

BAHRAIN

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

Ten years after Saudi-Emirati incursion: Time for khalifis to go

History will tell that the people of Bahrain were the first people to be attacked by their own brothers and partners in the Gulf Cooperation Council. The military attack on their Revolution ten years ago was the first time that the umbrella of the Peninsula Shield. It was sudden, brutal and full of hatred and enmity. This military alliance had never been used before the attack on Bahrain or after. When Saddam Hussain attacked Kuwait on 2nd August 1990 not a single shot was fired by this joint force. Instead GCC rulers rushed to America to send its forces to counter the Iraqi might. Five years before the Kuwait saga, the Saudis had signed a deal with UK for £25 billion for more than 100 tornado fighters and other equipment. None of these was used to counter the Iraqi aggression on Kuwait. The involvement of the Americans and their allies in the subsequent war was the beginning of a new era of total American political and military domination of the region. Two decades later, the ideology and capability of this force remained stagnant. In that period tens of billions were spent on military purchases mainly from USA and UK. Yet the ideology of the Peninsula Shield has never been properly and logically formulated.

Furthermore, the GCC leaders themselves have become disillusioned with the idea of a joint military force. The attack on Bahrain in 2001 transformed into a curse for the GCC. Instead of entrenching the idea of collective military strategy, the emergence of Mohammad bin Salman (MBS) and Mohammad bin Zayed (MBZ) has pushed their personal agendas to the forefront of Gulf diplomacy. The silence of the Arab world at the invasion of Bahrain and the crushing of its Revolution may have disappointed the Bahraini people especially the revolutionaries who had to pay the highest of prices but it had fatally wounded the idea of collective military and political strategy for the GCC as an entity. Instead, both crown princes became more self-centred, ambitious and vicious in dealing with opponents. The Arab silence in 2011 at the invasion of Bahrain has led to the emergence of these new leaders who harbour limitless personal political ambitions. This ambition has crystallised in their collective approach to Yemen and the flare up of the military conflict there. For

six years now this war has been raging relentlessly causing incalculable suffering to the people of the poorest Arab country. The warmongers were heartened by the silence of the people who decided their stands on sectarian basis. The anti-Iran propaganda, waged by the counter-revolution forces confused many people, some of whom went along with the fall-outs of those malicious claims. Subsequently the traditional Islamic movements had to pay painful price. However after the first four years of war, the Yemenis composed themselves and waged counter offensives against the aggressors. They succeeded in carrying the war into their territories, hitting Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. It was only then that the balance of terror blew in the face of the Saudis and Emiratis. Now they find themselves cornered from all sides. The only way out for them is to concede defeat. Their "Gulf initiative" that led to the appointment of Mansoor Hadi president of Yemen has been overturned by the Yemenis themselves.

The Saudi and Emirati dictators exploited the Arab and Muslim silence on their crime ten years ago. Everyone is now paying for that silence. The ignorance and prejudice among the elites contributed to the feelings of indifference as the people of Bahrain like Ahmad Farhan were crushed by the invaders. The demolition of around forty mosques and religious constructions was one of the most vicious acts of the Saudi-Emirati invaders. Silence became the order of the day among the Arabs and Muslims Bahrainis were left to face their own fate. Yet, they managed to withstand the initial shock of the aggression. They bowed to the wind but were not broken. Soon afterwards, massive protests erupted in all corners of the country. Initially the khalifi dictators were hoping to divide the opposition into "moderates" and "hardliners". So it allowed some protests by the political societies to take place on weekly basis. But soon, the khalifis could not tolerate these gigantic protests. They were swiftly banned. More vicious policies were adopted leading to the closure of political societies, banning moderate media like Al Wasat newspaper and dissolving religious bodies like the Islamic Awareness Society and the Scholars Council. The Saudi-

Emirati incursion had enabled the khalifi dictators to ride the storm, but only temporarily. The dictator had lost control of the situation and appeared weak, unwanted and doomed before the military invasion.

