

BAHRAIN

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

The Shifting sands in Arabia will bury the Alkhalifas

One year ago the Alkhalifa regime's forces attacked the house of Ayatullah Sheikh Isa Qassim and killed at least five people. They were among hundreds who were staying around the house to protect the most senior religious figure in the country. They had braved the boiling heat and the continuous threat of killing by the merciless forces. At the time the regime justified the blood bath arguing that it was pursuing "terrorists". It failed to produce a single reliable evidence to prove that, such as arms cache or real plans of military nature. The aggressors continued their onslaught arresting more than 200 people from Duraz and subjected them to horrific treatment of torture and abuse. Most of them were subsequently released. Scores were kept as hostages and were accused of planning to kill one a senior Alkhalifa member. Six were sentenced to death, two in absentia for being outside the country. The death sentence against the four was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment. It was a significant attempt to subdue the Bahraini people and force them into submission. The plan failed as outside powers, including supporters of the regime realized that the whole episode had been shameful, to say the least. The dictator was ordered to abandon his plan to kill more Bahrainis merely for standing with their religious leader.

Meanwhile the enforced siege of Duraz has remained. Barbed wires and cement slabs are positioned around the town. Out of six entry points only two are opened for the residents. No one from outside is allowed to enter Duraz. Two years have now passed since Sheikh Qassim had been placed under house arrest. His nationality had been revoked even before he was charged with any offence. The regime's attempts to deport him failed as no country would accept to share in the crime of removing a citizen from his homeland by the occupiers of his country. The situation has stalemated with political skirmishes continuing unabated. Protests throughout the country have persisted despite the heavy-handed policies imposed by the ruling tribe. The regime has linked its survival with the success of the Saudi policies in the region, the continued military, political and security American and British support. Under Donald Trump the four-country alliance comprising Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain continue to receive moral and po-

litical support. But this is conditional on large payments in billions of dollars. A feeling of disgust and shame is engulfing many quarters both in Washington and London. When Bahrain's dictator came to UK last month to attend the Royal Windsor Airshow there were protests, parliamentary agitation and media campaigns calling for the visit to be cancelled. The dictator had to alter his timetable to avoid scrutiny by the media. His hosts are now beginning to rethink their strategy of offering blind support to a regime that has proven to be politically and morally bankrupt.

What is next? As the Bahraini people continue their struggle to achieve democratic transformation the deteriorating human rights situation is haunting the politicians in Washington and London. With the unholy alliance bogged down in an immoral war on Yemen that increasingly appears unwinnable, there is a sense of despair even among the Western military establishments. The Trump doctrine of syphoning off billions of petrodollars in return for defending these hopeless allies is gradually losing momentum. The president himself is beginning to realise the futility of challenging the world which is rejecting his blatant support of autocracy with total disregard to human rights and basic tenets of modern state behavior. When the Trump administration approved a new military deal with the Alkhalifa of Bahrain for one billion dollars the feelings among many Congressmen have boiled and calls made for the cancellation of the deal. Human Rights Watch attacked it ferociously and called for it to be abandoned. It said that the deal is seen as an endorsement of the human rights violations being committed daily by the tribal dictatorship in that small Gulf state. There is fear among the human rights activists that the abandonment of human rights doctrines by the Trump administration is sending the wrong signals to those dictators. The realm of human rights is thus becoming more muddled as the vision becomes significantly blurred. This is not a way to establish modern statehood or conduct international business. There may be some immediate rewards but the moral cost is spiraling. How much of this can be stomachied by a disillusioned world? That remains to be seen.

