

BAHRAIN

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Domestic and regional developments impact positively for Bahrainis

The domestic and regional developments in the past few weeks provide some insight into the possible outcomes of the various challenges that face the people of the region especially Bahrainis. The direction of the debate in last month's "Manama Dialogue" meeting confirms the feeling among those who addressed the gathering. Yet the concerns among them are multifaceted. For the US administration, the classical view remains as it has always been in the past four decades. To them Iran is the main challenge to their political and military dominance in the region. The language of the American Defence Secretary when he addressed the meeting reflected a sense of despair on one hand and a hawkish attitude on the other. His main concern was the nuclear issue which has been haunting the Biden administration since its inception. When Donald Trump withdrew the US from the nuclear accord with Iran he created a bigger problem to Washington than to Iran. In the past four years, Tehran has pursued its nuclear programme with vigour as it sought to entice the others to remain committed to the accord. In Manama several politicians and diplomats were meeting behind doors to assess the situation and ponder the next step.

As for the "hosts" the crisis was largely domestic. It was embarrassing to the Bahrain's rulers that citizens continued their daily protests while some of their prisoners were staging devastating hunger strikes. The most prominent of those using hunger as a weapon is Dr Abdul Jalili Al Singace whose demands are not sophisticated. Yet for the rulers, his insistence on getting back his literary book that he had spent four years to write is non-negotiable. Due to their weakness as political players, their lack of popular and constitutional legitimacy and their fear for their future as occupiers of a land that does not belong to them, they have refused to give way to those humble demands of Dr Al Singace. Others on hunger strike include under-aged youths who have protested against their dictators and found themselves locked behind bars. Their experience is contributing to their political indoctrination that is likely to push them on the road that their predecessors had followed decades before them. For the past four months the hunger strike by Dr Al Singace has summed up

the crisis in this small island state and their rulers. The khalifis have been getting every help they had called for, whether from regional players like Saudi Arabia or UAE or from the Israelis who found themselves the favourite in a the ongoing power games. The Manama dialogue has however, failed to provide the hosts with the required psychological assurances they were hoping to achieve.

The interaction of the domestic with the regional has presented an awkward dilemma to the supporters of the khalifi regime. For more than one year they have been courting the Israelis against the wishes of the Bahraini populace. They hoped this new element would deter the people from struggling for their rights. But the people proved them totally wrong. If anything, their pro-Israeli policies have added new urgency to political change in the country. The khalifis have proven themselves enemies of the Bahraini and Palestinian people who have castigated them as traitors.

The other factor that is undermining the counter-revolution forces is their political and military reversals in several countries. Although they are subjugating Lebanon to enormous political and economic pressures, they have failed to bring its people to their knees. When George Qardahi, Lebanon's information minister tweeted against the military intervention in Yemen by Saudis, without naming them, the Saudis rushed to punish the country, hoping that would push it to punish Mr Qardahi. To their dismay, that has not happened. In Yemen, the reversals of the counter revolution forces have turned into an international embarrassment not only to them but to their backers in Washington and London. The past month has witnessed criminal intensification of attacks on civilian targets in Yemen in response to victories made by the Yemenis in the central region of Ma'rib. Furthermore, the Yemenis succeeded in targeting strategic targets inside Saudi Arabia, hitting military basis in Khamis Mshait and Aramco's oil facilities. It was a devastating blow to the Saudis, Emiratis and khalifis. After nearly seven years of relentless and criminal attacks, the aggressors have lost the war and with it their credibility and honour. The logistic and planning support by the Israelis has not helped the aggressors who have

remained subdued and unable to achieve any credible victory.

To compensate for these reversals, the khalifis had hoped that the annual security meeting called "the Manama Dialogue" would turn into a moral and political support to their fledgling regime. The US Secretary of State, instead, pursued the American-Israeli agenda and hit fiercely at Iran. The issue of Gulf Security has thus become a wrangling circus by the big powers as they continue their regional and international agendas, exploiting the regional political dictators. The meeting ended in disarray with a subdued final statement that failed to alleviate the feeling of despair, loss and defeat among those dictators. One clear principle has always been avoided by them; the security of the Gulf can only be secured by its people. Foreign powers can only spill more fuel on the burning local fires. But those people have always been repressed, marginalized and subjugated. But their prolonged silence cannot last forever. The hearts of their youth are throbbing with hope of a better future for themselves and the region. The people of Bahrain share these feelings and are doing their share of the struggle to ensure that the flame of change is never extinguished.

This month the Bahraini people will mark the annual Martyrs Day on 17th December. To them this is a valuable moment in their life to make themselves clear to their foes; Bahrain must be liberated from the oppression and dictatorship of the khalifi clan. As the blood of the martyrs is recalled the zeal to pursue their goals intensifies. There will be civilian activities inside and outside the country. There will also be calls and demands for their killers to be tried in a court of law. It is also hoped that the UN Special Rapporteurs on Extrajudicial killings will be contacted and urged to issue statements to confirm the criminality of killing people under torture, during peaceful street protests and execution after unfair trials. The hope is that these civil actions will contribute to end the nightmares of our people and enable the country to start a new era on the democratic path. The Day of the Martyrs will be another beacon in a dark era.

