

BAHRAIN

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Khalifi dictators target lawyers and children

It is almost impossible to visualise a scenario in which the situation in Bahrain returns to normal under the present dictatorship. It is a regime that has become addicted to crisis and could not survive without creating them. Even when things appear quiet the khalifis begin to wreck the boat in one way or another. If there are no protests or demonstrations, the regime would announce the uncovering of "a plot by an illegal group that seeks to overthrow the government with force". For the past forty years there have been countless allegations along these lines. Starting in December 1981 the khalifis found such claims convenient to their strategy of attracting the help of foreign powers especially the Americans, British, Saudis and Emiratis. The aim is to keep their regime in continuous readiness to attack the natives and harass them.

Last month people were astonished to hear new claims of "serious" plots against the regime. First came the detention of scores of under-aged children who were accused of rioting and arson allegedly committed one year earlier. They were subjected to horrific treatment at the hands of the regime's torturers before some of them were released under an international cry from the human rights world. Then came the bizarre episode of a senior lawyer who was subjected to a barrage of attacks and accusations because he presented in one of his tweets a historic argument that the regime did not agree with. Abdulla Al Shamlawi was summoned, interrogated, abused and threatened. Then he was tried and given suspended sentence. Subsequently the regime decide to stop him practicing his law profession for one year. It was one of the most blatant attack on the freedom of opinion by the khalifi regime.

Of course this is not an isolated incident involving lawyers. For the past four decades only this group has been in direct contact with victims of the khalifi aggression. They defended them in the courts, although their defence has often been futile. In the absence of separation of powers, the judiciary has become a weapon against the people. It has long abandoned its role of upholding the rule of law and administering justice. Judges are hand-picked by the royal court and their function is to announce the political decisions by the

khalifi dictator and present them in legal terms as "judgements"> Opposition groups have often urged people to boycott the "judiciary" as its function has become political. Rarely did this judiciary listen to the complaints of the victims of torture. There is no precedence to show that these "Judges" had listened to the complaints of the torture victims or ordered a serious investigation of their claims. They never formed an inquiry to examine the torture claims by victims. None of the torturers has been scrutinised for their crimes.

In the past two three decades many lawyers were targeted for their role in defending torture victims. Senior lawyers like Ahmed Al Shamlan, Abdulla Hashim, Abdul Shahid Khalaf and Mohammad Al Tajir were repeatedly targeted, harassed and indicted on trumpeted charges. The Law Society has been hijacked by the regime after it imposed stringent repressive rules to ensure loyalists took control of the society. Almost all professional bodies are controlled by the regime which has left no place for civil society activists. Everyone must tow the line of the regime to avoid revenge that, in certain cases, could lead to the liquidation of opponents. A senior elderly banker, Hussain Nejadi, was assassinated in Malaysia after fleeing the country following decades of persecution. He was jailed for seven years (1985-1992) for asking the khalifi interior minister to pay back almost \$4 millions that he had "borrowed" from the bank of which Mr Nejadi was the manager.

Last month an assassination attempt was staged to liquidate an opposition figure who has been languishing behind bars since 2015. Few weeks before the assassination attempt Sheikh Ashoor was the subject of forced disappearance. Human Rights Watch and others issued statements asking the regime to stop harassing the Sheikh after he had exposed the extent of his torture at the hands of the regime's thugs. A "jailed" soldier held Mr Ashoor from his neck until he almost passed out. His loud cries saved him from the attacker, widely believed to have acted on official orders.

