

BAHRAIN

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

Coronavirus humbles khalifi regime for its logistical, human failures

The ongoing pandemic is unique in modern history of mankind. Never has almost the whole world been in such a lockdown with almost every aspect of the human life brought to a standstill. One tiny little virus has overcome the human civilization. What is it? Disease? Death? Divine wrath? Man-made disaster? Or what. Whatever it may be, the reality today is far beyond what anyone would have imagined. The scenes of Hiroshima and Nagasaki show what the human evil is capable of doing. Yet it was loud, localized and with a known perpetrator. The present coronavirus pandemic has so far proven to be far beyond what anyone had imagined three months ago when it started in China. But the question is whether this is the first time such event had happened in the human history. It must be viewed as a corrective measure in line with the natural (divine) law. It is not a divine revenge, but a lesson that the natural laws will always take their course. The problem is that lessons are not readily learnt. Only few months ago the Australian fires proved without any reasonable doubt the inability of the human power to confront the force of nature (that is created and managed by God Almighty). These are lessons to everyone; Go with the grains of the natural (divine) laws. Be moderate in your approach to the use of the natural resources; Do not waste; Do not spread corruption, Do not be arrogant. Manage your affairs within those laws. Do not, for one minute, believe you are God. Most people are now caught in a total lockdown. This will continue for some time. In those difficult times, patience, wisdom and above all, worship should be the main features of the human acts. Now the natural (divine law) must be followed. Social distancing is one of the requirements of the natural law as the specialist doctors advocate. Staying within the four walls of home is an essential requirement of this distancing act. Governments will only be able to facilitate and enact what the doctors say. Their political powers and sovereignty have been greatly compromised. In normal times, the voices of the people are often ignored by the tyrants. Not anymore. New political dynamics are in force.

For example, the khalifi regime in Bahrain has been forced to release some prisoners. The dictator has been morally defeated

into accepting what he had rejected all along. Over the past decade countless calls were made that the native Bahraini prisoners of conscience be released. Yet the dictator's arrogance prevented him to heed those calls. Now an unseen virus has humbled him and forced him to drink the poison and release some of whom he had considered "criminals" for opposing his oppression, tyranny and dictatorship. Yet the demands are far greater. He is still resisting the calls to release all political detainees, some of whom are in their seventies, sick and are most at risk of losing their lives if the virus strikes them. Out of almost 1500 prisoners released, only 17 percent were political prisoners. The rest are common law criminals, many of whom are foreigners. But the onus is on the dictator. This is the order of the coronavirus that must be viewed, in one sense, to be of superior power to the tyrants. How many calls from international bodies including the UN Human Rights Council for Bahrain's dictator to stop persecuting native Bahrainis? How many calls were made for the release of human rights activists like Nabeel Rajab? Nevertheless, he chose to ignore those calls, in the belief that his the ultimate authority to determine the liberty or incarceration, the guilt or innocence and the life or death of people. This is the mentality of arrogant dictators, past and present.

On another front, while world governments call on their citizens outside their countries to come back before the airlines completely shut down, the khalifi dictator refuses to bring back Bahrainis stranded abroad. The UK government repeated its calls for almost one million Britons outside the country to return. The khalifi tyrants have refused to heed the calls for them to facilitate the return of more than 1300 pilgrims to return from the holy city of Mashad in Iran. Thousands of native Bahrainis make the visit throughout the year to worship at the mosque next to the shrine of the 8th Shia Muslim Imam, Ali bin Musa Al Rida. The spread of the coronavirus disease in Iran forced the airlines to stop their flights to the country. Now these native Bahrainis have become stranded for almost two months in a country which has been hit hard by the virus. Despite repeated calls for their repatriation, the regime has remained defiant. The Iranian government which has been overwhelmed by the rising number of

corona cases, yet they provided the Bahraini pilgrims with food, shelter and medicine while their government has continued its policy of persecuting the natives. Many promises given proved to be hollow. Only one plane load of 165 people were repatriated with half of them infected with corona. The regime has abandoned its national and human responsibility and could be accused of abetting in serious crimes against humanity. Several of those troubled Bahrainis have succumbed to the disease and lost their lives.

