

BAHRAIN

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

Bahraini political prisoners must be freed, jailers are criminals

The ongoing strife in Bahrain to get the political prisoners released has exposed the intractable political crisis in the country, the inability of the ruling family to synchronise politically, morally or ideologically with the native population and the complicity of certain outside powers in the ongoing crimes that show signs of abating. For several weeks families, friends and activists have lined the main roads in most areas of Bahraini, holding banners and chanting anti-regime slogans. One thing has remained since the Revolution that had erupted on 14th February 2011; the popular demand for an end to the khalifi hereditary dictatorship. When a major crime is committed by the regime these demands become more pronounced. When a political prisoner died in custody last month the public feelings were laid bare in the streets with repeated calls for the regime's downfall. Abbas Malallah died after suffering a heart attack inside his cell. The prison authorities did not provide immediate medical care, but ignored the repeated requests from other prisoners for help. When Abbas died he became yet another martyr on the revolutionary path that had been started by earlier patriots a century ago. Mr Malallah was an oppressed native Bahraini who was detained in 2019 for taking part in anti-regime political activity in a country where dissent is banned.

For ordinary people in other parts of the world the news that thousands of people are punished with jail, torture and execution for their political opinion appears far-fetched. The sad reality is that religious scholars, academics, teachers, athletes, women and children are languishing behind bars for refusing to accept the tribal dictatorship that has, for decades, been protected by shameless powers in the West whose double standards have been known for some time. While criticising Russia for detaining political opponents, like Navalny, they say nothing about the detention of people like Hassan Mushaima, Abdul Wahab Hussain, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja and many others. When UK's minister at the FCDO for MENA region, James Cleverly visited Bahrain last month he publicly supported the regime and hailed its human rights record. Dictators are in desperate need for such endorsement as they are

challenged by human rights bodies. It was hoped that Mr Cleverly would ask the khalifi regime to release the political prisoners immediately and unconditionally. It was also hoped that he would ask his hosts to hand over power to the people and end their despotic tribal rule. The UK's political and moral stands would have been better served by openly challenging the khalifi dictators who jail people for a tweet or a peaceful protest.

Bahrainis have learnt to depend on themselves and not to seek help from others. The regime, on the other hand has survived decades of popular opposition only by adopting repression and use sheer force to subdue opponents. Furthermore, it has been reliant on foreign help in almost every field including security, on foreigners. The UK has always helped the regime in security, military and political matters. Bahrainis have lost hope that the UK would become a force for good in Bahrain. Successive governments have supported the regime in every sense and helped it crush native Bahrainis. In the past Britain helped to rid the khalifis of their opponents in many ways; deploying British troops in the Bahraini streets. People lost their lives at the hand of UK troops in 1956 and 1965. The UK government sent security experts to support the khalifi dictatorship. In recent years, under the pretext of enhancing human rights records of the forced of torture, the UK sent experts who helped whitewash khalifi crimes in their own ways. Ways of hiding torture evidence, sheltering torturers, adopting deceptive policies including forming GANGOs are among the new tactics of the khalifi dictatorship.

The ongoing popular strife in relation to the political prisoners is a sign of anger at the British-inspired "alternative penalties". The political detainees are required to sign undertakings not to oppose the khalifi dictatorship in the future in order to live outside the regime's prisons. This is one of most hated programmes whose aim is to morally destroy the revolutionaries who had paid dearly for opposing the regime and calling for political change. The UK's legacy against political change in Bahrain is causing pain and agony. It is morally indefensible and politically void of legitimacy or any sign of reform. It

seeks to maintain the total grip by the tribal regime over the affairs of the country and throttle any attempt to change the dire political and human rights situation. The people are fully aware of the regime's intentions after decades of failed attempts to reform the corrupt dictatorship. The families are now calling for release of their children from torture dungeons with no conditions attached. The political activism will continue until the rights of the people have been fulfilled. It remains for the outside powers to do their share of responsibility to address political and human rights abuses in Bahrain as a way of showing commitment to the principles of good governance.

