

BAHRAIN

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Serious cracks in khalifi policies and calculations

It has always been a war of wills between the oppressed and the oppressors. This has been true in the case of Bahrain as it has been in other parts of the world. The oppressors often rely on material power to gauge their ability to maintain their grip on people. On their side, the people are aware that their strength lies in their faith, their logical and legitimate demands and their ability to withstand the onslaught of the oppressors. In the case of Bahrain the khalifi dictatorship has been adamant on suppressing any dissent and ensuring that no viable opposition existed. Yet they were shocked when the majority of the natives took to the streets demanding the end of their hereditary dictatorship. Their reaction was one that dictators would often resort to when they are cornered. They deployed a massive campaign of repression the like of which Bahrain has never seen before.

So what are the pillars of their policy at that juncture? Three of those pillars are: the relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which is asymmetrical, opportunistic and short-sighted. The second is the khalifi total submission to the Anglo-American alliance to secure its internal front and protect the khalifi tribal dictatorship. The third is the normalisation of relations with the Israelis as a second tier in its search for security at any cost. In these moves the khalifis gradually succumbed to the temptations of absolute power at the cost of their relations with the people. Gradually they became alien to the land, its people and their culture. The gap between the khalifis and Bahrainis has grown so wide that it is impossible to envisage a situation where reconciliation is possible. This is a dangerous situation that could render the khalifis unfit to rule at any level. This is an unenviable situation that is unsustainable in the long term.

It can be stated that three developments in the last decade have contributed to wrecking the superiority of the Anglo-American alliance and its relations with the Gulf sheikhdoms. The first is the Arab Spring nine years ago. It challenged the political balance in the region and caused the ruling tribes to rattle. The people themselves were affected in different ways. The counter-revolution forces adopted a new strategy of inflicting maximum damage on those people, materially and psychologically. The human losses were incalculable. The

subsequent developments helped weaken the balance of power which was heavily in favour the Anglo-American alliance. Three factors led to this: the first was the Arab Spring revolutions that shocked the status quo to the core and threatened to wipe out the oppressive order imposed on the Arab people for decades. Those revolutions started in Tunisia and spread like fire to Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. The first reaction of the counter-revolution forces was to absorb the first shock by removing the heads of state in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. This was followed by unprecedented repression as new players come to the forefront of the war on the people's revolt. Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates rushed to the scene and thought they would be capable of taking the lead in this counter revolution, supported by Egypt, Bahrain and Israel. For almost a decade it appeared that they may have succeeded in eradicating the zeal to achieve freedom. But then came the people's revolt in Sudan, sweeping Omar Al Bashir from power and compromising the power of the military. The counter revolution forces attempted to thwart the revolt and confine it to the removal of Bashir but the people insisted on ending the military rule and returning the power to the people. It remains to be seen to what the extent the political arrangements that have been made between the two sides will be honoured. The Algerian revolt also showed that there is still enough zeal in the people to enforce change.

Now there are signs that Egypt which has been ruled by the military headed by General Abdul Fattah Al Sissi may renew its revolution and end the military rule which had overthrown the elected president Dr Mohammad Morsi in 2013. The counter revolution forces reacted with horror at the prospect of the renewal of revolutionary change in the Arab world. The Saudis are the most horrified. The House of Saud is the ultimate expression of tribalism, backwardness, viciousness and cruelty. With the noose tightening around the neck of the crown prince for his role in the brutal murder of Saudi journalist, Jamal khashoggi last year and the recent destructive bombings at the heart of its oil installations at Abqaiq and khrais, the counter revolution forces are extremely worried that the time may have come for a new Middle East ruled by its own people. The khalifi tribal

dictatorship is the most vulnerable among the GCC tribal rulers. They have committed most heinous crimes against the native Bahrainis that there is absolutely no prospect of reconciliation between the two sides. As the outside powers that have propped them up for decades face their own internal and external challenges their feeling of insecurity has increased. But instead of reaching to the people, releasing the thousands of political prisoners and bringing their torturers and killer to justice, their natural reaction is expected to be more revenge and criminal acts against Bahrain and its people.