While this is an opportune time for contemplation, self-reflection and forgiveness, some tyrants and dictators refuse to come to terms with the reality. They continue to harbor feelings of hatred, enmity and revenge against their foes. Forgiveness does not have a place in their hearts or minds. Accepting the reality simply does not crop up in their thinking. How can this world, then, be turned into a better place for majority of the human race? So far the noble human feelings have pushed countries like China and Cuba to rush their assistance to people who have been overwhelmed by the disease like Italy, Spain and Iran. But other regimes like the khalifi tribal dictatorship in Bahrain have proven to be incapable of reforming themselves or replacing their prejudice and hate with love and cooperation. Bahraini doctors have been at the forefront of the natural and political challenges. Instead of rewarding them and recognizing their selfless contribution to those who needed help, the khalifi dictator exacted revenge on them. At this time nine years ago native Bahraini medics were rounded up, detained, tortured and given harsh prison sentences. May of them were sacked from their jobs. The reason? Carrying out their duties; attending to those who were shot by regime forces, pulling out the live ammunition especially the dum dum bullets and healing the wounds of those tortured by khalifi thugs and killers. All attempts to reform the regime have failed, but the coronavirus may succeed in ending their dark reign. Many have despaired but those with deep belief in the dominance of the natural (divine) law remain optimistic of a necessary eventual political

NGOs boycott Saudi G20, BBC documentary confirms khalifi abuses

More than 220 civil society organizations from around the world have voiced their concerns over the G20 civil society engagement process hosted by and in Saudi Arabia in 2020. The organizations have pledged not to participate in this year's process, known as the Civil 20 or 'C20', the dedicated stream of meetings for civil society within the G20. The organisations endorsed a statement, originally published in January 2020, that reads in part: "Instead of real reform, the Saudi government has been trying to whitewash its dire human rights record by holding major international events in the country. This includes the G20 and – through a government-authorized NGO – the C20. As leading civil society organisations present in most countries around the world (but not Saudi Arabia), we cannot participate in a process that seeks to give international legitimacy to a state that provides virtually no space for civil society, and where independent civil society voices are not tolerated."

On 18th March Saudi regime's court adjourned the trial session of four women human activists; Loujain al-Hathloul, Mayaa al-Zahrani, Samar Badawi, Naseema al-Sadah and Nouf Abdulaziz until 27th June as the country faces coronavirus crisis. Their hearings had been repeatedly delayed prior to the outbreak. No foreign observers were allowed into the court. Samar Badawi will appear before the court with them for the first time.

Anger is rising among native Bahrainis against the khalifi dictator for refusing to bring back more than 1300 citizens stranded in Iran for five weeks. They are said to be in a desperate situation as the coronavirus epidemic continues to claim more victims worldwide. They found themselves in this situation after the airlines stopped flights to Iran last month. The

governments of Oman and Kuwait are ready to help but the regime has refused to give the green light to transfer the Bahrainis back. At least five of them died of coronavirus and many of them are catching the disease.

Anger is also rising against the regime for refusing to release the political prisoners who are at great risk of the coronavirus disease. Only 250 out of 1500 released two weeks ago were political prisoners who had served most of their unjust prison sentences. On 23rd March Human Rights Watch said: Bahrain's prisons are plagued by hygiene problems. There was a scabies outbreak at the Dry Dock Detention Center in January 2020, infecting more than half the prison's population. In 2016, a government watchdog found that some buildings in the Jaw Prison suffered from "bad hygiene," "insect infestation," and "broken toilets." Yet prisoners, including high-profile ones, were routinely denied adequate medical care. Bahraini authorities should respond to this global pandemic by releasing those wrongfully held behind bars. They should provide appropriate information on hygiene and supplies and ensure all areas accessible to prisoners, prison staff, and visitors are disinfected regularly. They should develop plans for housing people exposed to or infected with the virus in isolation and ensure that appropriate medical care is available.

