

BAHRAIN

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

Bahrain's strife continues as people insist on change

The situation in Bahrain is gradually becoming critical as political prisoners start to succumb to Covid-19 pandemic which is spreading fast. The martyrdom last month of Hussain Barakat, a father of four, suddenly raised the alarm of extreme seriousness among a population that is has given hope of reforming a deeply corrupt political system. The human rights situation in Bahrain is now undergoing serious reviews by international agencies which have been alarmed by the lack of progress under a stagnant hereditary dictatorship. Last month's visit to London by the khalifi crown prince and prime minister transformed into an embarrassment to UK's political establishment as the media scrutinised the internal situation in a country that the British establishment has repeatedly described as "an ally". Articles in The Guardian, The Independent and other news outlets questioned the morality of an alliance with a regime that has been widely criticised for its vicious treatment of citizens and its inability to introduce any serious political reforms.

The advent of the pandemic has highlighted a dire political and human situation in the country. The number of infections in Bahrain has increased to new levels and with it the number of deaths. Panic has erupted as the country went into a lockdown and serious accusations of negligence and incompetence were levelled against the ruling khalifi tribe. For the past two months families lined up the streets to call for the release of their beloved ones from the torture chambers. The regime ignored these calls and, instead, it resorted to more detentions. Many were summoned last month and detained for participating in peaceful protests. The khalifi appetite for oppression and revenge has no limits. International human rights activists and experts have repeated their calls for an end to human rights violations but to no avail. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has confirmed that the two death row prisoners, Hussain Moosa and Mohammad Ramadan had been unlawfully detained and must be immediately and unconditionally released. The group was hoping that the UK's prime minister and his foreign minister would put pressure on their khalifi guest (crown prince and prime minister) to abide by international law and stop his government's shameful persecution of native Bahrainis.

Instead, they chose to ignore these calls. As he was entering No 10 Downing Street on Friday 18th June chanting of khalifi torture victims were echoing in the area, hoping UK's top officials would show some humane concerns and offer the world some lessons in morality and human responsibility. This did not happen.

The martyrdom of Hussain Barakat inside khalifi incarceration camps was received by the native Bahrainis with utmost disgust and anger. Since they were not given the chance to see his weakened body, they held their own funeral procession raising slogans against khalifi killers and calling for an end to Hamad's black era. The message was clear. While urging UK government to fulfil its human duty of challenging oppression, hereditary dictatorship and heartless ruling thugs, Bahrainis are aware of the policies of the post-Brexit UK that are devoid of human concerns. Yet, many UK politicians do not share the government's immoral behaviour on foreign policy matters. Many MPs have repeatedly called for sanctioning khalifi officials who are biological torturers. Calls have been raised for the Magnitsky Laws to be implemented on Bahraini torturers. Some enthusiastic politicians and activists have vowed to ensure that the khalifis who had committed heinous torture crimes would be duly punished in accordance with the rule of law.

The khalifis and their backers are increasingly worried about the prospects of internationalising the case of Bahrain. Preparations are being made for the prosecution of those involved in torturing native Bahrainis. Witnesses of khalifi torture policies are urged to document their ordeals with international bodies to ensure that justice is served. Victims are also encouraged to document their experiences in the regime's torture chambers as domestic activists receive the brunt of the regime's revenge policies especially as it is throttled and forced to concede moral and political defeat. The khalifi Gulf supporters are themselves becoming under great suspicions of committing grave crimes, attacking and murdering their native citizens who are calling on the khalifi torturers to hand back power to the people. The post-Covid situation is likely to be much different in terms of political balance in the region. With the Yemenis calling the shots in the war on their countries, Saudi, Emirati and khalifi

dictators still believe in the possibility of a pardon. They are wrong. Killers must be punished in accordance with international laws. Modern statehood cannot be founded on the wrong footing. Antiquated approaches of mass deceptions and distortions cannot replace the modern approaches to human rights. This is a culmination of decades of field research into the nature of the human soul. It must not overtaken by the old tricks of subservience, criminality and arrogance. Time is running short for the victims of torture who fear for their lives even after they leave their incarceration camps.