Where do we go from here? Ten years of steadfastness of the people have proven beyond doubt that the foreign military intervention in the county is not the solution. The people are not going to raise the white flag. With over 2000 political prisoners, hundreds of martyrs and the imposition of unprecedented sectarian policies, the country has become too polarized between two main sides; the natives (Shia and Sunni) on one side and the khalifa tribe on the other. This is an unsustainable situation even if other foreign powers, like the British, maintain their support to and defence of the antiquated khalifi regime. Bahrainis have too much at stake if they were to accept any solution short of real and fundamental political change. Dictatorship in Bahrain has miserably failed. This must be acknowledged by the new administration in Washington and the decision makers in London. Any political settlement that allows the khalifis to remain at the helm cannot last long. The accumulative sour generational grievances cannot be swept under the floor. The policies of the regime over the past decade does not help its supporters to establish integrity and credibility. At almost every level of human rights and good governance the regime's score has remained extremely poor. Magic or miracles are not expected to save the regime from an eventual collapse. For those powers that support it, the stakes are high if the regime suffers a free fall. They must manage the downfall of the khalifi dictators by urging them to quit, sooner rather than later. It had committed grave mistakes that have heralded its eventual downfall. The use of lethal force from the first day of the Revolution, the clinging to power at any cost, the invitation of foreign armies to invade and kill natives and the disdain of decent values of justice, rule of law and right to self-determination are among those lethal mistakes for which only one act could work for the dictator; to abdicate and hand over power to the people.

Bahraini children persecuted; UK needs foreign policy overhaul

Khalifi regime's efforts to dig deep into the early days of the Revolution in order to plan its revenge from citizens, reveal the endless nights its officials endure as they await the final hour of their departure from the political scene. Their dirty digging has led to persecution of Bahraini children. Today their kangaroo court adjourned until 4th March the "trial" of four under-aged native Bahrainis; Hussain Abdul Rasool, 16, Faris Hussain, 17, Mohammad Jaffar, 16 and Sayed Hassan Amin, 16. Khalifi torturers forced them to sign "confessions" of involvement in using Molotov cocktail against foreign mercenaries in February 2014. After seven years the regime is pursuing these children who were under ten years of age at the time. This is how criminal the khalifi dictators have been. After weeks of arrests, 4 children remain in detention in their torture dungeons. Among them is Sayed Hasan Ameen, who suffers from serious medical conditions. Today, a judge refused to grant him temporary release, placing his life at risk. He will remain detained until at least 4 March.

The family of Jalal Abbas Al Usfoor is extremely worried about him after news had come out of the notorious Jau prison (Bloc12) that he had been assaulted physically and psychologically two days ago. Yesterday regime's jailers decided to deny inmates their daily one-hour exercise outdoors. They will now be kept for three days in their cells without breathing fresh air or seeing the sun.

Reprieve has adopted a petition to force the khalifi dictator to spare the lives of two native Bahrainis unfairly tried and

sentenced to death by his henchmen. This month also marks 7 years since Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa were first arrested, tortured and sentenced to death there. Both men were forced to sign 'confessions' to make their torture stop. Mohammed, a father of 3 'confessed' to attending a pro-democracy protest. Both men could be executed any day now. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been a year since Mohammed and Husain have been able to see their families. They have been facing the possibility of being executed alone. Mohammed's mental health is deteriorating as a result. Both men exhausted their last "legal" appeal in July 2020. Ten years on from the Bahrain Arab Spring uprising, at least 51 have been sentenced to death. Now there are 27 individuals are on death row 26 and at risk of imminent execution

On 22nd February UK foreign office minister, Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon acknowledged that the UK government had knowledge that a police station visited by Pritti Patel, was used for torturing native Bahrainis. Lord Scriven had asked the government: What assessment they made of reports that torture and cruel inhuman or degrading treatment has occurred in the Muharraq Security Complex in Bahrain. Lord Ahmed's reply was: We are aware of allegations about the Muharraq Security Complex. We monitor a number of sources of information on matters that relate to human rights in Bahrain and make assessment. The visit has been widely criticized especially by Bahraini victims who had been mercilessly tortured there.