Sherif Azer, Project Leader at Reprieve said that the cancellation of The Grand Prix in Bahrain "is not bad news. That was sensible." He added: "The bad news is that people continue to be tortured in the name of justice in Bahrain, forced to sign so-called 'confessions' to escape unimaginable pain. Those 'confessions' are then used to sentence people to death. And right now, without the spotlight on Bahrain, torture is likely to remain the status quo. The victims of this

broken system are people like Maher Abbas al-Khabbaz who was beaten, whipped and deprived of food and water after he was arrested in 2013. He was told that he would be subjected to further torture if he refused to 'confess' to the murder of a policeman. The Grand Prix may have been cancelled and the world's focus is, understandably, on coronavirus. However, if anything, that only means we need to fight harder than ever to protect the values and human rights that underpin our society. We cannot lose sight of the people who are at risk of being forgotten during this crisis."

Former political prisoner, Sayed Mahdi Al Mousawi tweeted an alarming fact: "I spent five years at Jaw prison, I saw thousands of policemen. I swear by God that I had not seen a single Bahraini policeman. All are of foreign descent. The media reports talk of the disastrous situation among the Asians in Manama (policemen are among them). They represent a threat to the prisoners." Rejected by natives, the regime now depends on foreigners.

Yesterday, one of the most serious damning documentary programmes was broadcast by the BBC Arabic TV. Titled "Breaking the Silence" the documentary presented testimonies of Bahraini women political prisoners who confirmed that they had been tortured, abused and sexually assaulted by their torturers. It was an explosive programme that could bring governments down for the details it presented on how those jailers, including members of Alkhalifa tribe took pleasure in abusing native Bahraini women. One of them is the brother of a senior ambassador from the ruling family. See link below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMuhSszAUJg>

Bahrain Freedom Movement

Hundreds of Saudis detained, Calls to repatriate stranded Bahrainis

The Saudi regime has carried out another massive crackdown starting with the arrest of four senior figures from the Saudi household itself. Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) ordered the arrest of his uncle Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz (76), his son Nayef, his cousin and former crown prince Mohammad bin Nayef and his brother Nawwaf. At least 300 others including princes and businessmen were detained in what MBS claimed to be a war on corruption. The suspects include eight defence ministry officers, including a major-general, 15 interior ministry officials, including a major-general and a brigadier-general, two judges, and health and education officials. In 2017 he detained several members of the royal family and syphoned their wealth collecting more than \$100 billion. "The fight against corruption is no excuse for flagrant due process violations and preventing people from mounting an adequate defense," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human

Rights Watch. "Given their track record of abuse, the Saudi authorities should make fundamental reforms to the justice system to ensure that the accused will not be railroaded in unfair legal proceedings."

Calls were also made to the Saudi regime to release the political and other prisoners amid the coronavirus crisis. Social media has been inundated by pleas from relatives worried about the spread of the virus in the prisons and the lack of medical care. The sister of activist Mukhtar al-Hashimi (who was sentenced to 30 years in prison in 2011) appealed to King Salman to release him amid the coronavirus pandemic. He suffers various ailments including diabetes, blood pressure and anemia.

As the coronavirus disease takes hold, the fate of more than 1000 native Bahrainis stranded in Iran is causing enormous anxiety to themselves and their families. For more than a month they have been waiting help from the khalifi regime but it has consistently refused to do what other govern-

ments have done to their citizens. The Bahrainis have been on a visit to the holy city of Mashad in Iran to perform religious duties at the shrine of the eight Shia Muslim Imam Ali ibn Musa Al Rida. The spread of coronavirus led to the cancellation of flights to Iran. Five of those native Bahrainis have died and more are risk of succumbing to the disease. After pressures from other GCC countries, especially Oman, they allowed one flight with 165 people. Almost half of them were infected with Covid19 disease. They are quarantined in makeshift camps. Calls have been made to bring back the rest and accommodate them at the hotels at Huwar islands and other islands occupied by the khalifi senior figures. Daily appeals have been made by the stranded Bahrainis to the world to force the khalifi regime to allow them back.