What is proven, however, is that there is a widely-accepted view that the recent policies of the USA and some European countries have systematically ignored the issue of human rights and democracy in a turbulent world. Experience has repeatedly shown that this approach is simply not fit for purpose. The world's stability hinges on achieving a degree of justice and liberty to the people. These notions are considered alien by those oligarchies in the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The tension with Qatar created by the Saudis and Emiratis is taking its toll on the collective political work on the world's stage. The cries of the victims of those dictatorships are deafening. Whether the victims of war on Yemen, those subjected to torture in Bahrain or the Palestinians who are owed down by Israeli snipers, the cries of those victims are deafening and cannot be ignored for long. The Western political and military alliance is being subjected to enormous strains especially after Trump had withdrawn his country from the nuclear deal with Iran. To continue blaming Iran for the downturn in the Western economies and politics is causing enormous self-harm even for the small traders. It is clear that the billions of dollars siphoned off Saudi Arabia are not making their way to public funds agencies. Instead only a handful of people in the Western capitals are benefiting from those billions. The borrowing by Washington and London is becoming a serious irritant, but life goes on under Trump.

The rulers of Bahrain have linked their destiny with those of Trump and the rightist parties both in Washington and London. Their tenure appears to be short as the public taste continues to change. There is also a tendency to go beyond the limits of the capitalist system in an attempt to calm down the boiling situation that threatens the status quo in the world. Native Bahrainis are aware of the political dynamics in the region and are adamant to continue their struggle despite the risks. They hope that the fragile political balance will tilt against those dictatorial regimes. This may seem remote but the Arabian desert is known for its sand dunes that do not stay in one place. The next storm may end up carrying with it the remnants of those ageing and backward monarchies.

Reformist MBS jail women activists; Bahrainis have nationality revoked

The big lie that the Saudi crown prince had a "reformist" agenda has been laid bare by the arrest of women and men activists calling for real reforms. This week at least 10 activists — seven women and three men — were detained and denied any access to lawyers. The detentions are seen as a culmination of a steady crackdown on perceived critics of the government. The sweep began a week ago, on May 15, when police detained the 10 in the capital, Riyadh, and transferred them to the city of Jiddah. Their exact whereabouts now are unknown. Saudi media say the arrests were carried out by forces from the Presidency of State Security, a body that reports directly to the king and crown prince. The detained women are: Lujain Al Hathloul, Aziza Yousuf, Dr Eman Al-Nafjan, Dr Aisha Al Man'e, Dr Hussa AlSheikh, Madiha Al Ajroosh and Walaa Shubbar. The three detained men are: Dr Mohammad Al Rabi'a, Dr Ibrahim Al-Mudaimegh and Abdul Aziz Al Mash'al. In a statement released today, Human Rights Watch called for the immediate and unconditional release of those detained. Sarah Lea Whitson, Middle East director at Human Rights Watch said: "Every government that believed that the Saudi crown prince is a reformer and a champion for women should demand the immediate and unconditional release of all human rights activists," Whitson said. "It's not real reform if it takes place in a dystopia where rights activists are imprisoned, and freedom of expression exists just for those who publicly malign them." Amnesty International says Prince Mohammed's promises of reform "fall flat amid the intensifying crackdown on dissenting voices in the kingdom."

The Alkhalifa regime in Bahrain adopted a similar policy arresting more women this week. From Nuwaidrat town two women were incarcerated on 17th May: Zakiya Al Barbouri and Fatima Dawood. They were snatched from their homes by masked members of the regime's Death Squads on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan. Nothing has been heard of them since. Another woman activist is also being persecuted in the worst possible way. Najah Al Sheikh, who had been detained several times since the beginning of the Revolution on 14th February 2014, has been taken to court for calling to stop the Formula 1 (termed as the Blood Formula by native Bahrainis). When she appeared at Alkhalifa court on 21st May the judge refused to examine the torture inflicted on her at the notorious AlMuharraqa police station where she endured horrific torture including rape. He adjourned the trial until 25th June. She is one of 11 native Bahraini women undergoing severe persecution by Alkhalifa "reformists".

On 20th May Alkhalifa court revoked the nationality of nine people and sentenced them to between three and 15 years in jail as part of the crackdown on native activists. This year, more than 200 people have been stripped of their nationality, including 115 in a mass trial earlier this month. The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy says 728 people have been stripped of their nationality since 2012, after the tribal monarchy led a crackdown against protests by majority natives. On the same day regime's court adjourned the trial of the world renowned human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab, until 5th June to announce its verdict. He is charged with using twitter to denounce the Saudi-led war on Yemen

in which the Alkhalifa are participating. Anyone who tweets against the official policies of the ruling tribe is liable for five years jail. There is pressure on the dictator to release Mr Rajab whose detention for peacefully expressing his view on the illegitimate war has embarrassed their allies in Washington and London.

