

BAHRAIN

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

A new year with deep hopes of freedom

They may put on a brave face, but the reality is different on the ground. The khalifi dictators have attempted to expand beyond their means, and adopted policies inconsistent with their status as occupiers, thieves and foreigners. The fact of the matter is that the natives will always feel aggrieved as long as foreigners continue to rule their lands. This becomes even more acute when those foreigners exercised absolute dictatorship and refuse to identify with the natives. They may adopt some policies that appear friendly to one group, but this deception cannot last long. The reality eventually prevails and the natives will always come together to defend their land, history and culture. Dictators often rely on a policy of compulsion to ensure citizens silence and with it compliance with his orders. The powers of the state become his tools to repress the masses. There is no separation of powers. The dictator appoints judges to ensure that the judiciary remains a tool of repression and revenge from the opponents. Those who reject the policies of dictators are often labelled "enemies of the state". The dictator becomes the state, thus anything that belongs to the state also belongs to him. The security forces become an effective means of suppression acting in accordance with the dictator's wishes. So are the armed forces whose main function is not to defend the country but to protect the dictatorship, whether is a person, a party or a clan. The media also becomes another tool of repression and deception. The various news media propagate pro-regime news, ideologies and policies. They are used extensively against the opponents of the dictatorship.

As the end of the year approached, thoughts were being presented as to what kind of world is being sought by the inhabitants of this planet. The centuries of political developments do not appear to have created a much better world than the ancient ones. Wars are either being fought or promised by those whose hands are on the turrets. The big powers are becoming more concerned with wealth, dominance and expansion than the development of a world free of wars and miseries. The spread of incurable diseases is phenomenal as the human intrusion into the natural laws has led to more complex diseases. The investment in medical care and research is far less than that in warfare tech-

nology and arms. The cost of warfare is mounting beyond the reach of most of the countries. The lack of moral principles is pushing the big powers to ignore the political and moral shortcomings of those countries massive financial resources. The Saudis and Emiratis are being groomed by the Anglo-American alliance for their money despite their dismal human rights records. The khalifi clan which is ruling Bahrain with an iron-fist is relying on this unholy alliance despite its dwindling chances of survival. Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have fallen out in Yemen and are on loggerheads on other contentious issues. The Emiratis want the Saudis to declare war on the Muslim Brotherhood but the Saudis are reluctant to widen the scope of the conflict. The recent GCC summit has thrown this conflict into the open. The Saudis wanted to present a solid GCC stand by bringing back to the Saudi fold of the Qataris. They are unlikely to succeed easily. The Qataris have undertaken stronger links with both Turkey and Iran and presented themselves as statesmen with wider reach to other Muslim countries.

The Saudis have always vied for leadership of the Arab and Islamic world. Their oil wealth enabled them to exercise domination over the poorer regimes for decades. In 2011 they led the attack on the people of Bahrain who revolted against the khalifi dictatorship. The silence of the world encouraged them to wage the more devastating aggression on Yemen four years later. They accept no challenge from others especially in the issue of leadership. In the past they adopted quiet policies to achieve their goals, but they have been emboldened in recent years to take a more robust military approach to secure their leadership role. Last month they were enraged when the first Islamic summit not under their leadership was held in Kuala Lumpur. It was led by Malaysia and Turkey and attended by Iran and Qatar. Pakistan was among the organisers but it withdrew two days before it was convened. Its prime minister Imran Khan was summoned to Saudi Arabia and threatened by with severe financial punishment if he attended the summit. Four million Pakistanis would have been expelled from Saudi Arabia and other financial help would be stopped. Mr Khan succumbed and announced he would not attend. The summit was a success, being the first of its

kind; an open challenge to the Saudi leadership of the Muslim world which had been one of the pillars of its foreign policy. The countries which attended the summit were outraged by the Saudi lead in the normalisation with the Israelis. Their initiative has opened a new front in the challenge to the Saudi leadership of the Muslim world which they have enjoyed for decades. The Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (ICO) formerly known as the Organisation of the Islamic Summit which was a Saudi tool joined in the condemnation of the Kuala Lumpur summit claiming it would split the Muslim front.