Under intense pressure from the natives, the dictator ordered the release of hundreds of prisoners, mainly those jailed for common crimes. Scores of political prisoners

MBS jails 4 senior Saudi figures, more crimes by Bahrain's dictators

On Friday 7th March the Saudi crown prince, Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) carried out an outrageous act, detaining the most senior figures of the House of Saud. The arrests included his uncle, Ahmad bin Abdul Aziz, his son, Nayef, MBS's cousin and former crown prince Mohammad bin Nayef and his brother, Nawwaf. Several others were detained, questioned and released. The arrests also include senior figures in the armed forces on suspicion that, together with the four senior figures, they were planning a coup against MBS. The fragmentation of the House of Saud is the most serious and could lead to existential threat to the regime.

MBS has also caused economic crisis to his country. Few weeks ago he ordered the flooding of the oil market to punish countries like Russia and Iran. This has brought the oil prices tumbling down to a 12-year low. Oil is now selling at less than \$30 per barrel, compared to more than \$120 at its peak in 2008. The Saudi economy and that of the other GCC states is expected to suffer at a time when internal opposition to those autocratic regimes is threatening to change the political map of the region.

On 8th March, Saudi scholar and thinker, Sheikh Hassan Farhan Al Maliki was brought to one of the regime's kangaroo courts in Riyadh. He was detained for peacefully expressing his religious views. He has been behind bars since September 2018. The trial was adjourned until 5th April. Many other scholars are in jail.

As the corona virus takes hold in the world, there has been an outcry against Bahrain's khalifi dictators for ignoring the plight of more than 2000 native Bahrainis stranded in Iran after visiting holy shrines. The regime first refused outright the idea

of repatriating them. Its powerless national council was ordered to reject calls for their repatriation. As the condemnation and pressure mounted the dictator ordered the Shia Endowment department to bring those pilgrims back to the country. This was viewed with disdain and outrage. Finally, orders were issued to the dictator from his superiors that he ought to arrange the repatriation. Calls were made for him to evacuate four islands that he had misappropriated from public ownership, Umm Al Na'san, Jida (the khalifiya), Umm Al Subban (the mohammediya) and Huwar islands so that they may be used to quarantine those native Bahrainis, some of whom might have been infected while in Iran.

On 9th March the American Herald Tribune published an article titled: "The New Phase of Sectarian-Biological Reprisal in Bahrain". It listed some of the hate messages against patients infected with Coronavirus after their return from Iran. These include, among others, calling for executing the patients infected with Coronavirus and cremating their bodies; revoking their nationalities; arresting them on charges of threatening national security and quarantining them in Shiites' religious centers. Besides, patients with Coronavirus have been dubbed as "garbage, Magi, Iranian spies, Safavids, backward Shiites, grave worshippers, spy and terrorism sheep, biological weapons, people of infidelity, immorality, debauchery and impurity, sectarian traitors, mut'ah marriage, etc."

On 6 March 2020, 44 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) sent a letter to Bahrain's dictator and 45 MEPs sent a letter to the European Union Minister of Foreign Affairs Josep Borrell. Both letters requested urgent protection of the lives of two Bahraini torture survivors: Mohamed Ramadhan and Hussain Moosa. The letters express the

MEP's extreme worry over the unfair trial and process both men endured, as well as the torture they were subjected to at the hands of Bahraini authorities. Although Ramadhan and Moosa's conviction on charges of killing a security officer came in the face of allegations of torture, Bahrain's High Criminal Court of Appeals upheld and reconfirmed their death sentences on 8 January 2020. This decision ignored evidence, and refused to take into consideration the torture used to extract "confessions". In fact, for years, their allegations went un-investigated by Bahrain's oversight bodies (GANGOs).