Killing innocent civilians has been widely documented. Hundreds of native Bahrainis of all ages lost their lives in the past ten years as the people revolted against the

regime and staged the largest ever Revolution that has continued until now. Sporadic protests and demonstrations have persisted in various parts of the country. The tenth anniversary of the Saudi-Emirati invasion was marked by protests, strikes and passive resistance. Bahrainis in the diaspora have spearheaded the political activism that is becoming great embarrassment of the regime. Last month the European Parliament issued a strong statement condemning the heinous khalifi crimes and calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners. The regime could not disguise its anger when it issued a statement criticising the European Parliament. Yet it has failed to heed the calls to end its repression and start behaving in a civil manner. The resolution sent strong shock waves in the spine of the regime and its supporters, having been released at a crucial moment as the US administration under Joe Biden is weighting up its choices to clean up the mess left by Donald Trump. The Gulf rulers especially the Saudis, Emiratis and khalifis are extremely worried that the US may adopt different policies and stands that may strengthen the resolve of the people to escalated their opposition and seek serious political change.

The Bahraini people have suffered immensely at the hands of the khalifi regime and have no appetite for compromises that help prolong the life of the regime. There needs to be real political change that puts an end to dictatorship, ensure justice for victims of khalifi decades of repression and close the chapter of the hated hereditary dictatorship. To this end the people have become battle-hardened and no amount of repression, torture or killing will stop their march to achieve real political change. The khalifis have repeatedly failed to honour any commitment or promise to introduce reforms and are inherently corrupt, dictators and criminals. The world community has a duty to help Bahrainis achieve self-determination and establish a modern political system based on "one-man-one-vote" principle. Abandoning them to their fate is not a choice; it amounts to complicity in the khalifi complicity. Bahrainis will ensure this does not happen again.

Raab urged to stop persecution of lawyer, Saudi threat to kill Callamard

UK's foreign secretary, Dominic Raab has been urged by human rights activists to take a firm stand on a native Bahraini lawyer who is undergoing unimaginable amount of persecution at the hands of UK's khalifi allies. Abdulla Al Shamlawi, a long-standing human rights lawyer has defended many torture victims and is known for his professionalism and patriotism. This week the regime's courts have banned him from practicing for one year following his "indictment" for tweeting a view that the khalifis did not like. He tweeted an assessment on historical events in the early days of Islam (more than 1400 years ago) in line with the thoughts and beliefs of Shia Muslims. The ruling family has long been engaged in a war against this group of Muslims which constitutes over 70 percent of the population. A human rights activist said that the least Mr Raab could do, as a foreign secretary and former human rights lawyer is to stand up to the challenges of one of UK's best allies and ask them to end persecuting people for their views and expression of opinion and remove the ban on Mr Al Shamlawi.

As the Formula 1 prepares to launch its latest car race in Bahrain, human rights activists have criticized its management team for ignoring the plight of thousands of Bahraini victims of regime's atrocious policies. Ahead of the race this weekend, former prisoners who had been detained for calling to stop what is generally termed "blood formula" and families of victims like journalist Salah Abbas who was killed in 2012 during a protest against F1 race have felt betrayed by the decision of F1 management to go ahead with the race especially in these challenging circum-

stances under Covid-19. "The lack of sensitivity of these people is undermining the human values and their purpose in life" said one of the victims. Tomorrow a Press Conference will be held to call for a stop of the "blood race" at which UK parliamentarians will re-iterate their feelings of disgust. Protests are expected to erupt inside Bahrain against this race that has led to enormous suffering among Bahrainis.

Today the mother of two native Bahrainis slaughtered by khalifi security forces four years ago laid flowers on their graves. On this day in 2017 Mustafa Hamdan, 22, was hit with live bullets fired by regime forces on 26th January 2017 who attacked the house of Sheikh Isa Qassim. In a subsequent attack on 23rd May Mohammad Hamdan, Mustafa's brother, was shot dead by khalifi killers. The distraught mother, nonetheless, maintained her high-headed pride having given more than her share in the struggle for freedom. The killers of these two native Bahraini youths have not been charged with murder or even questioned about their crimes.

Yousuf Al Dairi, a prisoner of conscience has been severely tortured for expressing solidarity with Sheikh Zuhair Ashoor who was targeted for assassination last week in a prison corridor. The young man did nothing except raising slogans with others in support of Mr Ashoor. He did not attack anyone or destroy anything. Prison cameras recorded the peaceful sit-in and the barbaric assault by the torturers.