As the UK marks the 50th anniversary of their departure from all areas East of Suez including the Gulf, British and Bahraini people aspire for a fundamental change in the attitudes towards the world outside Europe. The British policy in Bahrain has not been bright or a source of confidence. If anything it leads to despair, anger and total disappointment. Those regimes left behind in 1971 were allowed to wreak moral and political havoc in the region. The natives have always aspired to achieve freedom, peace and justice. The UK could have left behind a positive legacy and enabled the people to overcome their historic predicaments under absolute hereditary dictatorships. That did not happen. People have deep faith in their own struggle and believe that their sacrifices will not be in vain. As thousands of native Bahrainis remain behind bars in khalifi torture chambers, people are left with only one way forward: to continue their peaceful and principled struggle until oppression and dictatorship are unseated. They believe it is impossible to co-habit with dictators, tribal chiefs, antiquated hereditary rule. This belief becomes more entrenched as successive rulers become more dictatorial and oppressive. As the caravan of martyrs grows their blood irrigates more freedom trees. Eventually, their dreams of victory will come true. Dictators cannot last forever. The blood of martyrs has, in the past and in most countries turned into a gigantic flood that swept tyranny, injustice and dictatorship. Bahrainis have paid hefty price for this. They deserve victory and they will get it. The hope is that the backers of the khalifis will switch positions soon to avoid linking their destiny to that of the khalifis.

UK urged to stop appeasing khalifis, investigate UAE activist death

Pressure is mounting on UK's prime minister to speak out against the horrendous human rights situation in Bahrain after he had received its crown prince and prime minister, Salman al-Khalifa. Press reports said the visit was kept "secret" for "security reasons" citing Downing Street sources. The brief meeting which lasted 40 minutes was followed by another meeting with foreign secretary Dominic Raab. Although economic deals were said to be behind the visit, political and security considerations could not be ruled out. Bahraini victims of torture knew of the visit at the last minute and hurried to Downing Street to show their disgust that UK's PM should shake the blood-stained hands of his guest. Media reports reflected the general feeling of anger caused by the meeting. The Middle East Eye carried the headline: 'Sickening': Rights groups slam Boris Johnson's meeting with Bahrain crown prince. The Mail online published an article titled: Human rights campaigners claim Boris Johnson's joke about 'flogging buses' to the leader of Bahrain is offensive.

Among those who protested against the meeting outside Downing Street was human rights activist, Sayed Ahmad Al Wadaei. Within hours his 17 years old brother-in-law was summoned to Al-Khamis police station in Bahrain. His parents were refused entry to the police station and his lawyer was not permitted to attend the interrogation. Trumped up charges are likely to be levelled against him.

A cross-party group of MPs wrote to foreign secretary Dominic Raab asking him to speak out against Bahrain's use of the Death Penalty at meeting with the khalifi PM. A strong letter was handed to Downing Street signed by four MPs: Hilary Benn, Andy Slaughter, Kim Johnson and Caroline Lucas.

On 22nd June Mary Lawlor, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, called on Bahrain to immediately release three human rights de-

fenders suffering long term detention as a result of their legitimate promotion and protection of human rights in the country. She said she had received reports that Mr. Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja had suffered facial fractures, while Mr. Naji Fateel and Mr. Abduljalil Al-Singace had been placed in solitary confinement and denied basic medical care and their right to practice their religion. It was also reported that Mr. Abduljalil Al-Singace had been forced to make confessions and his religious books were taken away. "The fact that their health continues to deteriorate in prison is very concerning," she said. "I urge the State to conduct an impartial and independent investigation into the allegations of torture in prison." The wife of political detainee, Hussain Aman has expressed grave concerns for the life of her husband who has not been heard from since 10th June. He had been infected by Covid-19 and banned from contacting his family. His wife contacted all relevant bodies but received no re-assuring news.