In the case of Saudi Arabia the crown prince has been forced to admit his role in the brutal murder of Jamal khashoggi and the hope is that he will be punished for it. But the khalifi dictators are unlikely to admit their criminal acts especially the brutal killing of hundreds of Bahrainis, the displacement of the natives, their genocidal policies, revocation of citizenship of natives, the destruction of more than 40 mosques and religious structures, imprisoning scores of women and raping some of them and transferring sovereignty of the country to outside powers. The enormity of these crimes will prevent them from admission of guilt. This means that the people who have vowed not to allow the repetition of the khalifi crimes against them to happen again, will never accept to be ruled by the khalifis again. They want to decide their own destiny, write their constitution and adopt a political system based on the principle of equal citizenship and "one man one vote" system of government. Their sacrifices will always be remembered and taken as a deterrent against accepting any political accommodation with the khalifi tribal dictatorship, short of returning the sovereignty to the people. This is the pledge they had given to their martyrs and will be honoured. For the defenders of the khalifi torturers, it is time to change course and align with the wishes of the people. That is the only avenue available to those who, for decades, sided with the oppressors who are losing their battles at every front. Delaying this will only lead to more misery, crisis and instability in the world.

Intensification of Saudi executions and persecution of Bahrainis

A report by the Gulf Centre for Democracy and Human Rights has highlighted the mass executions by Saudi authorities last April. Thirty seven people were killed on trumpeted charges and that at least 20 are awaiting the capital punishment. Three of these were arrested when they were minors. The report also presented horrific accounts of the ill-treatment and abuse inflicted on women prisoners including torture, sexual harassment and forced disappearance. Several of them were subjected to solitary confinement especially Naseema Al Sadah.

The sister of a prominent Saudi women's rights campaigner who has been tortured in prison has vented her frustration for not receiving any information about her trial or release date from authorities. Loujain al-Hathloul, who had campaigned to win Saudi women the right to drive and was arrested several times for breaking the recently overturned driving ban, was arrested in May 2018 alongside 10 other women's rights activists in the kingdom. Lina al-Hathloul, her young sister who lives in Brussels, has said coping with the uncertainty around her case is emotional rollercoaster" for both Loujain and her family. Some of the women had appeared in court earlier this year to face charges linked to their human rights work and contacts with foreign journalists and diplomats but it has been months since the trial had been convened.

Several prisoners from the Eastern province are facing cruel trials with the prosecutors calling for their execution and long-term jail sentences. Among them are:

Hassan Abdul Adeem Al Tuhaifa, Hassam Mohammad Al Tuhaifa, Mohammad Tayseer Al Nimr, Majed Al Qallaf, Hassan Al Qallaf, Hussain Al Qallaf, Muhsin Al Bahrani, Nasser Al Zanadi and Mohammad Al Ismail. The Saudi security forces have also arrested a young man from Qatif in the Eastern Province. Musa Al Mughassil was taken to unknown destination for no obvious reasons. He is brother of detained Haji Ahmad Al Mughassil and Fadel Al Mughassel

In an irresponsible move, Saudi Arabia, Emirates and the khalifis of Bahrain decided to withdraw their teams from the Gulf Cup 24 tournament to be held in Qatar. The move came at a time when this unholy alliance is facing defeats at almost every level. The aim is to score points against their neighbor after they have lost credibility at almost all fronts of their conflicts with others.

In Bahrain several political prisoners have continued their hunger strike to demand their rights for proper medical care, unhindered family visits and allowing religious and educational books into the cells. Among them are human rights activists Naji Ali and Ali Hajji. They have now completed four weeks of hunger.

The father of political prisoner, Usama Al Saghir has called for a simple blanket to protect him against the cold. Usama carries a total of 60 year prison sentences for opposing khalifi hereditary dictatorship. His body is riddled with shotgun wounds.

As the native Bahraini women detainees remain behind bars news have confirmed that Hajer Mansoor continues to suffer

abuses, threats and bullying from khalifi officers. On 16th September she was escorted by an officer from Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) to the Military Hospital who abused her verbally and psychologically. The officer kept screaming at Hajer, attempted to slap her and threatened to prolong her imprisonment. This treatment has continued since last July. She is in jail with her son in revenge for the activities of her son-in-law Sayed Ahmed Al Wadaei, a political refugee in UK. A native Bahraini religious scholar has been arrested. Sheikh Abdul Nabi Al Nashaba was detained because of his uncompromising stands with regards to the khalifi dictatorship.