Last Wednesday, 14 members of British Parliament called on Foreign Minister Dominic Raab to exert pressure on the Bahraini government to release political prisoners ten

years after their arrests, while criticising the British government's continued support for the Bahraini regime. An urgent letter sent by Labour MP Zarah Sultana stated: "In a follow-up to my letter that I sent on 22 February, coinciding with the tenth anniversary of the arrest of leaders and activists of the revolution in Bahrain following their participation in pro-democracy demonstrations, we bring to your attention once again the issue of suppressing democracy and opposition leaders in Bahrain." The letter indicated that ten years have passed since the arrests of Hassan Mushaima, Abdulwahab Hussain, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, Abduljalil Al-Singace, Mohammed Habib Al-Miqdad, Abduljalil Al-Miqdad, Saeed Mirza Al-Nouri and Sheikh Ali Salman, on charges of communicating with foreign countries, incitement to murder and vandalising property. The signatories to the letter, including former opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn, stated that after a decade, Bahrain is still repressing the opposition. Yet, the British government continues to support the Bahraini regime.

In an interview with the Guardian, the outgoing special rapporteur for extrajudicial killings said that a UN colleague alerted her in January 2020 that a senior Saudi official had twice threatened in a meeting with other senior UN officials in Geneva that month to have Callamard "taken care of" if she was not reined in by the UN. Asked how the comment was perceived by her Geneva-based colleagues, Callamard said: "A death threat. That was how it was understood."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
24th March 2021

EP damning resolution on Bahrain, Saudi detainees ill-treated

The international human rights community has welcomed the approval by an overwhelming majority of the European Parliament - 633 votes for, 11 against and 45 abstentions - of a resolution condemning in the strongest terms the human rights situation in Bahrain. The EP's resolution confirmed that ten years after the Bahraini "Arab Spring" uprising had been crushed by local authorities supported by military assistance from Saudi Arabia, the Bahraini authorities continue unabated to criminalise free speech and silence any peaceful dissent, including by targeting children, despite their hollow promises of political reform. This systematic crackdown, ranging from the application of the death penalty to arbitrary arrests and prosecution, torture, intimidation, travel bans and revocation of citizenship, leads to a brutal denial of civil and political rights and freedoms of association, assembly, and expression in the country. The EP made an unequivocal call urging the Bahraini authorities: to stop their repressive and retaliatory practices against human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and political activists, both in-

side and outside the country; to guarantee a safe and free space for civil society organisations, independent media and political societies to operate in Bahrain, including those that had been dissolved; to ensure the immediate and unconditional release of all human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience, detained and sentenced for merely expressing their opinions, and to drop all charges against them; to halt the use of the death penalty and ensure that judicial procedures fully comply with international fair trial standards; and to allow for thorough and credible investigations into allegations of torture and other cruel, degrading treatments against detainees, with a view to holding those responsible accountable.

The tenth anniversary of the military invasion of Bahrain by Saudi and Emirati forces was marked by native Bahrainis inside and outside the country who called for the immediate and conditional withdrawal of the invaders. Several demonstrations were held in the past few days, denouncing the military attack that caused death and mayhem. It led to the quashing of the Revolu-

tion, destruction of the Pearl Roundabout and monument, the imposition of martial law and the forming of military courts. Outside Bahrain several activities were held including protests outside the Saudi and khalifi embassies in London and online seminars to mark the detention of the leaders of Revolution and the demolition of over 40 mosques.