Last Thursday 17th May regime forces raided at least 13 areas; Sitra, Karbabad, Demstan, Saar, AlDaih, Shahrakkan, Aali, Hamad Town, Abu Quwwa, AlJufair, Abu Saiba, Iskan al Shakhoura and Malikiyah. Several citizens were detained while their families were subjected to horrific treatment on the first day of Ramadan. On 18th May young native Bahraini, Ali Fakhar, 25, was arrested at Hamad town. He had been given several jail sentences totalling more than 20 years with more to come.

To mark the first anniversary of the bloody attack on the house of Ayatullah Sheikh Isa Qassim (23rd May 2017) people in various towns and villages staged protests in the past few days. The regime's forces attacked the house killing at least five people and ended the presence of the Sheikh supporters in the vicinity of the house. He has been under house arrest for the past two years. The town, Duraz has been under siege ever since. No one from outside the town is allowed to enter. Barbed wires and cement slaps surround the area while the residents have to endure hours in the queues at the two entry points. Four other points were closed two years ago. The attack came two days after President Trump promised King Hamad there would be no more 'strain' in the U.S.-Bahraini relationship.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
23rd May 2018

Outrage at Saudi-Alkhalifa support of Israel, 115 Bahrainis made stateless

The US State Department is taking new steps toward a massive, multibillion-dollar sale of weapons to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This includes tens of thousands of precision-guided munitions from Raytheon, the same company that was involved in producing the weapons used in last month's strike. Reuters reported in November that Saudi Arabia had agreed to buy \$7 billion in precision-guided weapons from U.S.-based companies Raytheon and Boeing. Raytheon was "courting lawmakers and the State Department to allow it to sell 60,000 precision-guided munitions to both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates," according to the New York Times. The sale is likely to face stiff opposition in the Senate, where members have grown increasingly frustrated with the U.S. role in the devastating conflict in Yemen. Last June, the Senate almost rejected a similar sale of precision-guided weapons, but ultimately approved it by a narrow margin. Anger is boiling in the Arab world against the evil alliance comprising Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and "Israel" who had paid America hundreds of billions to withdraw

from the Iran nuclear agreement. The decision to withdraw had emboldened the Israelis first to attack Syria and then massacre more than 70 Palestinians. Alkhalifa foreign minister added salt to the injury when he openly supported Israeli crimes.

In one of the most outrageous crimes in recent history in the Gulf, Alkhalifa court in Bahrain revoked the citizenship of 115 native Bahrainis and gave 53 of them life sentences on trumpeted charges. This case pertains to Bahrain's allegation in 2015 that "they had set up the Zulfiqar Brigades to destabilize the kingdom". Regime's mouthpieces said 138 people had been falsely accused of "being behind a number of explosions, possession of explosives and training in the use of weapons and explosives and the attempted murder of police officers". Fifty-three defendants were sentenced to life terms and 62 others to between three and 15 years in prison, they said. "This outrageously harsh sentence is setting a new level of injustice in Bahrain. Rendering people stateless in a mass trial is a clear violation of international law. This is the worst verdict on the record", said Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, an activist with

London-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD). The latest ruling brought to 717 the number of Bahrainis stripped of their citizenship since 2012, he said in a statement, adding that there had been 213 cases this year alone.