The punishments meted on people who took peaceful active roles in the Revolution have always been vicious, cruel and illegal. To imprison a person for expressing an opinion is a crime. To torture to death a protester or a political foe is premeditated murder. To detain underaged children for taking part in a protest is a criminal assault on children. Thousands of native Bahrainis have now spent more than ten years in jail for calling for political change. This amounts to one fifth of the average person's useful life. Who gave these dictators the right to take away the freedom and liberty of people? How, in the 21st century can the modern world allow such atrocities to be committed by a regime? It is heart-breaking to see that both the US and UK actively involved in propping up these heartless dictators who adopt revenge as a means of subduing their opponents. What good to the human cause is expected from torturers, killers, rapists and thieves? The case of Bahrain has exposed the horrific facts of modern day international political order that allows vicious people to remain at the helm of power despite their horrendous crimes against humanity. The Bahraini political prisoners must be freed immediately and unconditionally. That is what human rights bodies have called for, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, IFEX, Frontline Defenders and others. Continuing to hold them behind bars is a continuing crime that is indefensible under any circumstances.

Fear for disappeared Bahraini inmates, Saudi activist to sue UAE

Up to 66 political prisoners are currently subjected to enforced disappearance at Jau Prison in Bahrain. They have been incommunicado since riot police violently suppressed a 'sit in' on 17 April. The protest was held by inmates at Buildings 12,13 and 14 against punitive restrictions introduced following the death of Abbas MalAllah earlier this month amid reports of medical negligence, the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) stated yesterday. An inmate has confirmed that a total of 66 prisoners were transferred to Building 15 after the attack, including 19 from Building 12, 35 from Building 13 and 12 from Building 14, none of whom has been seen or heard from since. During the attack, police released tear gas in the corridors and threw sound grenades into crowded cells. Eyewitnesses saw police beat inmates and throw them repeatedly to the ground face-first, leaving two prisoners, Sayed Alawi Alwadaei and Saeed AbdulEmam, with serious injuries. The injuries of the political prisoners have led to anxiety among their families. Ahmad Mirza was beaten and led away to unknown location. He suffers sickle cell disease. Nothing has been heard from him since. The mother of Sayed Adnan Majed Adnan has not heard from her son since the attack. The mother of Sayed Redha Sayed Ali Mahfood wants to know the fate of her son. So does the mother of Hassan Ali Al Sheikh. Former political prisoner, Mahdi Abu Deeb has expressed grave concern for the well safety of another political prisoner Mohammad Al Shamali. He was severely injured in the events of 10th March 2015. He was also tortured several times a day but remained steadfast and smiling. His

mother has genuine fears for his safety. Another worrying case is that of Khalil Al Saffar who was severely beaten by khalifi torturers on 17th April. He was pleading for the torturer to stop but his cries were not heeded. His family are extremely worried since his forced disappearance. Former prisoner, Ali Muhanna has been fined £4000 after calling for his jailed son's release. Earlier three brothers were also fined £4000 for calling for the release of their jailed brother, Mohammad Al Daqqaq.

Fourteen UK MPs have signed an Early Day Motion (EDM) calling for the application of the Magnitsky Law on the Bahraini torturers. The signatories expressed concern about the detention last month of 13 children and subjecting them to degrading treatment including Hussain Abdul Rasool, Faris Hussain, Mohammad Jaffar and Sayed Hassan Amin. Their offences include protesting against the F1 race. They also expressed indignation at the role played by the oversight bodies. They urged the UK government to stop training these bodies.

Prominent Saudi activist Loujain Al-Hathloul announced that she had filed a complaint against the UAE for espionage, kidnapping and illegal seizure of her car. Al-Hathloul's complaint against the UAE relates to her arbitrary arrest in 2018 and extradition to the Saudi authorities. Al-Hathloul announced the continuation of her struggle after her release, including appealing the judgments against her, objecting to the Supreme Court against her travel ban, and submitting a complaint about UAE violations. According to documents presented by Al-Hathloul, Abu Dhabi Police sold her car for not answering calls while she was in prison. These violations include kidnapping from the UAE and torture in a secret Saudi prison.