The khalifis have joined in the attack on the summit; they had to do so as a duty towards the Saudis to whom they owe their present existence. They would have been swept away by the power of the masses that revolted in 2011. The military incursion by the Saudi-Emirati alliance re-instated the dictator and his khalifi clan. But their position had been deeply shaken. Their future as rulers is doubted given their total dependence on the outside powers. The British are also instrumental in keeping these dictators in power. For decades the UK has abandoned the calls for democracy and human rights in the Arab world especially in the Gulf. With a new government in Whitehall headed by Boris Johnson this policy is likely to continue. Jeremy Corbyn has repeated his party's pledge to stop arming the Saudis. This goes against the political grains of the British establishment. It is hoped that the rising awareness among the human rights and political groups will help change the UK's foreign policy. The excesses of the khalifis have exceeded all expectations and are becoming a burden for those supporting them especially the UK. The continued political strife by Bahrainis will force a fundamental change in their country sooner or later. The hope is that the West takes steps to ensure that this happens peacefully and orderly. While the people will not depend on any foreign power to help in this transformation, it is in the interest of world peace and progress to help the pro-democracy drive in the Arab World. This is a moral duty on all.

Twitter removes thousands of Saudi accounts, two Bahrainis face death

On 20th December Twitter disclosed how they removed thousands of Saudi accounts: "Today, we are sharing comprehensive data about 5,929 accounts which we have removed for violating our platform manipulation policies. Rigorous investigations by our Site Integrity team have allowed us to attribute these accounts to a significant state-backed information operation on Twitter originating in Saudi Arabia." It further added: "Our internal analysis shows the network was involved in various forms of platform manipulation, targeting discussions related to Saudi Arabia and advancing their geopolitical interests on the world stage. Primarily, accounts were amplifying messages favourable to Saudi authorities, mainly through inauthentic engagement tactics such as aggressive liking, Retweeting and replying. While the majority of the content from this network was in Arabic, a portion of it related to events relevant to Western audiences, including amplification of discussion around sanctions in Iran and appearances by Saudi government officials in Western media."

On 23rd December Amnesty International described the Saudi government's sentencing of five men to death for the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi a "whitewash" of justice because they cleared the top officials tied to Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. It derided the Saudi Public Prosecutor's announcement they would be executing five individuals for "directly participating" in the October 2018 murder of Khashoggi. Saudi Deputy Public Prosecutor Shaalan al-Shaalan sentenced three additional men to prison time but ultimately cleared the three top advisers under bin Salman. US as well as other international agencies have said Khashoggi was

murdered and dismembered inside the embassy. AI said: "[The verdict] fails to address the Saudi authorities' involvement in this devastating crime or clarify the location of Jamal Khashoggi's remains." It added: "This verdict is a whitewash which brings neither justice nor the truth for Jamal Khashoggi and his loved ones. The trial has been closed to the public and to independent monitors, with no information available as to how the investigation was carried out".

Soon after the Queen had delivered her speech at the opening of the new parliament last week, in which she said that the countries which violate human rights should be sanctioned, Jeremy Corbyn asked Boris Johnson whether his government would implement this policy. He asked if this policy would include Saudi Arabia or would the government give a blind eye to the kingdom and ignore its bad human rights record and the Yemen war which has transformed into a humanitarian disaster.

On 23rd December Mohammed Ramadhan, native Bahraini condemned to death published an article published by Newsweek, about the decision by Bahrain dictators to re-try him and his colleague, Hussain Moosa on Christmas day. He said: On a day when billions will be surrounded by loved ones celebrating the birth of Jesus, I will be facing the death penalty. I have committed no crime, so the Kingdom of Bahrain has invented some and tortured me into 'confessing' to them. This is my punishment for standing up for freedom and democracy. When hundreds of thousands of Bahrainis took to the streets in 2011 to peacefully demand democratic reforms, I joined the protests, believing Bahrain's rulers would heed the concerns of their citizens. Instead,

America's ally in the Gulf responded with senseless brutality. Over the next few years, protesters were hunted down: thousands were imprisoned, political opposition was outlawed and torture became routine. As an employee of the security services who dared question the regime, I was singled out for special punishment."

On 20th December twenty Members of European Parliament sent a letter to the khalifi justice minister, raising concerns about the case of Mohamed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa. The MEPs described the rescheduling of their case to Christmas as "an attempt by Bahraini authorities to undermine the international community's ability to monitor and react to the situation." The MEPs also noted the 31 December 2018 Court of Cassation verdict for human rights defender Nabeel Rajab as a similar attempt to avoid scrutiny.