One of the most prominent human rights activist has complained of severe curtailment of his rights as a prisoner especially the banning of books. Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, who was detained in March 2011 has called this "intellectual anorexia", saying that by depriving prisoners of books during incarceration they're slowly taking away their humanity and ability to interact and connect with other people. This comes along with shortened phone calls and family visits and fewer family visits. He said that in the past two years he has only been allowed two issues of an American magazine. Two years ago the prison administration took away the small prison library they had access to and confiscated all their writings including their memoirs. He was at pain to say that he is not allowed to read or write.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
25th September 2019

Saudi oil on fire, khalifis insist on jailing Nabeel Rajab

On Saturday 14th September Saudi Arabia suffered the biggest blow to its economy and pride when the Yemenis attacked two of its largest oil installations at Abqaiq and Kruais in the Eastern Province. The Yemenis who claimed responsibility for the attack said 10 drones took part in the devastating attack that knocked down half of the Saudi oil exports. The attacks were in retaliation for a Saudi attack on a prison at the Yemeni province of Dhamar on 1st September. More than 150 people perished. UN experts had raised concerns that both US and UK may face charges of war crimes if they continued supporting the Saudi-led aggression on Yemen. The Gulf region is now facing bleak prospects with the spectre of war looming on the horizon. President Trump has said that he was ready to defend the Saudis only if they paid the US. He said the Yemeni attack was directed at the Saudis not the Americans.

On 11th September Saudi forces raided houses in the Eastern Province and detained Moosa Al Mughassil from the town of Tarut. He had been threatened with

liquidation if he did not hand himself to the Saudi torturers.

A woman prisoner of conscience has presented her case on social media. Nassema Alsadeh who has spent more than a year behind bars, half of which in solitary confinements said: "I advocated women's rights in Saudi Arabia, and due to that I am in jail far from my two special needs son and daughter and my loved ones. It's been 410 days since the Saudi authorities arrested me from my house, and kept me in solitary in small cell where the lights are always on for 360 days (I'm still in the same room)."

Bahrain's dictator has defied the human rights world and refused to release the renowned human rights activist, Nabeel Rajab. Yesterday the khalifi appeal court conveyed the dictator's decision to the family and lawyer of Mr Rajab who has spent more than five years behind bars for tweeting against the Saudi-led war on Yemen of which the khalifi tribal regime is a partner. Many international human rights organization had called for the immediate and unconditional release of Nabeel Rajab. Sever-

al US Congressmen, as well as MEPs had also called for the release. But those calls had fallen on deaf ears.

When the khalifi crown prince of Bahrain visited the Oval Office on 16th September, President Trump praised him for the purchase of American military equipment, but said nothing about Bahrain's downward slide on freedom and human rights. That's par for the course for Trump; Congress, however, is insisting on making American values at the forefront of US-Bahrain relations. In the midst of the rising tension in the Gulf it may be an awkward time to talk about the sad state of human rights in Gulf monarchies that also serve as U.S. partners. But, in truth, partners who abuse their own people are less stable and less secure. Trump's proud disregard for America's historic role as a defender of those suffering abroad — even in allied countries — has emboldened those regimes to go further than they would otherwise dared. Since Trump took office, the khalifi regime has ordered a human rights leader to spend five years in prison over tweets, sentenced the main opposition leader to

Global support for jailed Saudis, Muharram activities attacked in Bahrain

On 9th September Saudi bloggers staged a wide campaign on social media in support of the prisoners of conscience languishing in Saudi jails. The campaign also sought to highlight the new policies of targeting opponents outside the country. As the first anniversary of Jamal Khasoggi's murder approaches the Saudi crown prince feels more uncomfortable. He had been implicated in the killing and dismemberment on 3rd October last year of the victim who was an outspoken critic of the regime. An account named "Prisoners of Conscience" called for a day of tweeting in support of Saudi prisoners on 9th September. They are marking two years of the massive regime's campaign against the people. They targeted both Mohammad bin Salman and Mohammad bin Zayed for their role in waging the war against pro-democracy activists in many countries. A joint Saudi-Emirati invasion of Bahrain in mid-March 2011 was their first extra-territorial expansionism. Since then they have intervened in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. On 4th September a criminal court in Riyadh sentenced a peaceful protester from the town of Awwamiyah in the Eastern Province to a lengthy prison sentence. Ali Al Ridwan was given 12 years after extremely unfair trial. No lawyer was allowed to represent the victim.

Today, Amnesty International issued a direct call to the khalifi rulers of Bahrain to stop persecuting a prominent academic. It said: The authorities must immediately grant Abdel-Jalil al-Singace access to the medical care he so desperately needs and ensure that the necessary medication is available to him, It further added: Abdel-Jalil al-Singace has several

chronic illnesses, including post-polio syndrome, sickle cell disease, and a musculoskeletal condition. Additionally, since 22 August 2019, he has been experiencing severe chest pain, numbness in his fingers, and shaking in his left hand – which he relies on to move with his crutches. The denial of medical treatment to a seriously ill prisoner is shockingly cruel and puts his life in danger. It can also violate the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