On 10th March Human Rights Watch (HRW) revealed that police in Bahrain had beaten children who were arrested in protest-related cases last month, and threatened them with rape and electric shocks. According to the rights group, four children remain in detention and are being tried as adults, including a 16-year-old with a serious medical condition. HRW has called for action to be taken and for the children to be released. "Bahrain should release all children when there are alternatives to detention and drop abusive charges against them," the report read. 'The UK, US, and other governments should ensure that their security support to Bahrain is not being used to torture and humiliate kids'. In some of the cases cited, children as young

Freedom House: Bahrain is NOT FREE, Saudi detainees on hunger strike

In its latest report, Freedom House has reiterated its view that Bahrain is “NOT FREE”. On political rights the khalifi dictators were given 1 out of 40 and 10 out of 60 on civil liberties. On democracy scale, Bahrain has been given 11 out of 100. Last year the score was 12. In its overall assessment the organization said: Bahrain was once viewed as a promising model for political reform and democratic transition, but it has become one of the Middle East’s more repressive states. Since violently crushing a popular prodemocracy protest movement in 2011, the monarchy has systematically eliminated a broad range of political rights and civil liberties, dismantled the political opposition, and cracked down harshly on persistent dissent concentrated among the Shiite population.

A group of 15 rights groups have urged the administration of US President Joe Biden to address the deterioration of human rights in Bahrain by adopting a rights-based foreign policy towards the Gulf. The group, which includes the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), Amnesty International, Reprieve, and the World Organisation Against Torture, wrote in a letter to US State Secretary Anthony Blinken on 3rd March: “Last December, you noted that in too many countries, people are imprisoned and face torture or death for speaking their minds, reporting the news, or demanding their rights. This statement sadly reflects the situation in Bahrain over the last four years”.

Tomorrow, the Fourth High Criminal Court will announce the khalifi decision in the case of the four children from Karanah town: Hussein Abdulrasoul, 16, Faris Hussein, 17, Muhammad Jaafar, 16 and Sayed Hassan Amin, 16. Yesterday Human Rights Watch said: Bahrain police

beat children arrested in protest-related cases in February 2021 and threatened them with rape and electric shocks... Prosecutors and judges enabled the abuses. Police and prosecutors refused to allow parents or lawyers of the children, ages 11 to 17, to be present during their interrogations, and judges unnecessarily ordered their detention. One of the children spent his 12th birthday in jail.” On its part, Amnesty International urged people to write to the khalifi dictators to call for the release of children. In a session last week, the children described the ill-treatment they had endured since their arrest, but the “judge” refused to investigate their torture.

Regime’s mouthpieces have waged relentless war of abuse, swearing and threats against Al-Jazeera News for broadcasting a documentary on a Bahraini book. Zafarat is a compilation of testimonies of 70 native Bahraini prisoners who had been mercilessly tortured following a revolt inside the notorious Jau prison in 2017. They were protesting their dire conditions, lack of medical care and travesty of justice. The documentary talked to the book author and Bahraini victims of torture. The khalifis were enraged by the documentation of their heinous crimes that could form the basis of future legal cases against the dictator and his torture lieutenants.

Abdul Hadi Mushaima, father of the first martyr of the Revolution, Ali, who was detained and sentenced to three months for calling for the trial of his son’s murderers is suffering acute diabetes for which he is denied proper treatment. His old age did not stop the ill-treatment he has received behind bars.

On 8th March, the International Women’s Day, 161 parliamentarians from the German, UK, Irish and European Parliaments have signed a joint statement in support of

Saudi women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and their struggle for gender equality. They called on the Saudi authorities to immediately and unconditionally release WHRDs currently in detention, end all forms of discrimination against women, and fully dismantle the country’s male guardianship system. The statement was signed by 70 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), 48 German MPs, 22 British parliamentarians, and 21 Irish parliamentarians.

On 6th March detained Saudi human rights activists staged a hunger strike in Riyadh’s Al-Ha’ir Prison. Maha al-Qahtani, wife of Mohammed al-Qahtani, one of the founders of the opposition Hasam movement, said her husband and about 30 other people had started a hunger strike, including human rights defenders Fawzan al-Harbi and Eissa al-Nukhaifi. For these men to resort to a hunger strike must indicate how dire the situation is. The ill treatment of prisoners has led to serious ailments of many. Dhaif Allah Al Sareeh has been paralyzed as a result of torture. Dr Moosa Al Qarni suffers mental issues and is in hospital. Mohammed al-Qahtani, 55, is a Saudi economics professor, political activist, and one of the founding members of the Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA).