Oxfam has accused the British government

of prolonging the war in Yemen by allowing the export of air-to-air refuelling equipment that it fears could be used to help the Saudi air force conduct indiscriminate bombing in the country. The technology was licensed to Riyadh last summer when arms restrictions were lifted, alongside £1.4bn of other sales, and can be used to help war planes fly longer missions at a time when the conflict is intensifying. Sam Nadel, head of policy and advocacy at Oxfam, said: "As the US has called for an end to the conflict in Yemen, the UK is heading in the opposite direction, ramping up its support for the brutal Saudi-led war by increasing arms sales and refuelling equipment that facilitate airstrikes."

It has emerged that the Saudis executed Haidar Al Lef, 16 months after they had assured the UN that he had received a final sentence of 8 years in jail. He was the sole bread winner of his family.

Britain's royal family has met members of autocratic Middle Eastern monarchies nearly once a fortnight since the crack-down on 'Arab Spring' protests began 10 years ago this month. Their visits have often coincided with human rights abuses in the Gulf, where pro-democracy activists are punished for criticising the Windsor ties to regimes. Prince Charles, heir to the throne, held 95 meetings with Arab monarchies since 2011 – the largest engagement by a UK royal. Bahraini royals had most meetings with House of Windsor – 44 over the last decade, followed by House of Saud on 40.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

25th February 2021

Solidarity with Bahrainis on 10th anniversary of their Revolution

Bahrainis marked the tenth anniversary of their 14th February Revolution with vigour, dedication and strong pledges to pursue the path of peaceful democratic transformation. For the past ten days protests continued in many areas with the regular chant: "People want regime change". Pre-emptive mass arrests could not stop people's dynamism and resilience. Outside the country online activities were held including webinars in Washington, Berlin, London, Rome, Dublin and Paris. On 11th February the Associated Press published a report on the Revolution's anniversary, saying: "A decade after demonstrators massed in Bahrain's capital to call for the downfall of their government in 2011, authorities continue to suppress all signs of dissent. Activists behind those turbulent days say the memory of the protests that threatened the Sunni monarchy's grip on power is all but extinguished. But many live with the consequences. Although many activists and protesters have escaped into exile or been imprisoned, the threat of dissent persists in this tiny kingdom with a majority-Shiite population off the eastern

coast of Saudi Arabia."

Many arrests were made in the past week to pre-empt the people's preparations to mark the anniversary. From Karbabad Town, detentions included: Mohammad Abdul Zahra Al Shajjar, his brother, Ali, Ali Saeed Al Daqqaq, Ali Ahmad Ibrahim and Hussain Hani. The father of Ali Mushaima, the first martyr of the Revolution, was arrested and given three month prison sentence for "illegal gathering" in memory of his slain son. On Monday 15th February a judge renewed the detention of two under-aged children, Ali Yusuf Abdullah, 15 and Redha Abbas, 12 for 7 days. Redha was forced to celebrate his 12th birthday in a prison cell. The khalifi dictator was forced to order their release when international bodies and Western regime supporters were criticized for remaining silent. Five more juveniles remain at torture chambers in Bahrain. Yesterday regime's courts remanded Sayed Mohamood Sayed Mahfood and Mujtaba Munir Ahmad Dahif both 13 years old from al-Markh town for one week.

On 11th February khalifi court issued jail sentences on several lamenters (orators) in

revenge for continuing to serve the native community. Mahdi Sahwan and Abdul Amir al-Biladi were given three months jail sentences and pay a fine of 1000 Bahrain Dinars (\$2500). Hussain Sahwan, Saleh Sahwan and Ahmad al-Halwachi were given six months jail and forced to pay a fine of BD1000 (\$2500).

Rights groups, including IFEX members, recently called on the Biden-Harris administration to ensure democracy and human rights are returned to the center of US foreign policy towards Bahrain, and secure the release of all prisoners of conscience. On 11th February Amnesty International issued a statement saying: Ten years after Bahrain's popular uprising, systemic injustice has intensified and political repression targeting dissidents, human rights defenders, clerics and independent civil society have effectively shut any space for the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression or peaceful activism", adding: "the Bahraini government continues to ignore key recommendations of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, an independent panel commissioned by the

Ten years after: Khalifi dictators must go, US to stop arming Saudis

As the preparations for the 10th anniversary of the 14th February Revolution gets underway in Bahrain, the regime has escalated its repression, carried out pre-emptive raids on homes and arrested scores of innocent native citizens. On 4th February at least 13 people were detained: Alaa Hamid Al Samei', Mahmood Abdul Aziz, Sayed Hussain Amin, Mohammad Hamid, Sayed Mohammed Jassim, Abdulla Karimi, Ali Mahdi, Ahmed Mahdi, Hassan Al Sufi, Ali Hantoush, Hassan Al Barsham, Hassan Al Mushaima and Hassan Ali Ibrahim.