The Ashoura (Muharram) season this year saw an escalation of khalifi enmity of both the natives and their cultural and religious heritage. Scores of scholars, preachers, orators and heads of the religious halls (matams) were summoned, threatened and, in many circumstances, jailed. The khalifis are known for their policies of targeting the natives within a broad strategy of "genocide" that includes the obliteration of the cultural and religious specificities of the natives. Among those who were persecuted for their thoughts and breaching in recent days are: Sheikh Hassan Al Shakhouri, Sheikh Munir Al Ma'tooq, Sheikh Isa al Mo'men, Sheikh Abdul Mohsin Al Jamri, Sheikh Mahmood Al Ujaimi, Mulla Qassim Zain Al Din, Sheikh Fadel Al Zaaki, Sheikh Jaffar Al Sayegh, Sheikh Sadeq Rabi', Mulla Jawad Mirza, Sheikh Isa Eid, Sheikh Haamed A'shoor, Sheikh Zuhair Al Khaal, Sheikh Jaber Al Shahrakkani and Sheikh Mohammad Ali Al Mahfood. Some of them were charged with ridiculous offences such as presenting historical facts that the khalifi dictators do not like. Among the orators who were persecuted for participating in the religious processions related to Imam Hussain's martyrdom are: Ahmad Al Awainati, Ali Hamadi, Sayed Hadi Al Biladi and Abdulla Al Buri (Abu Sajjad). Religious symbols related to Ashoura were

also attacked in many towns and villages including: Al Musalla, Al Markh, Karbad, Hamad Town (Roundabout 4) and Jordab.

A group of students from Abu Quwwa town were detained, tortured and abused. Nothing was known about their whereabouts since their abduction by members of regime's Death Squads. They are: Sayed Hassan Sayed Hamid, Muntadhar Rashid, Sayed Abbas Al Durazi, Sayed Fadhel Sayed Abbas, Mohammad Abdul Amir, Sayed Ali Sayed Jalal, Ali Essa, Hassan Sadeq and Sayed Ahmad Sayed Hashem. Native Bahraini athlete Younus Hadher who is serving ten years for his anti-regime stands has been denied his necessary medications or specialist treatment for his bouts of epilepsy and loss of consciousness.

The khalifi persecution of native Bahrainis includes intervention in the specifics of their belief. In the past two weeks the slogan of the season became an irritant to the khalifi dictator. The majority Shia Muslim population had chosen the words "Together with a triumphant Imam (leader)". The dictator was outraged. The implicit message of the slogan is that the native Bahrainis aspire to follow the triumphant Imam. This is part of a religious tradition linked to the Ashoura season. The regime has always challenged the intrinsic religious doctrines and slogans that hint to victory for the people over tyranny and dictatorship. This has enraged the regime; it mobilized its mercenaries to remove banners and flags displaying this slogan. Many of those in charge of the processions were threatened and told to remove it from their congregation halls.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
11th September 2019

life in prison, stripped hundreds of dissenters of their citizenship, shut down the country's last independent newspaper, and tortured and executed dissidents after mass trials.

A native hunger striker has written to the British Foreign Office calling for an end to UK's training of khalifi torturers that is contributing to the Gulf state's human rights violations. Hundreds of political prisoners in the Jau Prison have been on hunger strike since August 15. Ali al-Hajee wrote to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and British ambassador to Bahrain Roderick Drummond last week to expose the inhumane conditions they face. He is one of thousands of political prisoners who suffer from severe physical and psychological abuse. He also suffers from the effects of medical negligence and a policy of collective punishment implemented by

the prison administration. In 2013 Mr Hajee was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment after he had been tortured and forced to "confess" and subjected to an unfair trial. Mr Hajee wrote: "The Bahraini authorities are using the training to maintain a facade of legitimacy and accountability before the international community. The UK government's unconditional political support and training only embolden the Bahraini authorities to continue abusing citizens without fear of repercussion. The UK cannot become complicit in these abuses or accept to be used as a political tool by dictators." Mr Hajee warned Mr Raab and Mr Drummond that the government had a "moral responsibility" to intervene when the "ineffective institutions trained with British funding are directly responsible for whitewashing crimes."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
18th September 2019



FRONTLINE Raises Serious Questions About Jamal Khashoggi's

Saudi officials maintain that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had no prior knowledge of the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi. But in powerful and occasionally contentious new interviews, FRONTLINE correspondent Martin Smith raises serious questions about how Khashoggi's murder in October 2018 could have been, as they have insisted, a "rogue operation." In the FRONTLINE documentary *The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia* Smith presses high-ranking Saudi official Adel al-Jubeir about how they could come to such a conclusion while the murder is still being investigated.

