

BAHRAIN

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

The intermingled Gulf politics need deconstruction

The ongoing tension in the Gulf is a cause for serious worry especially that an armed conflict cannot be safely ruled out. This is a region which has been rife with controversy, disagreements and conspiracies. It is pacted with aircraft carriers, destroyers and speed boats designed to disrupt shipping in this most important waterway. The United States has been at the forefront of the military build up, having withdrawn from the 2015 Nuclear agreement between Iran and six other states (five permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany). This unilateral action by Washington has set the scene for further conflict. President Trump has raised the stakes by threats of military action to force Iran to re-negotiate the nuclear agreement. The lack of European support to American has infuriated the White House which has been unable to do much. But then came the surprising move by the UK when it acquiesced to American request to impound an oil tanker (The grace) and force it to moor at Gibraltor. The Iranian were swift to retaliate, taking a UK-registered ship and using it to bargain their way out of the impasse.

The GCC countries have all been bystanders, pondering their position as several inherent crisis continued to mushroom, both within the GCC and without. Here are some glimpses:

The lack of real understanding between the people and the regimes ruling their countries. This has been going on for decades. The people aspire for representative governments while the regimes insist on maintaining their tribal rule. The struggle to achieve modern forms of governance has continued and with it repression and violence. The Saudis, for example, have managed to remain in power only with foreign aid from the United States. Bahrain has been ruled by the Alkhalifa hereditary dictatorship who have adopted most violent means and repression to remain in power. Following the Arab Spring in 2011 Saudi-Emirati alliance was formed to ensure that no movement may challenge the status quo in the Arab world, especially the Gulf monarchies. The prospects of real change in this region have been significantly diminished. But this is not a solution to the crisis of legitimacy of the ruling families. The Western powers have failed the people of the world and their own people as they continued to prop up despotic regimes and

ignore the pro-democracy movements. The ongoing strife between the people and regimes will always remains an obstacle to development, stability and peace.

The second area of destabilisation in the Gulf is the internal conflicts and feuding among the ruling tribes dominating the GCC countries. This is a serious problem that has led to the fragmentation of the GCC. Today, there are serious conflicts between several of these countries. The crisis between Qatar and the Saudi-Emirati-khalifi alliance is the biggest at the moment. There appears to be no real solution to this as the tension continues to grow between the two camps. Qatar has allied itself with both Turkey and Iran while the Saudi-Emirati axis is an ally of Egypt. Oman and Kuwait try to hold the stick from the middle but is often drawn to controversy especially with the United Arab Emirates. Kuwait is also in a difficult situation. It does not want to be drawn into conflict with either Iraq or Iran. But the others are not happy with this. There is generally unease about the Saudi-Emirati alliance which has adversely affected the Gulf alliance known as the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is now clear that it has been fragmented beyond repair, with Qatar and Oman being continuously ostracised for their good relations with Iran. This is one area of great contention and a cause for great disappointment even with the USA and UK. The newly-formed bonds with Israel has had negative effect on the GCC and added to the public grievances with the regimes.

The relations of the GCC with other powers is also a source of instability and unease. The Trump administration has not made the situation better with the repeated humiliation of the Saudi king and his son, known as MBS. While Iran is presented as the enemy by the Saudi-Emirati-khalifi alliance the other three states; Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, do not accept this classification. The UK's decision to return to East of Suez has not helped the fragile situation. The Saudis see it as a threat to its expansionist policies. It is also viewed as a source of instability in the region especially after the flare-up with Iran and the reciprocal impounding of ships. The Iranian tactics

have, so far, paid off. With a new leadership in London headed by Boris Johnson, there are several variables that affect the regional balance of power. The British re-deployment East of Suez is being hindered by the lack of vision among the leaders of the old empire. The UK is gradually losing its glare as the main European power in the region. While the European Union has adopted a wait-and-see approach towards the region, there are pressures on the EU to take a more pro-active role especially in supporting the pro-democracy movements, defending women rights especially of those languishing behind bars and adopting a more pro-active approach to promote democracy and human rights in the region. The EU has so far been slow to act, but the rise of populism is an indicator of the lack of strong leadership in Europe. Also the absence of a pan-Gulf approach to relations with Europe, the non-existent reform of the domestic policies and the variant approaches towards Iran have added more complications to an already entangled situation. With these thoughts in mind, activists are duty-bound to re-appraise their stands and policies, present alternative approach to the anticipated reform programmes and show a viable alternative political system to govern the region. The case of Bahrain stands out as one that needs immediate attention both by the British establishment and the European Union. The dismal record of human rights, the collective punishment programme and the sectarian nature of the regime are symptoms of political regimes that cannot be reformed or modernised. This is a headache to the European governments. The rulers of Bahrain have violated many red lines in their relations with the majority native population (Shia and Sunni). The only possible consequence of this is a revolt against their policies, this time not only in Bahrain, but elsewhere in the Gulf. The rise in human rights violations, torture, executions, persecution of the freedom of speech and the weaponisation of all state institutions will only lead to a corrupt rule that cannot withstand the pressures from the steadfast population. Bahrain will remain an important gauge of the political tendencies in the region, and the West has to take it seriously and act to listen to the people's grievances.