"Save Bahraini children" is the latest call after khalifi torturers detained several children in recent days. Reda Abbas, 13, Ali Yousuf, 15, Hussain Mohammad Ayoub, 13 and Mohammad Rashid, 13 were snatched from their homes by ISIS-style masked men. Regime's prosecutors have remanded them in custody for one week. On Monday The Arab Union for Childhood Protection condemned the continued detention of minors in Bahrain, describing the practice as "criminal". The organization also expressed concerns about Sunday's arrest of 13-year-old Mohammed Rashed and Hussein Mohammed Ayoub.

On 8th February four MPs at the UK Parliament issued an Early Day Motion (EDM) to salute the 10th anniversary of Bahrain. The EDM says: "That this House recognises the tenth anniversary of the Arab Spring and the Bahraini revolution of 2011; remembers the horrific events of the deadly pre-dawn raid of 17 February 2011, also known as Bloody Thursday; recognises the countless forms of repression that have targeted peaceful opponents of the regime, such as human rights defender Mr Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and the leader of the political opposition in Bahrain Mr

Hassan Mushaima, who have been in prison for the last 10 years; calls on the Government to press the Bahraini Government to abide by the principles of good governance, self-determination and human rights; and urges the Government to use whatever leverage it has with the Bahraini authorities to advance the democratic demands called for by the Bahraini people in 2011." The sponsors were: Margaret Ferrier (Independent), Jonathan Edwards (Independent), Kenny MacAskill (Scottish National Party) and Andrew Gwynne (Labour).

Forty cross-party MPs and peers have urged the University of Huddersfield to close a Master's course it runs at the Royal Academy of Policing in Bahrain, after evidence had emerged that political dissidents were being tortured in the same building. The MPs, led by Ian Blackford, the Westminster leader of the Scottish National Party, have written to Huddersfield's vice-chancellor, Bob Cryan, saying the university is at risk of "indirect implication in human rights abuse" by running an MSc in security science solely for officers of the academy. The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy campaign group (BIRD) has collected testimonies from 13 individuals arrested for political activism, who say officers abused them during interrogations in the academy where the Huddersfield course is based. Some of them report being electrocuted and beatings to their genitals. Four have reported sexual abuse.

At least seven imprisoned women had been on hunger strike for one week at the Isa Town women's prison in Bahrain. They are demanding that they be released because of the risk of contracting COVID19 - also asking that their living conditions be improved. Political prisoner Zakia AlBarbouri was moved to the Fort prison hospital because of

a drop in her blood sugar level. Officer Yasmeen Subhi is mistreating prisoners, especially those on hunger strike. The women are demanding accountability for women torturers.

International pressure has forced the Saudis to spare the lives of several political prisoners who had been condemned to be beheaded and crucified. Their state-backed Human Rights Commission (HRC) said on Sunday 7th February that three young Shi'ite Muslims sentenced to death when they were minors have had the penalty reduced to 10 years in prison. Ali Al-Nimr, the nephew of prominent cleric Nimr al-Nimr whose 2016 execution sparked demonstrations in Saudi Arabia, was 17 when he was detained in February 2012 for participating in protests in the country's Eastern Province. Along with Dawood al-Marhoun, 17 and Abdullah al-Zaher, 15 when they were arrested, Nimr was sentenced to death by the Specialized Criminal Court and faced beheading. He has served more than nine years in jail since his arrest. His sentence was commuted on Sunday, while Marhoun's and Zaher's were commuted in November 2020, the HRC said.