"You've reached a conclusion that this was a rogue operation before the investigation is complete," Smith tells Jubeir, who is now the minister of state for foreign affairs. "It seems to me — that you have made up your mind before you watched the due process," Jubeir responds in the heated exchange.

"No, you've made up your mind that it's a rogue operation," Smith says. "There are so many holes in — in your story — the story that you put out there, even the president in the United States said, 'This is the worst cover-up I've ever seen.'"

When Khashoggi disappeared, the Saudi government initially said that he had left the Saudi consulate in Istanbul alive, and that it had no information on his whereabouts. Days after the murder, evidence emerged that Khashoggi was killed and dismembered by a team of 15 Saudi agents who flew in and out of Istanbul on government planes. After several weeks, the Saudis acknowledged Khashoggi's death, but insisted the killing had been the result of a "brawl and a fist fight" and was a "rogue operation." Days later, the official Saudi story then shifted again: they admitted there was evidence the killing had been premeditated but maintained from then forward that it was a "rogue operation."

Yet as the new FRONTLINE film recounts, of the 15 Saudi agents believed to have carried out Khashoggi's killing, five are reported to have worked under Prince Mohammed's aide Saud al-Qahtani. Maher Mutreb, the alleged ringleader on the ground, was on the crown prince's personal security detail.

Smith also pressed Jubeir about the crown prince's ties to Mutreb, Qahtani and the murder in the above exchange from *The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia*. "You went on television on FOX News on October 21 — and you said that none of those involved in Khashoggi's death had close ties to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman," Smith says.

"Because he has ... these were security individuals. Security people have rotations, they sometimes serve — for spe-

cific times in terms of security or other issues," Jubeir says. "But these weren't just security individuals," Smith counters. "Mutreb, who traveled extensively with the crown prince, including in the United States, was on the scene. Are you saying that you didn't know that the people that were involved in the murder were close to the crown prince at the time that you said that?" "They — the crown prince has a lot of people who are close to him or who claim to be close to him. He has a lot of people who take their pictures with him," Jubeir responds. "You're asking all these questions," Jubeir says when Smith went on to ask him about Qahtani.

In the clip, Smith also speaks to Norman Roule, former CIA official, who says it is likely that Prince Mohammed must have at

least known of a rendition. Roule went on to confirm that he had high-level Saudi contacts that told him that it was a rendition.

The exchange with Jubeir is just one element of the new reporting in *The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia* — which examines Mohammed bin Salman's rise, his rule, and the evidence linking him to the events surrounding Khashoggi's murder. On Wednesday, FRONTLINE published Prince Mohammed's first comments on his role in Khashoggi's death. "It happened under my watch. I get all the responsibility, because it happened under my watch," the Saudi leader told Smith. He went on to insist he had no knowledge of the murder that the CIA believes he ordered.



Hunger striking political prisoner urges Britain to stop training Bahrain's security forces

A Bahraini hunger striker has written to the British Foreign Office calling for an end to training that is contributing to the Gulf state's human rights violations.

Hundreds of political prisoners in the Jau Prison have been on hunger strike since August 15.

Among the number includes Ali al-Hajee, who wrote to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab and British ambassador to Bahrain Roderick Drummond last week to expose the inhumane conditions they face.

Mr Hajee says he is one of thousands of political prisoners who suffer from severe physical and psychological abuse.

He also suffers from the effects of medical negligence and a policy of collective punishment implemented by the prison administration. He was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in 2013 after he allegedly was tortured into confession and subjected to an unfair trial.

Mr Hajee is currently suffering from severe medical conditions and has been prevented from seeing his family since February 2017.

Jau prison boss Brigadier Abdulsalam al-Arifi was invited to visit British prisons

and "develop rehabilitation programmes" earlier this year.

Mr Hajee wrote: "The Bahraini authorities are using the training to maintain a facade of legitimacy and accountability before the international community.

"The UK government's unconditional political support and training only embolden the Bahraini authorities to continue abusing its citizens without fear of repercussion. "The UK cannot become complicit in these abuses or accept to be used as a political tool by dictators."

Mr Hajee warned Mr Raab and Mr Drummond that the government had a "moral responsibility" to intervene when the "ineffective institutions trained with British funding are directly responsible for whitewashing crimes."

The Foreign Office did not respond to the Star's request for comment at the time of publication.

In answer to a written question on the issue last month, Lord Ahmed said: "Any training provided by or on behalf of the British government complies with our domestic and international human rights obligations."