Sheikh Mohammad Al Habib from the Eastern Province has been in jail since July 2016 serving a five-year prison sentence. Last November the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention stated that Al Habib was being detained arbitrarily and called on the authorities to immediately release him. On 11 May last year eight UN special procedures mandate holders expressed their concern at the persecution and ongoing detention of Sheikh Mohammad bin Hassan Al Habib for his human rights advocacy and activism.

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10th March 2021

as 13 were arrested, beaten and threatened. Later, they were summoned by a prosecutor without their parents or a lawyer present. Bill Van Esveld, the associate children’s rights director at HRW, said that the instances of abuse against children in Bahrain are the latest example in a long record of harm done to children in the country. “The UK, US and other governments should ensure that their security support to Bahrain is not being used to torture and humiliate kids,” he said.

On 9th March the Students’ Union and employees of the University of Huddersfield in Britain called on the university administration to suspend a training program for a police academy in Bahrain involved in human rights violations. The Union urged the university administration to suspend a partnership program it ran in cooperation with the Royal Academy of Police in Bahrain. This was against the background of documented cases of widespread torture of political prisoners inside the academy building. University employees and the University Colleges Association

(UCU) published a letter demanding that the university end its association with the academic program “immediately” affirming that “It is reprehensible for the University of Huddersfield to assist an organization implicated in torture,” the letter said. Education is not for facilitating torture.

Political prisoners at Bloc 14 of the notorious Jau prison have started a protest against khalifi officials following a serious attempt on the life of a jailed political figure. An attempt to assassinate Sheikh Zuhair Ashoor has left him with serious wounds and led prisoners to protest at the regime-inspired attack by a “jailed” former soldier. Last month the regime was criticized for forcibly disappearing

the Sheikh for more than one year and was humiliated into submitting to the demands to end its brutal treatment of Sheikh Ashoor. This latest attempt on his life is seen as an act of revenge by a regime whose pride and reputation had been tarnished by those episodes.

Few days ago, Saudi scholar, Salman Al Odah was brought to court in chains. It was a brief session which was adjourned until July, almost four years after his arrest in September 2017. Al-Odah faces a possible death sentence and is said to have lost half his eyesight and hearing during his imprisonment. In addition to scores of men activists, there are currently ten women activists languishing in Saudi jails: Israa Hassan Al Ghamgham, Na’eema Abdulla Al Matrood, Fatima Saeed Al-Naseef, Naseema Dawood Al Saadah, Maryam Ali Al Qaisoom, Ishtiaq Mohammad Al Saif, Sakina Al Dakheel, Kifaya Abdul Aal Al Tarooti, Zainab Al Sheikh and Zainab Fawzi Al Aithan.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17th March 2021



The death penalty remains a big issue in EU-Bahrain relations

23 MARCH 2021

This analysis is prepared by the editorial team of *commonsplace.eu*

On 11 March 2021 the European Parliament adopted a toughly worded resolution on the human rights situation in Bahrain focusing in particular on the cases of death row inmates and human rights defenders. The resolution was adopted with an unusually broad consensus, with 633 votes in favour, 11 against with 45 abstentions. The resolution exposes the dilemma in Europe as the EU seeks closer relations with the Gulf states, but where concerns about human rights remain high.

In the debate on Bahrain, MEPs were deeply concerned that ten years after the 'Arab Spring' uprising in 2011, the human rights situation in the country continues to worsen. Arbitrary arrests continue, the death penalty is still being applied, human rights defenders are prosecuted and harassed, and civil and political rights and freedoms of association, assembly, and expression continue to be denied.

The resolution strongly condemns the sentencing to death of Mohammed Ramadan and Husain Ali Moosa, and urges the Bahraini authorities, and in particular His Majesty Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, to halt their execution immediately. Their sentences must also be commuted and there must be a retrial that fully complies with international fair trial standards and excludes evidence obtained under torture, MEPs say.