Fears are growing that a Saudi young woman has been detained. Manar Al-Yami, a young Saudi woman, is known for the videos she publishes on her social media pages. Manar has many positions, including her attack on the authorities in Saudi Arabia and her rejection of the situation that women live there. Manar published a video attacking what is known as the Sahwa in Saudi Arabia and the former King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz. Not long after, Manar returned with another video, in a different way, to apologize for what she had said and to offer the loyalty of obedience to the ruler. The contradiction between the first and second videos sparked many reactions and fears of pressures that Manar was subjected to, while others warned that she might have been arrested. Deutsche Welle website has said that arms exports to the UAE encourage repression and tyranny in the region. It highlighted in a report that the US and its European allies account for nearly three quarters of all arms transfers to the Middle East and North Africa. Experts say that arms exports to the countries in the region led by the UAE fuel conflict and human rights violations.

On 27th April, Fitch, the ratings agency, said that last year's sharp drop in oil prices will leave most governments in the Gulf with deficits this year. But deficits will remain high, particularly in Kuwait and Bahrain. "We expect only Abu Dhabi and Qatar to eke out fiscal surpluses," Fitch said in a report. "High fiscal breakeven oil prices illustrate the scale of the public finance reform challenge and mostly remain well above current or forecast oil prices."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
28th April 2021

Daily protests challenge khalifi legitimacy, Saudi activists sentenced

The families of Bahraini political prisoners have been protesting daily to demand the immediate and unconditional release of their beloved sons from khalifi jails. Over the past week daily protests took place in Bilad Al Qadim, Duraz, Karranah, Karzakan, Abu Saiba, Ma'amir, Maqsha, Dar Kulaib, Bani Jamra, al-Markh, al-Sehla, al-Dair, Samahij, al-Malikiyah, al-Sanabis, Nuwaidrat, Salmabad, al-Hamala, Sitra, Abu-Quwwa and Demstan. The regime insists on holding native Bahrainis as hostages, many of whom have spent more than ten years in incarceration.

On 17th April scores of political prisoners were subjected to horrific treatment for demanding improvement in medical, sanitation and human care. Inmates at Blocs 12 and 13 of the notorious Jau Prison had been protesting inside jail after one their colleagues, Abbas Malallah was left to die for lack of medical care. At mid-day khalifi special forces stormed the buildings, threw sound grenades and rushed to beat the inmates with their truncheons. They

directed serious blows to the faces of the prisoners. Many received serious injuries to their faces and were seen bleeding heavily. The floor of bloc 13 was covered in blood. Political prisoners Saeed Abdul Emam and Sayed Alawi Al Wada'ei sustained horrific wounds as the attackers encircled each of them beating and kicking them. Sayed Al Wada'ei was lifted and thrown on the floor. The attack was led by two notorious officers: Ahmad Al Hamadi and Mohammad Abdul Hamid. Before the attack started, the cameras in the corridors were covered to stop them documenting the khalifi crime.

The prisoners were further punished by being denied the evening meal to break their fast. Meanwhile inmates at Bloc 20 are refusing to receive their dawn meal in protest against the forced disappearance of their fellow inmates. Following the horrific attack on Saturday, scores were led away from their cells and forcibly disappeared. They are demanding to know their fate after sustaining cruel torture. Meanwhile inmates at Bloc 20 are refusing to receive

their dawn meal in protest against the forced disappearance of their fellow inmates. Following the horrific attack on Saturday, scores were led away from their cells and forcibly disappeared. They are demanding to know their fate after sustaining cruel torture. Concerns are rising for the health of Mohammad Al Da'saki who has, over the past two weeks, been suffering various ailments with high temperature and stomach pain. The lack of treatment eventually caused his heart valve to collapse. He was rushed to hospital where an emergency operation was performed. His health remains critical.

The mother of three political prisoners has not received any call from them for more than two weeks. Muhsin, Raja'ei and Mohammad Ali Baddao, inmates at Bloc 13 have been subjected to horrific treatment and torture and denied contact with their family. Their mother is extremely concerned for their safety.

