th September Mahdi AlSaifra from Sanabis town was detained at the airport on his arrival from a religious trip to Iraq. Hussain Marhoun, also from Sanabis, was arrested. On 5th September, Mahmoud AlMowali from Muhraq was detained. From Samheej young citizen, Hassan Al Aradi was arrested on 11th September. This week thousands of inmates at Jaw prison started a strike to protest their ill-treatment at the hands of Alkhalifa torturers. Members of regime's Death Squads attacked them to break the strike, beating many of them and transferring some to solitary cells. The situation in the prisons is rapidly deteriorating with lack of beds, proper sanitation or health care. Also the family visits have been significantly curtailed.

Veteran human rights activist, Abdul Nabi Al Ekri, 74, has been charged with taking part in a peaceful protest at Shakhoura town on 23rd June and chanting anti-regime slogans. This ploy is a means of preventing him from travel abroad. The summons and charge came in time to stop him travelling to Geneva where the 36th session of the UN Human Rights Council began its sessions on 11th September. Mr Radhi Al Mousawi, the president of Wa'ad society was also summoned and interrogated. The prominent politician, Ibrahim Sharif, the former president of Wa'ad was also summoned to appear today at the torture center. He has now been charged with par-

ticipating in a peaceful protest at Bilad Al Qadeem. Journalist Ahmad Radhi was summoned yesterday by the notorious torture apparatus and charged with the same "crime". Yesterday, former prisoner, Jalila Al Salman was prevented from leaving the country and turned away from the airport. Yesterday, Bahrain's dictator issued a decree to appoint Adel bin Khalifa Al Fadhel as the new director of the most notorious National Security Agency (NSA) where native citizens were tortured at its underground dungeons. Apparently the dictator was "advised" to remove the former head after the torture methods, including rape, became widespread and embarrassed his supporters in Washington and London. In the past 16 years, NSA was headed by five Alkhalifa figures.

On Thursday 7th September the Bahrain Team at Amnesty Internationally (AI) published a new report which says that since June 2016, Bahrain has rapidly deteriorated into a full-blown human rights crisis. The authorities have dramatically stepped up their clampdown on freedom of expression. They have subjected over 160 peaceful critics to arrest, prosecution and imprisonment, as well as other forms of harassment. Those particularly targeted have been human rights defenders and political activists, as well as lawyers, journalists and Shi'a clerics. Credible reports indicate that security forces have subjected several of them to torture or other ill-treatment in custody. The authorities have also targeted Bahraini activists residing outside Bahrain, subjecting their families to interrogation and prosecution in reprisal for their relatives' human rights activities or participation in protests abroad.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
13th September 2017

Labour Party praised for banning Saudis, *from P2*

However regime's officials and GONGOS are attending in large numbers to spread lies and deception about the situation in the country. It is now clear that their efforts have failed to whitewash Alkhalifa crimes. Human rights activists residing outside the country have flocked to Geneva and presented to the world the true nature of the Alkhalifa regime including its systematic torture, abuse, arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, revocation of natives nationalities and the dire situation in the torture cells which contain over 4000 political prisoners.

In an attempt to pacify opponents following the publication by Amnesty International (AI) a damning report on the human rights crisis in Bahrain, Alkhalifa London embassy claimed to have held nine meetings with the organisation and that they were cooperating on these matters. However, Ariel Plotkin, a researcher at AI denied that any meeting had taken place. She said that prior to the publication of the report AI had requested a meeting but

the regime failed to respond.

As the situation inside the torture dungeons deteriorated further, the native prisoners of conscience have continued their hunger strike that they had started on 11th September. Many of them have collapsed especially after they were attacked by masked members of the regime's Death Squads. Yesterday they were joined by the world renowned human rights activist, Abdul Hadi AlKhwaja. He had staged several hunger strikes in the past to draw attention to the plight of the thousands of Bahrainis who are subjected to most inhumane prison conditions after their torture ordeals had finished.

Meanwhile, Nabeel Rajab has been charged with new offences. They include "spreading false news", "disobeying the law" and "Inciting hatred of the regime". These will be added to other charges relating to his tweets for which he will be tried on 27th September.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
20th September 2017

Bahrain must end reprisals against dissent

Since June 2016, the Bahraini authorities have dramatically stepped up their crackdown on dissent. As a result, Bahrain's formerly thriving civil society has found itself reduced to a few lone voices brave enough to still speak out.

The crackdown has extended to this Council where human rights defenders have faced reprisals for seeking to cooperate with the UN, including travel bans, some based on trumped-up charges, to prevent them from travelling to Geneva to participate in Bahrain's UPR or sessions of this Council. Human rights defenders and political activists are also subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and torture. This includes imprisoned prominent human rights defenders Nabeel Rajab and Ebtisam al-Saegh, who was tortured while being interrogated about her human rights work, including her participation in the 34th session of this Council.

The families of human rights defenders living outside Bahrain have also been targeted as a direct reprisal for defenders speaking out at this Council. Some relatives have been interrogated about their family member's human rights activities, and subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention and torture.

Alkhalifa finances

Scrutiny of the Ruling Family's finances remains a secretive affair, an issue that is bound to strengthen the opposition to Al Khalifa rule

Mark Owen Jones

How much of Bahrain's wealth has been taken by the Ruler and the Al Khalifa family over the past 80 years? Based on an analysis of the Government of Bahrain's financial reports, it would appear that between the years of 1926 and 1970, Bahrain's ruling family received about a quarter of the nation's wealth. In fact, the amount given to the ruling family per year was always the largest item of recurrent expenditure.