A delegation of a major Israel lobby group visited Bahrain last week. Bahrain's interior minister, Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, received a delegation from the American Jewish Committee, which was headed by their chief policy and political affairs officer Jason Isaacson. The delegation also met with Abdulla bin Faisal Al Doseri, Bahrain's assistant minister of foreign affairs, in his office. The AJC presented Bahrain with an award in September for being "opening and welcoming" towards the Israel lobby group. Bahrain's foreign minister, Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, arguably the most brazenly pro-Israel Gulf official, received the "Architect of Peace" award on his country's behalf.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
25th December 2019

Saudi Consul sanctioned by US, French MPs raise Bahrain's HR abuses

Concerns are rising for the life of a Saudi academic and thinker who has languished behind bars for more than two years. On 16th December a court in Riyadh adjourned its verdict on Sheikh Hassan Farhan Al Maliki until February 2020. The cleric has refused to be drawn to the sectarian policies of the Saudi dictatorship and has repeatedly called for reconciliation among Muslims and the reform of the political system of his country. The prosecution demanded his beheading. One of his sons, Abbas, is also behind bars as a retribution.

Last week, the Saudi Daily, Ukadh, reported that a court in Riyadh had issued a verdict against a preacher from Qatif in the Eastern Province imposing 10000 Saudi Riyals (\$3500) and twenty lashes for exercising his profession of reciting lamentations in remembrance of Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Hussain. From his cell, Saudi human rights activist, Walid Abu Alkhair wrote: Because of my human rights activism I was given 15 years prison sentence and a travel ban for the same

period. In November I was moved to intensive security unit and subjected to ill-treatment. I staged a hunger strike to protest this treatment.

The former Saudi Consul in Turkey has been banned from the United States for his role in the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in October 2018. Mohammad Al Otaibi was present at the Consulate in Istanbul when the crime was carried out. The killers who had been dispatched from Saudi Arabia on orders from the crown prince, were later seen on CCTV entering his residence with their luggage that may have contained the remains of the victim. A statement by the US State Department said: Washington has banned former Saudi diplomat Mohammad Al Otaibi from entering the country" adding that "the US have decided to impose additional sanctions on Otaibi for his involvement in serious offences of human rights... the killing of Khashoggi is a heinous crime and today's decision is an important additional step in response to Khashoggi's killing".

Yesterday, the annual Martyrs' Day was

marked by Bahrainis in their various peaceful styles. Protests and rallies were held in several places despite the intensive security presence at every corner of Bahrain's districts. The families of the martyrs were visited by people who expressed solidarity and sympathy. Others attended the graveyards to recite verses of the Holy Quran at the graves of the martyrs. Several activities were held outside the country. In Berlin there was a protest in the city centre with pictures of the martyrs. In London several activities were organized by the Bahrain Opposition Bloc. They include pickets, seminars and articles. On Monday 16th December a seminar and Press Briefing was held at the NEU building. On Tuesday exiled Bahrainis staged a protest at the Bahrain Embassy in Belgrave Square.

Serious concerns have been raised for the fate of seven native youths being persecuted by the khalifi dictatorship in Bahrain. On 15th December a khalifi kangaroo court adjourned the judgement until Christmas Eve in order to "bury the news". It is a

Riyadh GCC summit debacle, Bahraini football victory a snub to khalifis

The 40th GCC summit that was held in Riyadh yesterday was dismissed by many as a meaningless side show especially in the light of the Saudi failure to rally the other rulers of the member states. The summit which was held behind closed doors, lasted less than one hour. Riyadh had effectively raised the white flag in its political war with Qatar, accepting to move the summit from Abu Dhabi to Riyadh as demanded by Doha, participating in the Gulf tournament (Gulf24) that was held in Qatar and ignoring its earlier demands from Doha to stop Al Jazeera channel, cut links with Iran and the Muslim Brotherhood and close the Turkish military base on its soil. Yet Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim Al Thani snubbed the Saudis and boycotted the summit, sending, instead his prime minister. UAE strong man, Mohmmad bin Zayed, was also absent. The summit was a muted affair that failed to address the major issues like the Saudi-Emirati-khalifi aggression on Yemen, the relations with Iran and the people's demands for democratisation and respect of human rights.