The three brothers of political prisoner, Mohammad Al Daqqaq were detained for

Calls to free Bahraini political prisoners; more persecutions by Saudi, UAE

For the past two weeks native Bahrainis have been protesting to demand the immediate and unconditional release of about 2000 political prisoners from khalifi jails. Last night protests were held in Duraz, Dar Kulaib, Hamala, Sitra, Sanabis, Karzakkan, Al Dair, Nuwaidrat, and Dar Kulaib. The regime has refused to heed the calls and sought to deceive the outside world with what it calls "alternative sentencing" for those whose jail sentences have been served almost completely. With few weeks or months remaining these political prisoners are forced to sign undertakings to give up their natural rights to express opinion, describe their torture experiences or take legal actions against their torturers.

The UN Human Rights group for the Middle East and North Africa region have reiterated calls to release the political prisoners. They said: "We take note of the decision of the Bahraini authorities to release a number of #PrisonersOfConscience following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in prison, & we urge the State of #Bahrain to release all prisoners of conscience at heightened risk of the COVID-19 pandemic." They also called for neutral investigation into the death in custody of a native political prisoner saying: "We regret the death of Abbas MalAllah in prison, and call for an impartial and independent investigation in his death, and a re-assessment of the health conditions in prisons to prevent such incidents."

The tenth anniversaries of torturing to death of two political prisoners have been marked by their families. On 10th April 2011 Zakaria Al Ashiri died under torture. The following day Karim Fakhrawi lost his life in the same way. Images taken in the morgues show clearly how their bodies had been subjected to most horrific forms

of torture. None of the torturers involved was brought to justice. The khalifi dictator has imposed a culture of impunity as he clearly approved this horrible treatment of native Bahrainis. Today an earlier victim of khalifi brutality has been remembered. On 14th April 1965 Faisal Al Qassab had been mowed down by the British forces who were protecting the khalifis against an uprising that had erupted on 5th March 1965.

On 7th April Juvenile political prisoners at Bloc 17 of the Dry Dock prison staged an open hunger strike. More than 100 detainees have one basic demand; the cleansing of the water storage facilities after many of them had developed skin diseases.

In a Press release on 9th April Amnesty International said: "The Bahraini government and prison authorities have a clear duty to guarantee the right to health of those in detention and protect them from the risk of infection. They must not gamble with the lives of those in their custody. The authorities must ensure all prisoners are provided with face masks and adequate hygiene supplies, that they can keep physical distance and are tested regularly," said Lynn Maalouf, Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa at Amnesty.

On 8th April two MEPs Maria Arena and Hannah Neumann issued a joint statement on the 10th year of the imprisonment of human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja. It said: "Today marks a sombre anniversary for human rights defenders and for all those promoting fundamental freedoms in Bahrain. This day 10 years ago, Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was sentenced to life imprisonment. No country can justify the restriction of freedom of expression and assembly, and the jailing of defenders promoting universal human rights. Last month, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the immediate and uncondi-

tional release of Mr Al-Khawaja, as well as other human rights defenders detained for exercising their fundamental freedoms."

In a hearing held on 5th April 2021, the Specialised Criminal Court (SCC) in Riyadh sentenced internet activist Abdulrahman Al-Sadhan to 20 years in prison, followed by a 20-year travel ban after his release. The SCC is the terrorism court that Saudi Arabia established in 2008 to put on trial members of terrorist groups but has since been used to imprison human rights defenders and activists. The charges are related to his peaceful activities on Twitter which he used to post tweets that were expressing his views on citizens' public affairs. On 12th March 2018, Al-Sadhan was arrested at the offices of the Saudi Red Crescent Society in Riyadh, where he works as an aid worker.