Until 1941, the amount given to the ruler and those on the Civil List was consistently greater than the sum of all other expenditures. Although the amount they receive now is probably less, it is no longer recorded on the budget sheets, and therefore not subject to scrutiny. In addition to highlighting how much money was (and still is) taken by one family, this article also addresses a number of other issues, such as the mystery of the Abu Safah oilfield, and why the revenue allocated to the ruling family disappeared off the accounting books on two separate occasions.

How much does the ruling family receive?

Traditionally the ruler and the ruling family of Bahrain were given money through payment to the civil list. This practice continued until the end of 1949, after which the ruler distributed money from his own allocation called the privy purse. Upon receiving its first oil royalties in 1935, the Bahraini government set up the following system of administration;

The oil royalty would be divided into third, one third going to the Privy Purse of the Ruler, one third to non-recurrent capital expenditure and the remaining third to be invested. (Annual Report, 1955, pg 4)

In 1952 a new 50-50 oil deal was struck, and the government was to receive '50 percent of the profits of Bahraini oil and

duty on oil imported from Saudi Arabia through the pipeline' (Annual Report, 1956, pg 106). However, due to the fact that Bahrain's oil reserves were relatively limited, a new deal was struck in 1955. In this new agreement, the government would receive 50 percent of the profits of any oil refined in Bahrain. In all cases, the ruler would personally receive 1/3rd of the oil revenue accrued to the government. After decades of receiving exorbitant sums of money, the constitution of 1973 contained an article that sought to define the amount received by the Ruler. According to the 1974 budget, this sum was fixed at 6 million Bahraini Dinars (BD) per annum. Somewhat disturbingly, it appears that the figure of BD 6 million per annum actually increased after the democratic reforms of 2001. As I stated previously:

Ebrahim Sharif (incarcerated leader of the National Democratic Action Society) also noted that the amount allocated for the Civil List in 2001 was 8.5 million dinars, which represented an increase of 2.5 million from 6 million. This increased in 2002 to 9 million. On 2003, the amount allocated to those on the Civil List was no longer included on the annual financial report, which meant that Bahrain's elected MP's, whose responsibility it is to scrutinize the budget, can no longer scrutinize the amount of money given to royals.

Despite the scandalous amounts of money going to the Ruling Family, there were even more nefarious developments towards the end of the 1950s. Between 1962 and 1970, the official government accounts stop documenting the amount of oil royalties and money going to the Ruler. The figure given for 'Oil Receipts' listed under 'Revenue' was actually only two thirds of the total amount payable by oil companies to the State. By omitting the amounts paid to the privy purse in the recording of expenditure, reading the financial reports is very misleading. For example, in his review of 1968 Head of

Finance Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa writes;

Educational and health services accounted for the largest single items of recurrent expenditure during the financial year and together they amounted to almost half the total expenditure incurred.

In actual fact, the largest single item of recurrent expenditure that year was the amount given to the ruling family. To put it in perspective, in 1968 the ruling family received almost twice the second highest item of recurrent expenditure (which was education).

The Abu Safah Question

Under a treaty agreed with Saudi Arabia in 1958, Bahrain currently takes half the net revenue from the sale of oil from the Abu Safah Field. Most sources seem to state that this agreement was concluded in 1972, though apparently production started in 1966. Furthermore, an agreement between the governments of Saudi and Bahrain regarding 'matters of policy connected with the field was made in 1965' (Shaikh Khalifah bin Salman, Annual Report 1965, pg 3). Al Kuwari (1978) believes that oil revenues from Abu Safa were allocated to the Ruler of Bahrain's privy purse between 1966 and 1972. He makes this assumption based on a number of reasons, including the following:

4) All oil revenues received by the state and not appearing in the budget were allocated to the privy purse of the ruler.

Al-Kuwari also adds that no officials were able to give him an adequate explanation as to where the money went. If he is correct, then this represents a significant scandal in Bahrain's history. If funds from Abu Safah were going to the Ruler's privy purse, the money involved is likely to be huge. In 1975 alone, Abu Safah was generating BD 50 million for the Bahrain government.

So how much do the ruling family get?

Abu Safah and suspicious accounting aside, one thing remains clear - Bahrain's Ruling Family accrued about 25% of the nation's revenue between 1925 and 1970. Between the years of 1925 and 1937, this figure was about 50%. What is more, although the privy purse allocation was decreased to BD6 million between 1974 and 2001, it increased following the reforms of 2002 and, as of 2003, it is no longer recorded in the annual government budget or subject to parliamentary scrutiny. So despite Bahrain's democratic reforms over the past decade, scrutiny of the Ruling Family's finances remains a secretive affair, an issue that is bound to strengthen the opposition to Al Khalifa rule.

Visit this link for a detailed breakdown of the amount of money received by the Al Khalifas between 1925 and 1970.

http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/opinion/marc-owen-jones-how-the-al-khalifas-took-a-quarter-of-bahrain's-wealth_11643



They robbed people of their wealth and built these high rise towers. The land on which the Financial Harbour was built had been bought by prime minister for less than \$3 from the public purse.