On 6th December a young man from Qatif in Eastern Arabia was martyred after succumbing to the horrific injuries he had sustained 35 days earlier. On 2nd November Saudi armoured vehicles invaded the province and hit anything or anyone in their way. Two people were hit. Hassan Al Dakhil who was riding his scooter died instantly; Jaffar Al Khlaif was transferred to the hospital where he spent agonising days before his martyrdom. In another case, Ali al-Nimr will be marking his sixth consecutive birthday on Saudi Arabia's death row on December 20th. He'll be 25 years old. He was just 17 when he was

arrested in Saudi Arabia and 19 when he was sentenced to death for 'crimes' linked to protesting. Human rights bodies have urged people to "take 2 minutes to send Ali a message of support ahead of his birthday"

Stung by the visit to the house of Nabeel Rajab's family by American Senator Chris Murphy, Bahrain's dictator has ordered the family to close their doors for visitors who sometimes discussed the situation in the country. The ban has shown the inherent weakness of the khalifi dictator who feared the consequences of asking the Senator not to visit the family. Instead he vented his anger at the defenceless family who had no alternative but to abide by the khalifi order. The closure of the house is another regressive step by a regime that had dissolved political societies, independent newspapers, banned speakers and banished activists.

On 8th December Bahrain won the Gulf Tournament Cup for the first time. It was hailed as manifestation of the skills of the native footballers who exhibited enormous skills. Scenes of jubilations around the country stunned the khalifi regime which had jailed and tortured athletes including footballers. The khalifi clan, led by its dictator has imported foreigners including athletes to replace the natives. The victory has given impetus to the demand that the khalifi dictatorship be ended and that natives (Shia and Sunni) should run the country themselves.

Yesterday, Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action Update, calling on the Bahraini authorities to ensure that the verdict in the cases of Mohamed Ramadhan Issa Ali Hussain and Hussain Ali Moosa Hussain Mohamed is the fair outcome of a trial that has fully complied with international fair trial standards, that excluded evidence obtained under torture and without recourse to

the death penalty. The khalifi High Criminal Court of Appeal had attempted to "bury the news". By setting 25 December 2019 to issue its verdict in one of the most controversial cases of miscarriage of justice in the country the khalifis hoped no one would care about it. On 22 October 2018, under immense international pressure the Cassation Court overturned their death sentences which it had confirmed in 2015 and returned their cases to the Appeal Court for re-examination, based on new evidence.

Two Members of Parliament in Portugal have asked the government to explain its policy towards the human rights situation in Bahrain. Alexandra Vieira and Pedro Filipe Soares, who are members of the Bloco de Esquerda (BE) Party also asked whether the government has any plan to influence the situation in Bahrain. They presented to the Parliament a list of human rights abuses including torture, unfair trials and forced disappearances with particular emphasis on the deteriorating situation at the notorious Jau prison. They also referred to the cases of Sheikh Ali Salman, Nabeel Rajab, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace and Mrs Ebtisam Al Sayegh. Portugal had historic links with Bahrain when it colonised it between 1522 and 1602.

A letter describing the spread of skin diseases among native political prisoners has complained that the prison authorities had failed to take serious measures to stop the spread of the disease and treat the infected. It was signed by 12 sick prisoners. One of them, Hussain Abdulla Al Haddad said: I cannot sleep because of pain and the feeling that those in charge continue to ignore our pleas.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
11th December 2019

time when the political and human rights world in the West shuts down completely until the new year. The victims are: Abdulla Saeed, Sayed Majeed Sayed Faisal, Bader Maitham Al Haddad and his brother Abdulla, Mahmood Al Shaarqi and Sayed Mohammad Sayed Anwar. They have denied the charges which relied on the "evidence" provided by a "secret witness".

Last week regime's courts handed 30 native Bahrainis prison sentences of various severity. Eight were given life, seven were jailed for ten years, one person jailed for 15 years, four given five years, one person was given three years, and nine others were jailed for one year.

Several French MPs have taken interest in the human rights situation in Bahrain and tabled questions to their government about them. On 10th December two MPs, Mr. Pancher and Mr. Hammouche, tabled questions to draw the attention of the French Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs to those violations. In his question, Mr. Pancher expressed his concerns over the executions, torture and the deteriorating medical conditions of both Hassan Mushaima and Dr. Abduljalil AlSingace. Mr. Hammouche referred to the denial of medical

care in the prisons. He asked the Minister, in the name of France which is "the country of human rights" to take concrete diplomatic actions to encourage political dialogue between the royal family and the political opponents so that democratic reforms and a Constitution respecting human rights can be implemented. Earlier questions were raised by two other MPs, Clémentine Autain and Jean François Mbaye.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
18th December 2019



My death sentence has been set for



**Opinion, Newsweek 23rd December
By Mohammed Ramadhan**

On a day when billions will be surrounded by loved ones celebrating the birth of Jesus, I will be facing the death penalty. I have committed no crime, so the Kingdom of Bahrain has invented some and tortured me into 'confessing' to them. This is my punishment for standing up for freedom and democracy. When hundreds of thousands of Bahrainis took to the streets in 2011 to peacefully demand democratic reforms, I joined the protests, believing Bahrain's rulers would heed the concerns of their citizens.