Saudis flee as repression intensifies, khalifis incensed by factual film

The Saudi repression against citizens especially human rights activists has driven hundreds to flee from the country. Their aim is to protect themselves from execution, torture, prison, and unjust sentences, to freely engage in politics, human rights and media activities. They were driven to these extra measures to avoid the wrath of the present king Salman and his son known as MBS. After the government rid itself of internal activists and destroyed the structure of independent civil society, it turned to activists abroad to complete its repressive plan to stop the remaining voices from speaking freely. The government has used various methods to silence dissent. The case of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, who vanished after entering the Saudi consulate in Turkey, exposed Saudi Arabia's intentions and methods against political activists. Now the authorities have adopted revenge from the families of the activists in order to silence them.

In recent weeks prominent Saudi cleric Ali Al-Omari was again subjected to torture at his prison in Riyadh. Bloggers have revealed that Al-Omari was subjected to "more brutal" torture than he had before. On 24 May 2018, a Twitter account said that Saudi TV 24 was preparing to broadcast an interview which was conducted after a round of torture and it included Al-Omari's admitting that he is a "terrorist" because he apparently belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood group. This group includes Sheikh Salman Al-Ouda, Awad Al-Qarni, Abdel-Aziz Al-Fawzan, Jamal Khashoggi and others. The interview was conducted in 2018, but it was not broadcasted because of Khashoggi's assassination.

A Saudi blogger received humiliating reception in Jerusalem as he toured the occupied territories claiming to be promoting "peace" between the native Palestinians and the Zionist occupiers. Mohammad Saud was set upon by Palestinian youth as he walked in the old market of Jerusalem. As he did not show any remorse he was subjected to more attacks by the youths. There was an immediate Arab outrage against the visit which is part of the Saudi initiatives to forge peace with Israelis. Video of the incident shows a child spitting on Mohammed Saud as he visited the holy site, while others yell at him to leave. In another clip, chairs and other objects are thrown at Saud as he walks through one of the Old City's alleys. He was encouraged on his trip by the new Saudi policy of normalising relations with "Israel" and several visits by Al Saud emissaries to Tel Aviv.

Despite the Saudi new policies of liberalising the country, artists have shunned the house of Saud for its repression and absolute form of dictatorship. The most recent snub came from Trinidadian rapper, Nicki Minaj who told the Associated Press news agency: after "careful reflection I have decided to no longer move forward with my scheduled concert at Jeddah World Fest". "I believe it is important for me to make clear my support for the rights of women and freedom of expression," she said.

In Bahra, khalifi dictators have started to take revenge from their opponents who spoke to Al Jazeera news channel about the situation. The programme titled (Players with fire) exposed regime's lies to undermine the people's revolution in 2011. Those who appeared in the pro-

gramme have been targeted for abuse, character assassination and threats and smear campaigns against their families. Revenge, not the rule of law is the norm. Political prisoner, Hussain Al Sahlawi has been subjected to a horrific attack by one of the torturers. Hiding behind the name "Abu Hassan", the khalifi torturer attacked Mr Al Sahlawi viciously, pulling his hair and beating him. Then he transferred him to solitary confinement. Mr Al Sahlawi had asked for medical care for his hand and two puffed eyes. The victim's body is riddled with shotgun wounds sustained in one of the peaceful protests few years ago. Despite continuing his hunger strike for 35 days, political prisoner Mohammad Al Singace has remained defiant and resolute in his demand to be given medical treatment and freed. Two days ago he is reported to have collapsed after suffering a bout of sickle cell syndrome. He was transferred to the hospital. His family has expressed grave concern for his life. He has now collapsed three times since he started his hunger strike.