"The European Parliament further strongly deplors the lifting of the de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty in Bahrain and calls on the authorities to introduce immediately a new moratorium on the use of capital punishment as a step towards its abolition. MEPs also demand that all human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience in the country be immediately and unconditionally released."

The Bahraini government must stop harassing human rights defenders and immediately lift the travel ban on them, MEPs stress. The country's authorities must also guarantee that human rights defenders are able to carry out their legitimate activities under all circumstances. The full text of the resolution is available here.

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0086_EN.html

The resolution was swiftly and strongly condemned by the Bahraini authorities, as well as by members of the Bahraini parliament. Bahrain's relations with the EU are based on friendship and mutual respect, chairman of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee at the Council of Representatives, MP Mohammed Al-Sisi Al-Buainain said. He

rejected any foreign intervention and guardianship on the country's people, especially – he said – when the matter was based on "unfair and suspicious sources."

Al-Buainain further affirmed that the EP had not contacted the elected Representatives Council, adding that Bahrain's human rights system had achieved "remarkable strides" citing the 'Open Prison' policy which aims to ensure that convicts and detainees are treated according to the highest human rights laws. Al-Buainain urged the EP to visit the kingdom and verify the facts about the human rights situation in the kingdom.

The largely symbolic Arab Parliament also rejected the EP resolution, saying it represented a blatant interference in the country's domestic affairs. It further urged the EP to stop making itself the guardian of Human Rights situation in the Arab countries.

The human rights situation in Bahrain has been under scrutiny by the international community for a long time, and the Bahraini leadership has consistently been very sensitive and dismissive of such criticism. However, the emphasis in the European Parliament resolution on the death penalty leaves little space for debate. Bahrain either has or does not have the death penalty, and as far as Europe is concerned, there should be no ifs or buts; the death penalty should not be practised – preferably abolished but at least under a complete moratorium.

Speaking at the end of the European Parliament debate, EU Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen said:



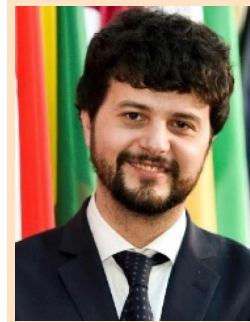
"I am aware of the concerns this House has been expressing for several years in relation to the cases of death row inmates and human rights defenders; and overall on the human rights situation in Bahrain, as also proven by the number of EP resolutions on the matter. Human rights represent a core dimension of EU's engagement with Bahrain, featuring regularly in high-level meet-

ings and annual Human Rights Dialogues with the country."

The Commissioner added:

"The recent visit of the Foreign Minister of Bahrain [10 February] to Brussels offered the opportunity to emphasize the importance of human rights as a key element of EU-Bahrain relations. It also allowed the HRVP to raise several cases of imprisoned activists and human rights defenders, pleading for a solution including on humanitarian grounds. We reiterated publicly the EU's principled position against the death penalty. The EU has consistently been encouraging Bahrain to introduce a moratorium on executions as a first step towards abolition."

MEP Brando Benifei



"As a Member of the European Parliament, I urge the government of Bahrain to immediately and unconditionally release the Bahraini prisoner of conscience, Hassan Mushaima. The European Parli-

ment is always in the forefront so that international relations are based on the respect of human rights in all countries of the world on the basis of international conventions."

MEP Mikuláš Peksa

"Imprisonment of opposition figures for exercising their basic and legitimate right of freedom of expression is one of the most despicable acts committed by oppressive regimes. In Bahrain, it is also combined with ill-treatment and torture of prisoners of conscience. We, as politicians, must



condemn this inhumane policy of silencing human rights advocates in Bahrain across the political spectrum and in the strongest terms. The international community must cease to ignore the atrocities committed by the Bahraini regime, and call for an immediate release of Mr Hassan Mushaima and all other prisoners of conscience, to allow them to advocate for human rights and strengthen civil society. A society can never be truly free and democratic, if we do not consider the freedom of expression and free sharing of information as its foundation".