In a severe blow to Bahrain's tyrant came yesterday from Peter Ford, who was British Ambassador to Bahrain 1999-2002. He announced his resignation from his position as adviser to the royal Charity Organisation of Bahrain, in protest at Alkhalifa's new-found support for Israel. Peter Ford told 21st Century Wire: "This is the latest step in the downward path Bahrain has been taking recently, distancing itself from its previous staunch support for Palestinian and Arab rights. The exchange of fire was started by Israel and not Iran, in a transparent design to provoke an Iranian reaction following President Trump's decision to end the Iran nuclear deal. I find the Bahraini position even harder to understand coming at the same time as the transfer of the US Embassy to the holy city of Jerusalem, which will clearly give Israel encouragement to be belligerent and must be condemned." *Continued on Page 4*

US, Saudi & Israeli alliance threatens world peace, democracy & HR

The decision by the US president last night to abrogate, unilaterally, the most celebrated achievement of his predecessor, the nuclear deal with Iran, has been criticised worldwide and caused a major split within the Western political and military alliance. Although the decision had been anticipated, many observers hoped that the lobbying by Germany, France and UK would sway Mr Trump into changing or freezing his antagonistic approach to the deal that had averted a military showdown with Iran. There are now strong feelings of revulsion against the Saudis and Israelis who spent billions in order to influence the American decision and force Trump's unilateral abrogation of JCPOA. The reverberations of the American decision will continue to rattle the world and could eventually lead to military conflicts. The Saudis and Israelis, as well as the Trump hawkish administration, are seen as responsible for this world political mayhem. In its editorial on 3rd May The New York Times accused the White House and the Pentagon of "misleading the Americans about growing military involvement in a war in Yemen that we should have nothing to do with." It said that about a dozen Army commandos have been on Saudi Arabia's border with Yemen since late last year. The commandos are helping to locate and destroy missiles and launch sites used by indigenous Houthi fighters in Yemen to attack Saudi cities. This involvement puts the lie to Pentagon statements that American military aid to the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen is limited to aircraft refueling, logistics and intelligence, and is not related to combat. It said: "When senators at a hearing in March demanded to know whether American troops were at risk of entering hostilities

with the Houthis, Gen. Joseph Votel, head of the Central Command, assured them, "We're not parties to this conflict."

The human rights world has reacted with anger and indignation at the suggestion by Alkhalifa court in Bahrain dealing with Nabeel Rajab's case that he faced 14 more cases. The court was considering an appeal against an earlier sentence of five years against Mr Rajab for a tweet criticising the Saudi-led aggression on Yemen. Instead of quashing the illegal sentence, the court raised the spectre of more trumpeted charges against this giant human rights activist. Palestinians have expressed outrage at teams from the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain for taking part in the opening legs of the Giro d'Italia cycling race in "Israel" last weekend, which undermined Arab solidarity with their cause. The presence of these two teams, broke a boycott of Israel in place since the start of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948. In an unusually barbed statement to a fellow Arab country, the Palestinian Olympic Committee said their participation was "a stab in the back to the great sacrifices made by the Palestinian people ... and a free service for the occupation."

As the Royal Windsor Horse Show gets underway, calls for cancellation of the presence of Bahrain's dictator at the show have escalated. Anti-war activists have openly called for banning the dictator from attending the show alongside the queen as activists plan an open protest outside the show. The Bahraini Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) has lodged legal complaints against three sponsors of the event. In a statement it said: "We want to hold the organizers, HPower Group and the key sponsors (Rolex and Land Rover) accountable for the negative human rights impact of

the race and ask them to put in place processes to stop this happening again." It further added: "... Hamad of Bahrain should not be a guest of honour at the event while pro-democracy movements are violently suppressed in his own country." The legal complaint asks the companies involved "to acknowledge the human rights implications of what they are doing, and to put in place human rights policies and engagement processes so that they avoid 'sportwashing' foreign despots' reputations in the future."

In one of the bleakest assessments of the Bahraini economy under Alkhalifa tribal junta Bloomberg said on 3rd May that the country would join other countries with weak economies like Sudan, Lebanon and Libya. It elaborated: "The smallest oil producer in the Persian Gulf will join Lebanon, Libya and Sudan in 2019 as the only countries in the Middle East and North Africa with debt that exceeds 100 percent of gross domestic product, according to the latest IMF economic outlook." In order to prevent this bleak prospect Bahrain needs the oil price to exceed \$113 per barrel, which is unrealistic for now. Despite this, Bahrain's dictator continues to plunder the country's wealth to satisfy his egoistic demands and punish the native Bahraini population. The earlier announcement that the "largest reserve of Shale oil and gas" had been discovered in Bahrain has not helped the regime's cause. It only led to ridiculing a bankrupt regime whose policies have been directed to beg financial support from neighbouring countries. The announcement did not help the regime's reputation or its prospect of better economic and political achievements.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
9th May 2018