The Saudis have been shocked by President Biden's decision to stop arming them as long as the war on Yemen continues. On 4th February he said: "This war has to end," ... "And to underscore our commitment, we're ending all American support for offensive operations in the war in Yemen, including relevant arm sales." Bruce Riedel of Brookings wrote: Today, President Biden announced an end to support for "offensive" operations by the Saudis. We will need to see how this is transferred into concrete policy.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
10th February 2021

King in response to international concern over the suppression of the 2011 protests." "Since 2011, the only structural changes Bahrain has seen have been for the worse, as opposition parties have been outlawed, the only independent news outlet has been shut down, and new laws have further closed the space for political participation. The protest leaders of 2011 continue to languish in grim prison conditions, and human rights including the right to freedom of expression are routinely trampled on," said Lynn Maalouf, Amnesty International's Deputy Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa. "The Bahraini state has crushed the hopes and expectations raised by the mass protests of 10 years ago, reacting with a brutal crackdown over the subsequent decade that has been facilitated by the shameful silence of Bahrain's Western allies, especially the UK and the US."

On 14th February The Independent newspaper published

an article titled: "The Arab Spring failed but the rage against misery and injustice continues today". It said: A decade ago today, as pro-democracy uprisings raged across the Middle East, tens of thousands of protesters in Bahrain began their own rallies. Like many of the region's revolutions, the protests were met with a bloody crackdown, according to those present (it's an allegation the Bahrain government denies) - and 10 years later, many of the key voices of Bahrain's revolt are behind bars, under travel bans or in



exile. However, one difference is that over the last decade the UK has poured millions of pounds of taxpayer money into Bahrain in a bid to improve its human rights record. The UK has repeatedly said this £6.5m of technical assistance is having a positive impact on human rights. But leading rights groups, Bahraini activists and British parliamentarians say this policy has spectacularly failed. In the words of a new report by Bahraini rights group Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy (Bird), a decade on from the uprising, Bahrain has "regressed in almost every area of human rights".

In a letter sent on Monday 15th February to the UK's foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, 11 British MPs have expressed their serious concern regarding "the failure of UK reform efforts to foster genuine change in the country" urges the government to suspend this assistance until the death sentences of torture victims have been quashed. Bahraini activists agree.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17th February 2021

Huddersfield Uni's Bahrain degree 'providing torture hub with legitimacy'

Fri 5 Feb 2021

Forty cross-party MPs and peers have urged the University of Huddersfield to close a master's course it runs at the Royal Academy of Policing in Bahrain, after allegations that political dissidents were being tortured in the same building.

The MPs, led by Ian Blackford, the Westminster leader of the Scottish National Party, have written to Huddersfield's vice-chancellor, Bob Cryan, saying the university is at risk of "indirect implication in human rights abuse" by running an MSc in security science solely for officers of the academy.

Huddersfield will not say how much it is being paid for the course, which was inaugurated by Prince Andrew in April 2018 when he was the university's chancellor. It says the course is in line with UK government policy and will bring about improvements in Bahrain.

However, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy campaign group (Bird) has collected testimonies from 13 individuals arrested for political activism, who say officers abused them during interrogations in the academy where the Huddersfield course is based. Some report being electrocuted and beatings to their genitals. Four have reported sexual abuse.

This week's letter, signed by MPs including Layla Moran, the Lib Dem spokesperson for foreign affairs, and John Cryer, chair of the parliamentary Labour party, says Ali Mohamed Hakeem al-Arab, 24, who was executed in Bahrain in July 2019 despite a human rights outcry, was tortured at the academy.

A Bahraini doctor now working in the NHS was granted asylum in the UK last year on the basis of his testimony about being tortured at the policing academy. Speaking out for the first time the doctor, who is treating Covid patients at a British hospital, says: "The academy is not a place of learning. It is a place of torture and human rights violation. The UK government must put restrictions on a British university training in such a place."

The doctor, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals against his relatives in Bahrain, said he was one of more than 200 suspected activists arrested and taken to Jau prison, across the road from the academy, after political protests in May 2017. He said he was taken with other inmates to the academy on seven occasions to be interrogated and tortured, often through the night.

"I told the Home Office in my application for asylum that an officer said to me 'See that water bottle we gave you to drink? You don't deserve to drink it'. That water bottle was then used to rape me. They kept kicking me on my balls. They have a device which provokes electric shocks. They used that on my anus and my spine and buttocks. All of these things happened in the academy."