Instead, America's ally in the Gulf responded with senseless brutality. Over the next few years, protesters were hunted down: thousands were imprisoned, political opposition was outlawed and torture became routine. As an employee of the security services who dared question the regime, I was singled out for special punishment.

In February 2014, I was working a night shift as a security officer at Bahrain International Airport when two plainclothes officers approached me. They asked me to come to the Preventative Security Department to answer some routine questions. It was only when the car pulled up outside Bahrain's notorious Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID) that I realized something was wrong.

When I entered the building, I was blindfolded, plunging my life into darkness. My hands were cuffed behind my back as I was beaten with iron bars. Any weakness they could find was cruelly exploited. When they discovered my back injury, I was forced to stand until I collapsed. When they learned I had undergone fertility treatment, they kicked me repeatedly in the testicles.

I was stripped naked, powerless to resist humiliating sexual assaults. They threatened to rape my wife and sisters in front of me. After four days of this physical and emotional torture, I was a broken man.

The officers knew I was innocent. They brought up my participation in demonstrations and cursed me as a traitor. They even told me they were waiting for a major case to frame me in.

Eventually, I was charged with planting a bomb that killed a police officer. There was no forensic evidence against me, just a confession my co-defendant Hussein Moosa signed after he was tortured and hung by his wrists from the ceiling for three days. The outcome of my trial was a foregone conclusion. I was not even permitted to instruct a lawyer to defend me until I had already been sentenced to death. My young twins were just two years old when I arrived on death row. I have watched them grow up through the glass window that separates inmates during family visits, unable to even hold their hands to comfort them.

In 2015, Hussein and I exhausted all legal remedies, meaning a stroke of the King's pen would seal our fates. In 2017, we watched three fellow inmates being led out to the firing squad, the first political executions in Bahrain for 20 years. There are eight other political prisoners on death row at risk of imminent execution. I cannot describe how it feels knowing you could

be next. Hussein and I were offered a glimmer of hope when human rights groups Reprieve and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy revealed the extent of British support for Bahraini institutions set up to whitewash torture. The acute embarrassment this caused the U.K. government led to a public outcry, and was sufficient to secure a review of our cases.

Yet this hope was dashed when I arrived at court on 27 November, 2019, expecting to hear the final verdict on our case, to hear that it had been delayed until Christmas Day.

Bahrain has previously tried to avoid international scrutiny by burying bad news on days when Western audiences are distracted. This summer, the Kingdom waited until British MPs were on summer holiday before executing two more political opponents. On 25 December 2017, a Bahraini military court sentenced six men to death. This Christmas, Hussein and I are likely to be next.

If Bahrain thought it might lose the West's unconditional support, it could change my fate. British Embassy representatives attended my case review, but failed to condemn my sham trial or comment on my torture. On paper, the British Government opposes the death penalty in all circumstances. In practice, they have supported Bahraini bodies who helped put me and Hussein on death row.

As a Muslim, I revere Jesus as an inspiration to the oppressed and a symbol of resistance in the face of injustice. Yet, Bahrain's rulers are turning a day of

UK says all those responsible for

Britain has called for all those responsible for the murder of Jamal Khashoggi to face justice (Johnny Green/PA)

Britain has urged Saudi Arabia to ensure "all of those responsible" for the killing of the dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi are brought to account.

Saudi authorities announced on 23rd December that five people had been sentenced to death for the brutal murder last year of Mr Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. However the verdict was swiftly condemned by critics as a "mockery" amid complaints that those who ordered the killing had been left untouched by the investigation.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Mr Khashoggi's family deserved to justice for what had happened.



Dominic Raab has called for those responsible for murder to face justice (Victoria Jones/PA)

"The killing of Jamal Khashoggi was a terrible crime. Mr Khashoggi's family deserve to see justice done for his brutal murder," he said in a statement. "Saudi Arabia must ensure all of those responsible are held to account and that such an atrocity can never happen again."

The murder of Mr Khashoggi – a prominent critic of the Saudi royal family – by a team of Saudi agents when he went to pick up documents which would have allowed him to marry his Turkish fiancée, caused widespread international revulsion.

In all, 11 people were put on trial in Saudi Arabia for the murder – described by the authorities as a "rogue operation" – although their names have not been made public.