The UAE last month said Princess Latifa, daughter of Dubai's ruler, Mohammad bin Rashid al-Maktoum was being cared for at home by family and medical professionals. The UN's human rights office has repeatedly asked Dubai to provide "proof of life" for Latifa, a demand echoed by the UK foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, and other western governments. On Friday 7th April, the UN spokesperson Marta Hurtado told a briefing in Geneva that the UAE had not responded to its request or clarified the conditions in which Latifa. "We haven't got any proof of life, and we would like one, one that is clear compelling evidence that she is alive. Our first concern of course is to be sure of that, that she is still alive," Hurtado said. She added that the UN also planned to raise the case of Latifa's older sister Shamsa, who was kidnapped in 2000 from the streets of Cambridge. Concerns over the fate of Latifa, 35, have grown after videos claimed her villa home had been "converted into a jail".

Bahrain Freedom Movement,
14th April 2021

two nights at Al Nu'aim and Dry Doc prisons for demanding his release. He has Sickle Cell blood disease which makes him extremely vulnerable to Covid-19. The three brothers, Anwar, Yasser and Younus Al Daqqaq were forced to pay BD3000 (\$8500) before they were released.

Yesterday Saudi human rights defender Mohammed Al Rabiah was sentenced to six years in prison by the Specialised Criminal Court (SSC) for criticizing the regime. In recent weeks, the Saudi authorities have sentenced several human rights defenders and peaceful critics to lengthy prison terms, including Abdulrahman al-Sadhan, Israa al-Ghomgham and Mohammed al-Otaibi. Sheikh Mohammad Moosa Al Sharif has been sentenced to five years. He is a pilot with the Saudi Airways and a member of the international scientific committee of the Holy



Quran.

Families and friends of human right defender and co-founder of Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA) Mohammad Al Qahtani have not heard from him since he tested positive with Covid19 few weeks ago. His wife and family are extremely worried. Saudi officials have been denying their requests to speak to him to check on his health and safety.

bourg. Accepting the award on her behalf in a virtual address, Loujain's sister Lina Alhathloul thanked the award committee: "International support is the only way we can expose the injustices in my country and protect the victims. Thank you for giving us the strength to continue our fight."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21 April 2021

Political prisoners in Bahrain face COVID outbreak, violence

Shenaz Kermalli/APRIL 22, 2021

While a pandemic lockdown is nothing like being in jail, the time we spend in isolation, with relatively quick and easy access to basic personal protective equipment, should help us better appreciate the horrific living conditions thousands of political prisoners are facing right now.

In Jau, the largest and most overcrowded prison in the tiny Persian Gulf island of Bahrain, an average cell measures 3 by 3.4 metres and houses up to 12 prisoners. Many are political opposition leaders and protesters from Bahrain's stifled opposition movement, including activists from the country's Arab Spring-inspired movement in 2011.

Adult and juvenile inmates alike lie in dirty cells and corridors littered with waste. Physical and psychological torture are common. Despite an official capacity of 1,201, Jau prison is estimated to be holding more than double that number of inmates.

"There has never been a distribution of face masks, hand sanitizer, testing, regularized testing since we started making inquiries in September 2020," Devin Kenney, a Gulf researcher with Amnesty International, said at a meeting held by human rights organizations earlier this month. "Social distancing is effectively impossible."

Human rights activists called it a blood-bath and "revenge attacks" for the street demonstrations.

So when authorities announced that three cases of COVID-19 had been discovered last month in Jau — something relatives of political prisoners had long suspected — daily protests filled streets and villages in ways that hadn't been seen since the Arab Spring. Local human rights organizations tracking prisoners' test results (available through the health ministry's website) posted on social media that the number of infections likely exceeded 150.

Led largely by mothers, daughters and sisters of the detainees, the demonstrators called for their loved ones to be released immediately. "Today my brother Ahmad Ali completes six years in prison," a protester and sister of inmate Ahmad Ali Yousif told me last week. "His wife was five months pregnant with twin girls when he was detained ... and my brother loves children so much you would not believe it. It really breaks my heart."