On behalf of Bahraini Physicians in the Diaspora, Dr Ali Al Faraj who resides in UK and works as a senior Psychiatry Consultant appealed to the khalifi dictators to provide adequate protection and care to stop the spread of Covid-19. He urged them to find alternative vaccines to the Chinese one that has not been effective in preventing the spread of the disease. He also called for urgent mass vaccinations, proper control of the borders against visitors from highly infected countries and re-engage the native Bahraini doctors who had been punished by the khalifis in 2011 for treating the victims of regime's terror. He also addressed the dire situation of the political prisoners and called for their release to avoid further deaths inside the torture chambers.

Another political prisoner, Nidal Abdulla, 21, has been transferred to hospital after his condition deteriorated due to Covid-19 infection. Despite pleas from other inmates for him to be transferred to hospital as he struggled for breath, it took the khalifi pris-

on authorities two hours to transfer him to the hospital. His condition is unknown.

A United Nations human rights watchdog has called on Bahrain to release and compensate two activists facing death sentences, saying they are being arbitrarily detained. "Taking into account all the circumstances of the case, particularly the risk of harm to the physical and psychological well-being of Mr. Ramadhan and Mr. Moosa, the appropriate remedy would be to release both men immediately and accord them an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations, in accordance with international law," the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said in a report published Thursday and dated May 31.

Political activists in the West who oppose some GCC regimes have been terrified by the sudden death of a young woman activist from the United Arab Emirates. They have urged the British police to probe the death in Oxfordshire of an "at risk" UAE dissident and vocal critic of Saudi Arabia to rule out anything "untoward" campaigners say. Alaa al-Siddiq, 33, a prominent human rights activist, is understood to be the victim of a fatal car crash in Oxfordshire on Saturday night 19th June. Ms al-Siddiq was the executive director of a UK-based non-profit organisation advocating for greater freedoms and human rights in Saudi Arabia and the wider Gulf region. They fear the "accident" is not as it seems and that it is likely that it had been engineered with the help of Israelis. They accept that a car accident had happened but they want all mitigating circumstances to be revealed and examined. There have been several incidents involving attacks on activists from these countries, including physical attacks, arson and horrific liquidation as was the case of Jamal Khashoggi. It is hoped that UK police will re-assure Gulf activists.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
23rd June 2021

Covid-19 spread in Bahraini prisons, Saudi boy execution condemned

Grave concerns for the life of senior political leader, Hassan Mushaima are rising. For more than two weeks he has been in isolation without access to appropriate medical treatment. Alarm was raised two days ago when the pain in his feet and leg intensified and spread to the thighs. He is now unable to move. He also feels dizzy most of the time. Despite calls from international bodies for his release, the regime has refused to let him free or provide him with adequate necessary medical care.

Hassan Al Mawali, a photographer has been suffering from Covid-19 while serving his long prison sentence behind bars. His family pleads for his immediate and unconditional release. Another political prisoner, Hussain Aman, is fighting for his life as he struggles for breath after catching Covid-19. He needs a ventilator and proper

treatment after his condition had deteriorated in recent days. The mother of Ali Hassan Ashoor is pleading to spend her last days with her son who was arrested when he was a young boy.

The wife of martyr Hussain Barakat who died in jail last week after catching Covid-19 has spoken of her broken heart after his demise: They have deprived me of the best days. They took everything and left me with nothing except grief and the pain of eternal separation from my husband. She said when she spoke to him few days before his death he had been extremely weak, unable to breathe or communicate. Then he was transferred to hospital where he died on 8th June.

Two days ago seven native Bahrainis were remanded in custody for one week for taking part in a symbolic procession for a mar-

tyr who was left by the khalifis to die in their jails. Among them is Jaffar Ramadan, brother of death row victim, Mohammed Ramadan. Senior cleric, Sayed Majid Al Mash'al was also summoned by the regime's torture apparatus and interrogated about its participation in the symbolic funeral of the martyr.

It has been ten days since the detainee Ahmed Mirza was cut off from contact, and there are ears that he will be attacked again by the security forces. Victims of the 17th April attack at Jua prison are fearful of severe retributions if they revealed what had happened to them.