Another prisoner of conscience, Mohammad Sarhan, has been transferred to solitary confinement for objecting to the bad conditions of the jail, overcrowding and lack of medical care. When he started explaining the situation to the torturers they sat upon him causing him enormous bodily harm. First he was abused, beaten and abused. Then he was transferred to solitary confinement as punishment for speaking to the police gangs roaming the jails and asking them to improve the conditions of the jail.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
24th July 2019

Saudis blacklisted by EU, documentary indicts Khalifis of serious crimes

On Sunday 14th July Saudi killers stormed the town of Al-Jish in the Eastern Province and killed an innocent civilian. Majed Abdulla Al-Adam was assassinated in Qatif by the regime's forces who attacked the town using overwhelming force. Several natives were liquidated by the Saudi killers this year in raids on their towns and villages. Extra-judicial killings have been rampant both in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Last week the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Republican chairman, Senator Jim Risch, introduced legislation punishing Saudi Arabia over human rights abuses and criticizing Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, but not halting weapons sales. The bill is the latest effort in Congress to hold the kingdom accountable for rights abuses, including the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at a Saudi consulate in Turkey and a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are waging a dirty war. "The Crown Prince has frequently behaved in a reckless man-

ner, including arresting those opposed to his rule," the bill says, adding that bin Salman's actions could "significantly harm" U.S.-Saudi relations.

The European Union is preparing an overhaul of its listing of countries that pose money-laundering risks, an EU confidential document shows, a review that could allow Saudi Arabia to be moved to a new grey list after having been blacklisted. The EU executive added the oil-rich kingdom in February to its blacklist of 23 jurisdictions that represent a threat to the bloc because of lax controls against terrorism financing and money laundering, but after Saudi pressure the list was struck down by EU states. Fearful of the economic impact of that listing, European governments led by Britain and France developed the grey-listing procedure.

On Sunday 14th July serious crimes were attributed to the khalifi dictators of Bahrain by Al Jazeera news channel. It broadcast a documentary entitled "Those who Play with Fire" containing secret recordings of

Bahraini intelligence officers planning and coordinating attacks on opposition activists. Three Bahraini intelligence officers recruited Al-Qaeda commanders to form a secret cell to assassinate Bahraini opposition activists, according to the documentary, on orders from King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa. The list of opposition activists to be assassinated included Abdul Wahab Hussain, a prominent leader of the opposition who played an important role in the 2011 Bahraini uprising against the khalifi dictatorship. The documentary said Hamad personally intervened to have one of the Al-Qaeda commanders, Mohammed Saleh, released when he was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia. The documentary also quoted a retired CIA officer, John Kiriakou, as saying that intelligence obtained from notes made by Abu Zubaydah, a Guantanamo Bay detainee who was previously accused by the US of being an Al-Qaeda leader and extensively tortured by the CIA, had mentioned three members of the Saudi royal family. When the CIA contacted the three

Callamard pursues Saudis on Khashoggi as Bahrainis cry for medical care

Agnes Callamard, the U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions dismissed the trial of 11 defendants in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia which will be held behind closed doors saying "it is unlikely to deliver real justice."

In an article published by the Washington Post yesterday she said top Saudi officials have not been investigated or charged in Khashoggi's brutal, premeditated killing. She added: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is responsible for Khashoggi's extrajudicial execution, enforced disappearance and torture. Ms Callamard said that Khashoggi's murder is not a Saudi domestic matter and that Saudi Arabia committed an unlawful extraterritorial act aimed at violating freedom of expression, threatened the sanctity of consular relations and interfered with the interests of the international community as a whole. She accused the US and the other permanent members of the U.N. Security Council of allowing themselves to be made complicit in what is, by all appearances, a miscarriage of justice and accused them of failing "to address the responsibility of Saudi senior leadership and divert attention away from the responsibility of the kingdom itself."

Saudi Arabia has executed 122 people - including children - during the first six months this year, making it one of the bloodiest in the kingdom in five years, according to a new report. Among the slain were six who were arrested as minors, three women and 51 who were facing drug charges that would be considered minor offences elsewhere in the world. The latest figure of executions from the oppressive Arab Kingdom is more than double from the same period last year - when 55 people were put to death.

The moral crisis in Bahraini prison has intensified in recent months as the regime ignored domestic and international calls to stop using medical care as a weapon against native Bahraini prisoners of conscience. Recent cases have confirmed the khalifi policy of denying proper medical care to those who need it. It took the mother of the Ilyas Al Mulla weeks of pleas and cries to force prison authorities to take her cancer-ridden son to hospital yesterday. Only when she declared hunger strike on Monday that the khalifi defenders in London ordered them to transfer Mr Al Mulla. Many others await in agony a similar decision to allow them meager medical care. Sheikh Mohammad Habib Al Miqdad is suffering from acute abdominal problems but has received no medication. He has been in severe pain for some time but his pleas to see a doctor were not heeded.