Amid the unrest, tensions within Jau prison also reached a boiling point last weekend. More than 50 riot police entered one of the prison buildings and attacked at least 35 prisoners for protesting poor health and sanitation conditions. Human rights activists called it a blood-bath and "revenge attacks" for the street demonstrations. According to one eyewitness account told to Bahraini Sayed

Ahmed Alwadaei, a Bahraini activist living in exile, inmates had formed human chains in a sit-in that security forces tried to break up.

"They surrounded [one prisoner] and we could see the batons rise and fall on his body until they took him out," the inmate could be heard saying in a recorded phone conversation shared by Alwadaei. "Sayed Alawi Muhammad Jawad from [the town of] Barbar was beaten very violently ... and the corridors were full of blood, the chairs and panels were broken. Younger men [prisoners] were using them to resist the forces."

The eyewitness told Alwadaei that prison guards then made an announcement from the building's loudspeakers. "Your sit-in is illegal." The prisoners answered them. They said, "We demand our rights, give us our rights, and we will go back to the cells."

Several prisoners were reportedly thrown face first onto the ground repeatedly. One detainee was knocked unconscious after suffering a deep head wound, which reportedly bled profusely. Another was seen being carried away by police. No one knows where these individuals are currently located.

Shortly after the attack, Bahrain's Ministry of Interior released a predictably evasive statement denying that any excessive force had been used against detainees, suggesting instead they were aggressors: "Security and legal procedures were taken today against [Jau prisoners], in which they were involved in chaos and violence against police personnel."

The following day, Bahrain's National Institution for Human Rights, a quasi-governmental oversight body, denied claims that prisoners had been beaten and moved to an unknown site.

It is precisely bogus findings (from pseudo rights organizations) like these — along with statements that political prisoners are forced to sign upon release that ban them from ever speaking publicly against the government — that contribute to Bahrain's long-standing culture of impunity. Gulf autocrats are masters at creating false narratives, no doubt due to their well-funded public relations apparatus based largely in Washington and London.



A State Department spokesperson put it plainly: Biden wants to "recalibrate" the relationship, not "rupture" it.

Few recall Bahrain's Arab Spring-inspired movement in 2011 for this reason. Just as in Egypt and Tunisia, tens of thousands of demonstrators gathered in the capital public square to protest their government's tight grip on power, arrest of political critics and discrimination against the country's majority Shia population. Unlike movements in Egypt and Tunisia, however, public dissent was quickly and brutally suppressed. Nearly 2,000 Saudi-led troops rolled into the island. Hundreds of people were killed, and thousands more imprisoned. Others simply went missing.

It's a time Khaled Sahwan — who was arrested and tortured by Bahraini authorities 10 years ago for participating in the 2011 protests — will never fully heal from. Now living in Windsor, Ontario, Sahwan works at a call centre and studies human resources management.

"I remember at the beginning of my arrest they put me in a very small narrow cell in a solitary prison for about three weeks. It was very difficult. I was handcuffed, and between the physical and psychological torture, the insulting and beating us with different ways. ... I still have sores on my body," he told me. Hearing about the recent attacks at Jau left him reeling with anguish, especially because several of his friends are still incarcerated.

What's also deplorable is how Ottawa and Washington continue to prop up Gulf monarchs while knowing all too well how nefarious these regimes are. A warm meeting between the U.S. secretary of homeland security and Bahrain's minister of interior last week reflected just how much U.S. foreign policy is again failing on a human rights front.

"Secretary Mayorkas and Minister Al-Khalifa acknowledged the close cooperation and partnership that exists between Bahrain and the United States, which both countries look forward to strengthening," read a statement released by U.S. Homeland Security. No reference was made to the ongoing protests or COVID-19 outbreak at Jau.

It's clear that in the eyes of Ottawa and Washington, the financial and geopolitical benefits of a U.S.-Gulf alliance outweigh the value of human life. President Joe Biden indicated as much in February when he chose not to sanction Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for his role in the assassination of Saudi journalist and U.S. resident Jamal Khashoggi. A State Department spokesperson put it plainly: Biden wants to "recalibrate" the relationship, not "rupture" it.

Futile words that offer no hope for those facing an entirely different lockdown all together right now.