Bahrain, British colonialism and short history of repression

May 16, 2018

Human rights violations in Bahrain have steadily worsened over the past 100 years because of assistance by countries like the UK. The Al Khalifa regime gave up their foreign policy in return for Britain's protection – this was the regime that was persecuting Bahraini people at that time. They appointed Shaik Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and gave him the right to most of the revenues of the land – later including oil revenues – in return for a promise to share it with the ruling family and keeping them in order. This UK complicity is really where the story started.

Over the years, Bahraini people have protested this relationship and this theft of their country's assets, and each time Britain has helped to put them down.

In 1954, four protesters were shot by British-trained police. A commission of inquiry found no-one guilty and blamed it on the crowd. Two years later another six people died after British-trained po-

lice opened fire on a crowd in the market. Another commission found no-one accountable. Two months later, leaders of a popular cross-sect uprising were illegally deported to the island of St Helena (off the West Coast of Africa). What has emerged is that Britain actually considered supporting this democratic group of Bahrainis, the National Union Committee, but documents show that they weren't sure a democratic government would support British interests in the Gulf, whereas the repressive Al Khalifas were more reliable.

In 1965, there was a strike at the Bahrain Petroleum Company, mainly about the treatment of immigrant workers, and when this was crushed, a new uprising took the form of General Strikes. Royal Navy helicopters dropped tear gas on crowds while British-trained police shot another half a dozen dead – this time there was no inquiry.

In 1971, Bahrain became nominally independent, but the British continued to train the Bahraini police to ensure the Al Kha-

lifa family remained in power as well as selling them weapons. They also sent in an 'advisor' – Colonel Ian Henderson, infamous for crushing Kenya's Mau-Mau movement and implicated in torture and assassination – and he headed the secret police. Under Henderson and the Prime Minister, Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa (still PM after 45 years), deaths and torture increased dramatically. Documents show that British officials in Bahrain actively colluded to hide evidence of torture from the British parliament. For example, in the late 70s, two men were tortured to death for the alleged murder of a newspaper editor. UK Bahraini activists raised interest in the case among British MPs, but evidence now shows that British Embassy officials edited letters to deny they knew about the murders.

The cover-up is emblematic of the present day. We know the situation in Bahrain. We know that John Yates, the Metropolitan Police.

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Former British Ambassador Resigns from Advisory Post after Foreign Minister Supports Israeli Aggression

MAY 14, 2018

21st Century Wire says... Bahrain's foreign minister tweeted out 'Israel had a right to defend itself from Iran' on May 11th. In an unprecedented show of support for the Zionist regime, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa issued the extraordinary statement on the social media platform:

"As long as Iran has breached the status quo in the region and has (yet to) evacuate its troops and missiles, any state in the region, including Israel, is entitled to defend itself by destroying the sources of danger."

Peter Ford, who was British Ambassador to Bahrain 1999-2002, has resigned from his position as adviser to the Royal Charity Organisation of Bahrain, in protest at Bahrain's new found support for Israel.

Peter Ford told 21st Century Wire:

"This is the latest step in the downward path Bahrain has been taking recently, distancing itself from its previous staunch support for Palestinian and Arab rights. The exchange of fire was started by Israel and not Iran, in a transparent design to provoke an Iranian reaction following President Trump's decision to end the Iran nuclear deal.

I find the Bahraini position even harder to understand coming at the same time as the transfer of the US Embassy to the holy city of Jerusalem, which will clearly give Israel encouragement to be belligerent and must be condemned."

For a detailed and accurate analysis on those 10th May attack by Israel against Syria, please watch this commentary from Syrian expert and media analyst, Kevork Almassian of Syriaana Analysis:

...

Peter Ford's resignation letter in full:

"It is with enormous regret that I feel obliged to terminate the Cooperation Agreement between the Royal Charity of Bahrain and myself dated 1 January 2015, in accordance with clause 8 of that agreement and respecting the provision for 30 days notice.