On 5th March Amnesty International (AI) called for the release of Bahraini political prisoners. Responding to the release last week of Hajer Mansoor, a prisoner of conscience who had served a three-year prison sentence after a grossly unfair trial in Bahrain, Lynn Maalouf, AI's Middle East Research Director, said: Hajer Mansoor's release is long overdue, but she should never have spent a single day in detention in the first place. "Hajer was imprisoned for three years on absurd 'terrorism' charges, solely because of her family relationship with Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, a human rights activist who now lives in the UK. "As such, her sham trial was nothing more than act of reprisal intended to intimidate and ultimately silence a critic of the Bahraini government who had escaped beyond their reach". She added: "All other prisoners of conscience who have been detained solely for peacefully exercising their human rights, or for their association with those who have been critical of the government, must now be released immediately and unconditionally."

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were also released, most of whom with few weeks remaining of their full jail sentences. The khalifi dictator refuses to release the senior figures of the opposition some of whom are in their seventies. There are growing concerns for the health of these people. Human rights bodies insist on emptying the torture chambers without any condition. The main demand that the khalifi hereditary dictatorship must be replaced with modern statehood remains the main demand of the people.

Human rights campaigners have refused to relinquish the pressure on Huddersfield University over its controversial training course for Bahrain's police force. Several former Bahraini detainees have testified that they had been tortured at the headquarters of the Royal Police Academy where Huddersfield University has been delivering a Masters course in Security Science. Vice chancellor, Prof Bob Cryan has been criticised by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) for his refusal to pull out of the country. Prof Cryan comments: "As you will know, we are one of a number of UK organisations

and agencies who are assisting in this work... As we pointed out in our previous response to you, the delivery of this course is in line with the mission advocated by the UK Government's Department of International Trade. Protesters have held several vigils at the University's campus calling for



it to stop training torturers. They accuse the University of abetting in these heinous crimes under false pretexs.

27 February 2020, US Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) submitted a statement for the Congressional Record, addressing Bahrain's crackdown on peaceful protestors. In his statement, Senator Wyden expressed his concerns regarding Bahrain's ruling monarchy's actions against peaceful protests. He recalls when, nine years ago, protestors were being forcefully arrested by the hundreds and killed by the dozens. He pointed to the Bahraini government's failure to hold its leaders accountable and its failure to uphold reforms. The Senator acknowledges Bahrain as an ally to the U.S.; however, he still holds them responsible and accountable for the stress they have caused their people. He reprimands the Obama administration for allowing Bahrain to treat peaceful protestors with such severity. Senator Wyden highlights the hypocrisy of the Trump administration when the topic of human rights is discussed on the floor.

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Senator Ron Wyden Submits Statement for the Record on the Deteriorating Situation in Bahrain

on March 5, 2020

5 March 2020 – 27 February 2020, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) submitted a statement for the Congressional Record, addressing Bahrain's crackdown on peaceful protestors. Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) commends and supports Senator Wyden's statement and the concerns that he raises. In his statement, Senator Wyden expresses his concerns regarding Bahrain's ruling monarchy's actions against peaceful protests. He recalls when protestors were being forcefully arrested by the hundreds and killed by the dozens, what will be 9 years ago this month. He calls on the Bahraini government's failure to hold its leaders accountable and its failure to uphold reforms. Since 2017, Bahrain has intensified and increased its arrests and detention of those who critique the kingdom. In 2019, Bahrain's human rights record escalates as more executions and arrests are carried out.

The senator acknowledges Bahrain as an ally to the U.S.; however, he still holds them responsible and accountable for the stress they have caused their people. He reprimands the Obama administration for allowing Bahrain to treat peaceful protestors with such severity. Senator Wyden highlights the hypocrisy of the Trump administration when the topic of human rights is discussed on the floor. Mike Pompeo speaks on the importance of human rights and the U.S.'s ability to put in place changes in a country to halt the abuse of human rights by non compliant regimes. However, in regards to Bahrain, Secretary Pompeo does not have much to say on its abuse of human rights.

Senator Wyden concludes the statement by urging his colleagues to stand against the persecution of peaceful protestors in Bahrain. He once again calls on Bahrain to halt its repression on freedom of speech and peaceful expression.

Mr. WYDEN – Mr. President, 9 years ago this month, citizens of Bahrain took up banners to defend a greater role in their society and political process.