In a snub to the world, the House of Saud executed a young innocent man for taking part in anti-regime protests several years ago. Mustafa Hashem al-Darwish, 26, was murdered in cold blood without giving his

PRESS RELEASE

End Impunity in Bahrain: EU Human Rights Sanctions Project Launched

14 June 2021: The European Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ECDHR), with UK-based lawyers, Michael Polak of Church Court Chambers and Annahita Moradi of One Pump Court, launched a legal campaign to utilise the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime to end impunity in Bahrain through a panel event.

The event introduced the legal project to implement the EU's version of Magnitsky sanctions against known perpetrators of human rights abuses in Bahrain. Also on the panel were Ali Mushaima, a Bahraini political activist and son of imprisoned political opposition leader, Hassan Mushaima; and Marc Owen Jones, Assistant Professor in Middle East Studies and Digital Humanities at Hamad Bin Kalifa University (Doha) and author of 'Political Repression in Bahrain'.

Annahita Moradi presented a summary of the claims of widespread and systematic human rights abuses perpetrated by the Bahraini Government which, she stated, demand a meaningful response from the international community. Annahita introduced the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime (GHRSSR) as providing a new opportunity to place prominent human rights abusers, both individuals and entities, on a sanction list. She argued that this international mechanism would, if used, provide a tangible consequence for those perpetrating and involved in the commission of abuses, and would tackle the deep-rooted culture of impunity in Bahrain.

Michael Polak then detailed the EU GHRSSR as a positive addition to the human rights litigation landscape, especial-

ly as they allow for the targeting of specific individuals and not the entire state. Michael highlighted how such sanctions which include EU travel bans and the freezing of assets can have an important impact on Bahrain as the political elite have strong links to the EU, and argued that their effectiveness should not be understated as illustrated by a number of examples of the application of similar sanctions around the world. He stated that the necessary evidence for the imposition of the sanctions is available and therefore it should be used as it would send a strong signal that widespread and systematic human rights violations will not be ignored by the international community.

Ali Mushaima provided concrete examples of human rights violations in Bahrain, especially in regards to torture and the plight of prisoners of conscience. Through his testimony, he highlighted that sanctions are one of the only means through which justice can be delivered for those who have suffered from severe human right violations. He also stated that frequency of use and the identity of the targets that the EU focuses on with this new sanctions regime will demonstrate how serious European governments are about defending human rights.

Marc Owen Jones analysed political repression in Bahrain as a long-standing practice. His assessment was that the use of Western diplomacy with Bahrain as a soft means of tackling human rights abuses has proven futile. Marc quantified the abuses perpetrated by the Bahraini Government, highlighting that it has worsened in the past few years. Marc concluded that this legal campaign will go a long way in

raising awareness of, and helping to stop, widespread human rights abuses.

Michael Polak of Church Court Chambers who will be Lead Counsel on this case, says: "We are very excited about the opportunity to address impunity for human rights abuses in Bahrain which have been going on for far too long. The case for sanctions against the individuals responsible for the intense repression, including the use of torture and arbitrary executions, is strong. We will be calling on EU states that consider the evidence that we submit to them and to support the designation of those involved."

Annahita Moradi of One Pump Court Chambers who will be Junior Counsel on this case, says: "The allegations of the abuses committed by the Bahraini Government to crackdown on the people's dissent include enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and detentions, physical and psychological torture, extrajudicial killings, and due process interferences. There has been a marked failure to investigate these claims impartially, effectively and without delay in line with international standards. Bahrain's ruling family and Government thrive on this culture of impunity. The imposition of these sanctions would send a signal to them and the rest of the world: you will face tangible consequences for any involvement in human rights violations."

The legal campaign involves considerable legal costs and to move forward with this case we need your help. Please visit our fundraising page for more information.