In the early hours of this morning the Khalifi thugs attacked the town of Karranah and arrested several native Bahrainis. Among them was Ali Ibrahim Al Mo'men. On Thursday 4th July the khalifi thugs attacked Buri Town and arrested many innocent native Bahrainis. At least 11 were snatched from their homes. They include: Hussam Hassan, Muhsin Ahmad, Nidal Mirza, Ali Hussain Habib, Hussain Ahmad Al Hujairi, Mahdi Abdul Wahed, Ahmad Ali Al Aali, Mohammad Hassan Al Farsan, Mohammad Jassim Darwish, Mohammad Najji and Ahmad Murtada. Last month at least 43 native Bahrainis were detained as the regime prepared to receive Israeli delegates to its ill-fated "economic workshop" to facilitate the launching of Mr Trumps' "Deal of the Century".

On 3rd July Amnesty International condemned the khalifi regime for harassment of former Bahraini member of parliament Osa-

ma Muhana al-Tamimi. It said: "The actions against al-Tamimi come in a climate of escalated state intimidation aiming to quash free expression. In addition to official agencies' actions against al-Tamimi - including multiple summonses and an attempt to confiscate his personal phone without a warrant - there have been a number of incidents targeting al-Tamimi's businesses and personal safety in recent years which the government has failed to adequately investigate. The broader context involves a series of recent statements by the highest officials, including the King, that criticism of government.... will not be tolerated."

In London ministers have asked the courts to set aside a landmark ruling that British arms sales to Saudi Arabia are unlawful, a legal manoeuvre that prompted Jeremy Corbyn to accuse the Conservatives of prioritising military exports over civilian lives. The government has applied for a stay of last month's judgment pending an appeal, according to Campaign Against Arms Trade, which is fighting the case, at a time when conflict between the Saudis and Yemeni people has intensified. That appears to contradict assurances given to MPs by Liam Fox, the international trade secretary, that Saudi arms sales would be halted after the ruling pending a review. At the time, 57 export licences were under consideration. Corbyn said: "This makes a mockery of their own commitment to halt all new sales while a review takes place into civilian casualties. Nothing could be clearer: the government's priority is to sell arms, not to protect the rights and lives of Yemeni people."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
10th July 2019

Saudi royals, they disappeared and their bodies were later found in the desert. The documentary added that Bahraini intelligence officers also travelled to Iran to coordinate with JundAllah, a militant group based in Iran's southeastern province of Baluchistan which claims to fight for equal rights for Iranian Sunnis but is accused of having links to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

On Sunday 14th July the people of Nuwaidrat town took to the streets declaring the right of the people to demand the downfall the hereditary dictatorship. Protests have also continued in several areas. Yesterday there were protests at the towns of Abu Saiba and Shakhoura. In the early hours of yesterday khalifi forces snatched native Bahraini Ali Khalid from his town of Abu Saiba in

mysterious circumstances. His whereabouts are unknown.

On 11th July regime's kangaroo courts issued harsh prison sentences against seven innocent people. The victims are: Muntadar Ali Al-Rayes, Ahmad Jaffar Ibrahim, Sayed Murtada Fadel, Ali Mohammad Al-Ghasra, Sayed Hashim Sharaf, Ahmad Sayed Moosa Fadel and Sayed Ali Taha Fadel. They are

all from Duraz town.

Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) has called for the immediate and unconditional release of Mohammad Al Singace who has now spent 26 days on hunger strike at Jau prison. He is calling for a retrial and immediate release as he maintains his innocence and rejects the charges against him. Mr Al-Singace has lost a lot of his weight and is on the fringe of collapse. ADHRB has also expressed serious concerns about the health of Dr Abdul Jalil Al-Singace who has been denied proper medical care. Last week he developed severe pains in his chest and abdomen but the prison authorities have refused to transfer him to hospital despite repeated requests. Dr Al-Singace is a disabled person with Polio since birth.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17th July 2019



U.S. Senate Foreign Relations chairman offers Saudi rights bill

The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Republican chairman, Senator Jim Risch, introduced legislation on Wednesday punishing Saudi Arabia over human rights abuses and criticizing Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, but not halting weapons sales.

The bill is the latest effort in Congress to hold the kingdom accountable for rights abuses, including the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at a Saudi consulate in Turkey and a humanitarian catastrophe in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels.

"The Crown Prince has frequently behaved in a reckless manner, including arresting those opposed to his rule," the bill says, adding that bin Salman's actions could "significantly harm" U.S.-Saudi relations.