My action is prompted by the support reportedly expressed by Shaikh Khaled Bin Ahmed Al Khalifah for Israel's latest attacks on Syria.

Such support is first of all founded on an Israeli lie, in that Israel was not attacked by Iran, Syria or anybody else before launching its obviously pre-planned attacks transparently designed to provoke Syria and Iran following President



Trump's decision to take the US out of the Iran nuclear deal.

More importantly, the understanding expressed for 'Israel's right to defend itself' signalled yet another downwards step on Bahrain's path of distancing itself from its previous staunch support for Palestinian and Arab rights, a sound and wise policy which has I believe served Bahrain well for many years and which is consistent with the wishes of a majority of Bahrain's population, as well as the

requirements of justice.

That the Foreign Minister should express his support for Israel in the same week in which the US transfers its Embassy in Israel to the holy city of Jerusalem makes it even harder to understand his position.

With the region set for more turmoil as an emboldened Israel backed to the hilt by reckless advisers in the US administration pushes to take more and more advantage of a weakened Arab world, it is in my view impossible to accept the wisdom of giving Israel even more encouragement. I say with a heavy heart that Bahrain will be one of the first to suffer if the conflict in Syria is widened.

I am most grateful to have had the oppor-

tunity to collaborate with you in the highly esteemed work of the Royal Charity and wish you personally and the Royal Charity every success in the future."

As Ford also told 21st Century Wire – "a good reputation is only worth having if you are prepared to put it on the line for a good cause."

It seems we still have among us, great men (and women) who are prepared to put principles and integrity above their own interests.

Outrage at Saudi-Alkhalifa support of Israel *Continued from Page 2*

A new report by Reprieve and Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) exposing, for the first time, the full involvement of UK-funded and trained institutions in torture and the death penalty in Bahrain was launched yesterday. It said that the UK's Foreign Office had spent over £5 million since 2012 on a programme of security and justice assistance to Bahrain. In that time, executions have resumed, the number of men on death row has tripled, and peaceful protesters have been abducted, tortured into false confessions and sentenced to death in sham trials. British complicity in this repression includes training guards at a prison where inmates are regularly tortured, training an ombudsman who repeatedly misled foreign governments about whether complaints about torture had been made, and training an inspector of prisons who ignored credible allegations of torture. Maya Foa, Director of Reprieve said: "A Global Britain should be proudly promoting human rights and the rule of law, not undermining them in secret. Despite having direct evidence that British-funded training may have contributed to torture and the death penalty in Bahrain, ministers are continuing their funding to that country's oppressive Government. The only way for the public to be confident their money is not leading to abuses abroad is for the Government to publish a full and transparent account of projects we are funding, and the human rights risk assessments for each."

Bahrain's dictator has also been angered and frustrated by the negative exposure and protests against his attendance at the Royal Windsor Horse Show last weekend. On Saturday 12th May, activists from several NGOs gathered near the entrance of the Show chanting anti-regime slogans and calling on the British government to stop supporting the regime. Two of them managed to enter the show but were stopped by plain-clothed security officers. A bus and a van with slogans against his visit also roamed London streets.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
16th May 2018

Bahrain, British colonialism and repression

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Assistant Commissioner (who resigned over hacking inquiry and Murdoch links), went to Bahrain to provide "technical assistance" under the guise of 'reform'. But human rights abuses continue unabated against Bahrain citizens, and as described in the film, families of UK-based activists have been imprisoned, tortured, and used as hostages to try and prevent peaceful protest here.

The UK has sold £82 million worth of weapons to Bahrain since the brutally crushed 2011 popular uprising, when Saudi troops (again with British weaponry and training) were invited into the country to quell street protests by around half the population.

Colonialism is alive and well, and the King of Bahrain's visit to sit next to the Queen at the Royal Windsor Horse Show is an affirmation of that colonial power and continued support for this evil, undemocratic and violent regime.

*Thanks to Dr Marc Owen Jones
Lecturer in History of the Gulf and the
Arabian Peninsula, Exeter University*