He said officers threatened to rape his mother and sisters to try to make him

confess to taking part in protests and to giving medical treatment to protesters.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Bird's director of advocacy, escaped Bahrain after being tortured by police, and has evidence that his brother-in-law and cousin have since been tortured at the academy. He is concerned that Huddersfield's MSc, which includes modules on forensics and terrorism, will allow officers at the academy to conceal evidence of torture. "The course provides this academy, which prisoners call a torture hub, with legitimacy. The partnership with this British university is a way of laundering their image," he says.

They have a device that provokes electric shocks. They used it on my anus, spine and buttocks. This was in the academy Huddersfield University said: "The delivery of this course is in line with the mission advocated by the UK government's Department of International Trade." It quoted Lord Ahmad, minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth, who said last year that the UK was committed to supporting Bahrain-led reform and that "disengaging or criticising from the sidelines is less likely to deliver the positive reform that Bahrain and the international community seek".

However, the Liberal democrat peer Lord Scriven, who signed this week's letter, said the university had failed to provide any evidence of improvements.

"I'm from Huddersfield. It's where all my family live and I feel very proud of it. This stain of blood on the local university which is carrying out a so-called academic course in a regime where human rights are being severely questioned really worries me," he says. Scriven says he wrote to Huddersfield's vice-chancellor about his concerns but says he received only a "standard reply". He felt this way of dealing with it was a "pompous and unethical" response. "I would go so far as to say he doesn't care about what is happening there," he says.

Ahmed al-Qassab, a Bahrainian student of HR management at Huddersfield who was granted asylum in the UK in 2018 on the basis of his testimony about being tortured by police in Bahrain, has also written urging Cryan to abandon the course.

He says: "Anybody familiar with the Bahraini regime knows that they are not interested in educating their police force or improving standards. They are seeking new ways to cover up their violations and clean up their violent reputation. When I was granted asylum in the UK, I finally began to feel safe after years spent living in fear. Finding out my university is training the very people who

tortured me has made me feel unsafe again."

While Huddersfield has few supporters in higher education on this issue, the controversy taps into broader concerns about universities' relationships with authoritarian states. An inquiry by the foreign affairs select committee in 2019 criticised the then Foreign and Commonwealth Office for playing a "nonexistent" role in advising universities on how to stop "autocratic" countries trampling on academic freedom. The MPs found "alarming evidence" of Chinese interference on British campuses, some of which appeared to be coordinated by the Chinese embassy in London.

The committee said officials at Confucius institutes, joint ventures between the host university and a partner university in China, were involved in confiscating papers that mentioned Taiwan at an academic conference. They also cited evidence that China was attempting to control dissidents studying in the UK, including an Uighur Muslim called Ayesha, who was monitored and her family in China harassed.

Prof John Heathershaw, a member of a new Academic Freedom and Internationalisation working group, set up by the all-party parliamentary group on human rights, says universities should not be prevented from partnering with authoritarian states, but they need to be more transparent about the terms on which they are doing so. The group has launched a code of conduct to ensure universities protect themselves, and decisions are not driven only by financial return.

Huddersfield University said its Bahrain course was 'in line with the mission advocated by the UK government's Department of International Trade.' Photograph: Christopher Thomond/the Guardian

Heathershaw, an expert in international relations at the University of Exeter, says: "If you make an agreement with a Chinese institution there might be stipulations of joint approval of appointments with that institution. I have seen that."

He says not all institutions will have the reputational power to play hard ball on partnership terms. "If you're Oxford University making an agreement with a Chinese institution, you have a great deal of autonomy and can insist on your independence. But if you're a modern university like Huddersfield, you won't have the same power to negotiate."

But Simon Marginson, professor of higher education at Oxford University, says fears about Chinese influence over UK universities are exaggerated. He says Chinese universities have "a good deal of autonomy" and can be held accountable for what they do, but should not be blamed for government agencies' behaviour.

"If we follow that logic we should boycott everything to do with China," he says. "That would be like boycotting the University of Texas because the US military is responsible for more than 100,000 civilian deaths in Iraq, or because of Trump's separation of children from their families on the Mexican border."