Bahrain's ruling monarchy cracked down on the peaceful protestors; State police and security forces arrested hundreds and killed more than a dozen, according to press reports at the time. Bahrain's leaders promised accountability and reforms in response to international condemnation,

but they would implement hardly any of them, and they rolled back some of the few they did implement.

Indeed, the situation in Bahrain has only grown worse. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain wrote last year that "since 2017, the government has intensified the repression through the arrest, detention, and conviction of individuals who draw attention to the kingdom's human rights record or criticize the government."

Last month, Human Rights Watch wrote, "Bahrain's human rights record worsened in 2019, as the government carried out executions, convicted critics for peaceful expression, and threatened social media activists."

It gives me no great pleasure to point out the monarchy's increasing repression. I have no personal animosity toward Bahrain, which remains an important U.S. ally.

But the U.S. Government has a duty—an obligation—to be honest with friends and allies and to hold them to a high standard. I regret to say that the Obama administration

did not do nearly enough to hold Bahrain to that high standard, as I repeatedly came to this floor to discuss. The Trump administration has, for its part, been even more callously indifferent to the regime's abuses, despite Secretary of State Mike Pompeo speaking many times about the importance of human rights.

Just last year, Secretary Pompeo said America can effect change "[b]y articulating abuses and pressuring non compliant regimes."

So where is Secretary Pompeo when it comes to articulating Bahrain's abuses and pressuring Bahrain's rulers to do better? The Secretary, like his boss, is missing in action.

I urge my colleagues to take a hard look at Bahrain's human rights record, to talk with victims of the regime and hear their stories of persecution.

As I do every year, I renew my call on Bahrain's rulers to change course and open space for dialogue, for free thought, and for peaceful expression and protest.

How Bahrain shrinks from duty towards its citizens

The outbreak of coronavirus has remarkably changed the rules governing the interactions between the governments and their citizens so that we are witnessing broad different types of excitedly, emotional, philanthropic, or selfish behaviors in social relationships.

Well aware that such a problem may occur in their own countries, some governments have chosen to help the countries affected with the virus. This is while some other governments believed they could build a wall around their borders to prevent the spread of the virus into their countries.

The way different countries acted to return their citizens from affected countries can be used as a good means to judge their responsible or irresponsible reaction to the phenomenon.

Many governments rushed to return their citizens from countries where the virus had spread. This was actually done within the framework of protective measures of the governments to save their citizens and prevent the spread of the virus into their countries. In addition, right of residence is an essential right of each citizen as it has been enshrined in many different international human right documents and treaties. The governments are obliged to facilitate the residence of their nationals in their home country.

As the epidemic first broke out in the Chinese city of Wuhan, the Iranian government stepped in rapidly to return its citizen, the students in particular, from the city because it feared the lives of the citizens and their families might be in danger.

It was not only Iran that rushed to help its citizens. Almost all other governments across the world, including many regional governments did the same.

With the beginning of the epidemic in Iran, different world countries cancelled flights to the country and returned their citizens to their home countries as soon as possible. Kuwait, for instance, returned some 1,000 citizens from Iran. So did the UAE, Qatar and Oman.

But the story was different for Bahraini citizens who were in Iran, mostly as religious tourists, when the epidemic broke out. The Bahraini government took an unconventional way in dealing with the issue, refusing to return its citizens.

Because of the negligence of the Bahraini government, some 1,300 citizens of the country were forced to unwantedly remain in the northeastern Iranian holy city of Mashad. Although the Iranian government has done its best to render residential and healthcare services to the Bahraini citizens, five of whom have lost their lives over the past two weeks.

With blame game and raising baseless allegations against Iran, the Bahraini government is acting so that incites the government's religious discrimination against a class of citizens.

The Omani government mediated to return some 165 Bahraini citizens from Iran but the Manama government stopped the scheme, raising unwise and ridiculous claims against Iran saying 77 of the passengers coming back to Bahrain were infected to coronavirus. They claimed that Iran had launched a biologic attack on Bahrain.

It seems that Bahrain government need to put an end to its baseless claims and return its citizens from Iran as soon as possible since their stay in Iran will create problems both for Iran and for the Bahraini citizens themselves.