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family advance notice, They found out that Mustafa had been executed by reading the news online. Mustafa was arrested in May 2015 and charged with offences related to his participation in protests, many of which occurred when he was 17 years old. He was placed in solitary confinement and tortured so badly that he lost consciousness several times. To make the torture stop, he confessed to the charges against him. At his trial, Mustafa told the court that he had been tortured and recanted his confession. The court was also aware that Mustafa was a child at the time of many of the alleged offences. Yet it issued the death sentence against him. Despite pleas from human rights bodies including Reprieve, the Saudis went ahead with their heinous crime.

On 12th June Zuhair Ali Sharida, a political prisoner, died in Saudi jail after catching Covid-19. He was detained in 2017 for his writings and died at al-Ha'ir prison near Riyadh after contracting COVID-19 amid an outbreak in prison earlier this year. He was held in the same ward where Covid-19 patients are held. Other prison-

ers of conscience including human rights defender Mohammed al-Qahtani also became infected. Following a decline in Zaheer Ali's health he was transferred to hospital, where he stayed for over a month until his death. His family were not given any news about his illness, and had been denied any visits or communication with him since February. They received his body the day after his death. Earlier, in March 2021, Zuhair Ali and more than 30 other prisoners of conscience in al-Ha'ir prison had staged a hunger strike in



protest against harassment.

A lawsuit in the US against Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been launched. Initially it related to a Caribbean oil refinery, but unexpectedly highlighted something else, the disappearance of his main rival. Former prince Mohammed bin Nayef (MBN), who had been unseated as heir to the throne by his cousin Prince Mohammed in 2017, has not been seen in public since his detention in March last year. MBN, long seen as the CIA's most trusted Saudi ally, served as the kingdom's interior minister from 2012 before becoming crown prince three years later. The lawsuit pointed to government efforts to keep a tight lid on his whereabouts, with documents showing the detained royal was represented by a US law firm that works for his rival. The man behind the lawsuit, Saudi businessman Nader Turki Aldossari, is barred from leaving the kingdom along with his family members, according to letters from his lawyer to President Joe Biden and other US officials.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
16th June 2021

No longer silent, Gulf Arab citizens express anger at Israel

June 7, 2021 6:00AM EDT

(Beirut) – A Bahrain government report denying that police and detention-center officers beat, insulted, and threatened to rape four boys, ages 15 to 17, in detention in late 2020 and 2021 lacks any credibility in the face of compelling evidence, and is a blatant effort to white-wash serious human rights violations, Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) said today.

The boys' statements and corroborating information contradict the March 14 report by the ombudsman of Bahrain's Interior Ministry that said none of the boys were abused in custody, the groups said. The UK government, an ally of Bahrain, approvingly cited the misleading ombudsman's report.

"If the Bahraini authorities are given a green light to exonerate themselves for vicious child abuse with a sham investigation, there's nothing to stop them from doing it again tomorrow," said Sayed Ahmed AlWadaei, advocacy director at BIRD. "Foreign governments like the UK that support Bahrain's security and law-enforcement should press for accountability, not continue business as usual with officials who torture children."

On June 7, Human Rights Watch and BIRD wrote to the UK government about the children's mistreatment, urging it to press Bahrain for accountability, the groups said. The UK has supported Bahrain's Interior Ministry with £6.5 million since 2012. The US is the main supplier of weapons used by Interior Ministry forces.

Human Rights Watch and BIRD spoke with the four boys and reviewed the verdict in their case, the prosecution dossier, the ombudsman's report, and other materials. Previously, the two groups documented abuses against 10 other children in the same case, who were threatened with rape and electric shocks from wires attached to a car battery in an outbuilding at a police station. Amnesty International reported that the four boys were being prosecuted as adults.

Police in Hamad Town summoned Jameel J., 14, whose name, as with the others, is being withheld because they are children, in April 2020 for question-

ing about his actions on February 14, the anniversary of Bahrain's Arab Spring uprising. One officer threatened to hit him and another threatened to "put you in the jail cell and let all the officers rape you," he said. He was released and interrogated again on November 30, then age 15, by two police officers at the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID) in Manama.

They slapped him repeatedly, he said, and threatened to beat him severely and to arrest his father. One officer said, "Will you confess or would you like me to treat you like a man?" He confessed to throwing a Molotov cocktail and burning tires and gave the names of other boys. Jameel J. said police put him in a cell with adults, then allowed him to call to his parents briefly and transferred him to a small, windowless solitary cell for two days.