However, the Saudi Arabia Diplomatic Review Act would not block weapons sales to Riyadh, focusing instead on barring travel by many members of the Saudi royal family who work in its government, although not the king or crown prince.

Risch said his goal was legislation that addresses rights abuses, but that President Donald Trump would sign. "This is an honest effort to get a bill that can pass and become law," he told reporters.

It was not clear whether Risch's bill would be considered strong enough to win Senate approval.

Although Trump's fellow Republicans hold a Senate majority, the chamber last month defied him by voting to block \$8 billion in military sales to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and other countries.

A handful of Republicans joined Democrats to pass resolutions opposing the sales, rejecting Trump's decision to sidestep Congressional review of such deals by declaring an emergency over threats from Iran, although with too few votes to override a presidential veto.

The Republican-majority Foreign Relations Committee also approved separate legislation, sponsored by ranking Democratic Senator Bob Menendez, that would make it more difficult for Trump to avoid congressional review of arms sales.

And it is due to consider as soon as next week another measure imposing harsher sanctions on Saudi Arabia that also has bipartisan support.

Assistant Secretary of State Clarke Cooper told a Foreign Relations hearing on the weapons sales on Wednesday that the equipment has not been delivered, even though it has been seven weeks since the emergency declaration in May.

"Delivery is pending," he said, prompting Republicans and Democrats to question the administration's decision.

'FOLLOW THE DAMN LAW'

Trump views weapons sales as an important generator of jobs and Saudi Arabia as a necessary counterweight to Iran's influence in the Middle East. He has promised to veto all 22 resolutions of disapproval.

Risch's bill calls for a "comprehensive review" of Washington's relationship with Saudi Arabia and a peaceful resolution of the war in Yemen. It also calls on Trump to deny or revoke visas of members of the Saudi royal family until the country improves its rights record, although it allows waivers for security reasons.



Risch, who led Senate opposition to resolutions against the weapons sales, said it was important to respond to "clear" Iranian threats to the United States and its allies.

Discussing the bill with reporters, Risch said stopping weapons sales could push Saudi Arabia towards China or Russia. "They can go to the bazaar and buy arms from anyone they want to," he said.

At the hearing, Menendez scoffed at the contention that the Saudi and UAE arms deals were urgent enough to sidestep weapons export law. "How would sales that will not be delivered for many, many months immediately respond to an emergency?" he asked.

Risch said he had consulted with Democrats, the State Department and the White House, but would not say whether Trump would sign the bill if it passed the Senate and House of Representatives. An aide said the senator is "cautiously optimistic" about getting Trump's support.

The House is due to start voting on resolutions of disapproval next week. They are expected to pass the Democratic-controlled chamber, but unlikely to garner the two-thirds majorities there and in the Senate to overcome Trump vetoes.

Underscoring bipartisan concern, Republican Senator Ted Cruz joined Democrats in criticizing the weapons sales without congressional review. Cruz had voted against the resolutions of disapproval because of the threat from Iran.

"Don't make the mistake that it is only Democrats that are concerned about this," Cruz said. "Follow the damn law and respect it."

Risch's bill is co-sponsored by Democratic Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Chris Coons, and Republican Senator Marco Rubio.

Al Jazeera: Bahrain recruited Al-Qaeda terrorist to assassinate dissidents

July 16, 2019

Senior members of the Al-Qaeda terrorist group were recruited by Bahrain in a secret plot to assassinate heads of opposition groups, prominent dissidents and activists, according to a sensational documentary aired by Al Jazeera's Arabic-language news channel.

Titled "Playing with fire", the 52-minute documentary exposed recordings and communications between Bahraini intelligence and Al-Qaeda members to form a secret cell on the authorisation of the King of Bahrain, Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa.

The documentary claimed that King Hamad had personally intervened to ensure the plots success by having one of the Al-Qaeda commanders, Mohammed Saleh, released when he was imprisoned in Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain writer: We do not need permission to normalise relations with Israel

Iran was amongst the targets. The documentary found that officers from Bahraini intelligence met

with Al-Qaeda linked terrorist groups based in Iran's south-eastern province of Baluchistan, to co-ordinate operations within the Islamic Republic.

Saleh, head of Al-Qaeda in Bahrain is seen confessing that he met officials in the National Security Agency who asked him to lead a cell to assassinate Shia dissidents in 2003. Saleh said he made calls with leaders in the organisation in Saudi Arabia to provide arms to execute the plan.

Bahrain, which has strongly backed the Gulf coalition boycotting Qatar claiming, amongst other things, that Doha supports terrorists organisations, has denied the allegations made in the documentary.