On December 2, police took Jameel J. before the public prosecutor without a lawyer. "Everything [the prosecutor] told me, I just responded yes, yes. I was desperate not to return to the CID because I was afraid they would beat me again," he said. After confessing he was transferred to the Dry Dock Detention Center.

The three other boys in the case, Ahmad A., Hasan H., and Sayed Hasan Ameen, were summoned to the Fourth Criminal Court in Manama on February 11, 2021, where a judge ordered their arrests. From the court, the children were taken for Covid-19 tests in an Interior Ministry facility in Manama's Qalaa neighborhood, and then to the CID. Police fingerprinted and photographed the boys, took DNA samples, handcuffed and blindfolded them, and made them wait in a corridor from around 1:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

The boys said police insulted, slapped, and threatened them. "I'm too embarrassed to tell you the insults they said to me," said Ahmad A., age 17. Hasan H., 16, said, "The first thing, they slapped me, blindfolded and handcuffed me." He remained handcuffed when "they brought us lunch, and even when I went to the bathroom." Police did not question them but told them to sign documents that they did not read. "I wasn't sure what was on the papers," Hasan H. said.

At 1:30 a.m., they said, they were moved into small isolation cells at the CID. At 4:30 a.m., police handcuffed and transferred the boys by bus to the Dry Dock detention facility, slapping and insulting them. At the jail, Ahmad A. said, "We were made to stand facing the wall, and after about 15 minutes I asked to sit down. An officer said, 'You think jail is a playground?' and slapped my head. They cut my hair. I was scared. He threatened to rape my father." Hasan H. said an officer "said they would rape my mother and father."

Officials told the boys to strip off their clothes and, for two of them, to put on a loincloth (wizar). One of the boys told us officers told him to strip completely without giving him a wizar, to humiliate him. Police searched them and ordered them to carry mattresses, which they said were damp and dirty, to the same cell where Jameel J. was detained.

The four boys were detained until March 11. Up to nine other children, ages 15 to 17, were in the cell. They went to the prison yard for an hour a day, where they mixed with adult detainees, the boys said. Officials monitored the cell with a CCTV camera, and an official sometimes summoned the boys and hit them for infractions like writing on the cell wall. A guard regularly entered the cell and kicked or stepped on the boys, they said.

In one incident, a guard entered the cell and demanded that two of the children stand up. When one boy "smiled at him," the guard appeared to interpret it as insolence, and pepper-sprayed them, the boys said. "He said, 'I will crucify you,' and he sprayed pepper spray into the cell at two guys, suffocating everyone" in the cell, Hasan H. said.

After about six days, they said, everyone in their cell fell ill, but guards refused them medical care. Ahmad A. said, "I was sick for three or four days, I needed a clinic, I had a fever, a headache, diarrhea, and pain in my body, but they didn't take me. They didn't even give me Panadol or test me" for Covid-19, he said. An Egyptian boy in the cell was "very sick, with a headache, fever, stomachache, and we kept knocking at the door" for help, but the guard told them to stop, Sayed Hasan Ameen said.

Ameen, 16, has medical complications from sickle cell anemia, but officials refused to allow him his prescribed medications for eight days. Then "an officer told me to take my medication in front of him," but it should be taken at specified times so he refused. "He got mad, so he handcuffed me very tightly for two hours," causing lasting pain. Adult prisoners learned he had medications and "came to the cell to ask for drugs, and offered me money, but I refused," said Ameen. He was able to keep his medications.

On March 11, the court in Manama convicted Jameel J. on the basis of his coerced confession and fingerprints on a Molotov cocktail, and convicted the other three boys solely on the basis of Jameel J.'s confession. Bahraini criminal laws treat children ages 16 and older as adults, but the court released the boys on six-month suspended sentences, applying a new law not yet in force that defines a child as anyone under 18. The releases followed international news coverage of abuses against other children arrested in the same case.