Crackdown on Bahraini natives, fallouts of Saudi harsh policies intensify

Yesterday, a massive crackdown on native Bahraini youth was carried out by the Khalifa regime. Scores of people have been detained and are undergoing severe forms of torture. From El Ekr town the arrests included Mahmood Abdul Latif, Mohammad Abdul Jabar and Hassan Al Mughani. From Duraz: Ahmad Abdulla Marhoon, Hassan Rahma, Mahdi Muslim, Hassan Muslim and Mohammad Habibi Baddaw. From Nuwaidrat: Mustafa Bahar, Fadel Abbas Abdul Jabbar, Mansoor Abdulla Abdul Jabbar and Abdul Jabbar Isa Abdul Jabbar. From El Ekr: Ahmad Adulla Mahroon, Hussain Rahma, Mahdi Muslim and Hassan Muslim. Four children from Malkiya were summoned for interrogation. Under-aged Bahraini native, Mohammed Kadher was summoned for interrogation accused of taking part in a protest against normalization with Israel and abandoning the Palestinians. It is now four days since another young citizen, Mohammad Abdul Latif has been detained. No news about him have been received. His whereabouts or charges against him are also unknown. His family is greatly concerned as he suffers health problems including chronic asthma. The jailers refused to allow medicines provided by the family to him.

International concerns for the well-being and life of Dr Abduljalil AlSingace, the former head of the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of Bahrain is intensifying. He has now completed 140 days of hunger strike in protest against the Khalifa authorities for confiscating his handwritten manuscript on Bahraini dialects. Statements, protests, tweets and expressions of support have risen sharply as his health rapidly deteriorates. The British Government is singled out for criticism for its unwavering support of a regime that had

been found, by its own commission of investigation ten years ago guilty of administering "systematic torture". In London the activist, Ali Mushaima is starting hunger strike outside the Khalifa embassy calling for Dr Al Singace's release.

On 28th November the Khalifa court will decide the fate of two children who had taken part in a peaceful protest. Reda Hassan, 12 and Ali Yousuf, 15, were charged almost a year ago but their case was kept hanging for all this time. In a modern society these two children would not have been charged with any offence.

The children who started hunger strike last week to protest the conditions of their cells have reached serious stages of malnutrition. Sugar level has dropped to 2 percent. The regime's GANGOs have ignored their plight and decided to defend the Khalifa brutality against these children. As a punishment, Khalifa torturers have denied the strikers the right of family contacts.

The woman who was engaged to marry Jamal Khashoggi has asked singer Justin Bieber to cancel his scheduled December 5 performance in Saudi Arabia's second-largest city Jeddah, urging him to not perform for the slain Saudi journalist's "murderers." Hatice Cengiz wrote an open letter to the singer published last Saturday in the Washington Post in which she urged Bieber to cancel the performance to "send a powerful message to the world that your name and talent will not be used to restore the reputation of a regime that kills its critics."

Reprieve has started raising funds to start a campaign to save the life of a detainee in Saudi jails. In a statement it said: Hussain Abu al Kheir should be at home in Jordan with his eight children. Instead, he's on death row in Saudi Arabia. He could be executed any day

now for what he was forced to 'confess' to under brutal torture. That's why Reprieve investigators, lawyers and campaigners are fighting Hussein's case right now.

The Saudi activist, Areej Al Sadhan is appealing for an end to harassment of her relatives by the Saudi authorities. She tweeted: My brother and Red Cross worker Abdul Rahman alSadhan is barred from any calls or visits. It has been three years and eight months of arbitrary detention, torture and solitary confinement. Saudi courts have ignored the abuses and instead enabling more abuses. She asks: Why the continuing human rights violations against my brother and others in Saudi Arabia including torture enforced disappearance?

On 17th November English PEN tweeted its support of a UAE prisoner of conscience. It said: We condemn the imprisonment of Emirati academic, human rights lawyer and author Dr Mohammed Al-Roken and ask the UAE authorities to release him.

UK parliamentarians have written to Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling on the UK Government to oppose UAE official Ahmed al-Raisi's bid to become Interpol president, as pressure builds against his candidacy ahead of this week's vote. Margaret Ferrier Co-chair of All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights who sent the letter, commented: "We believe that the UK should oppose al-Raisi's candidacy and support a candidate from another country where fundamental rights and freedoms are enshrined and respected". Elections for Interpol's president is being held this week.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
24th November 2021

Hunger strikes challenge Khalifas, US-Saudi arms deal opposed

On 11th November Boris Johnson's government was accused by MPs of prioritising trade agreements over national security in its handling of surveillance abuses on British soil by governments using spyware made by the Israeli company NSO Group. A letter to the British prime minister signed by 10 MPs and peers has called on the government to end its cybersecurity programmes with countries that are known to have used NSO spyware to target dissidents, journalists and lawyers, among others, and to impose sanctions on NSO, "if they are at all serious about our national security". Several UK MPs told Boris Johnson that "the UK government should cut off Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain from a multimillion pound programme in the wake of the Pegasus spyware scandal. "Your government has failed to publicly condemn the actions of either NSO Group or the Saudi, Emirati and Bahraini governments" they said.

Yesterday jailed Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi al-Khawaja started a

hunger strike after being informed that he has been banned from receiving calls from family, his daughter Zaynab said. "My father, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, has started a hunger strike today. The prison administration informed him that he is not allowed to make any calls. Having had no visitation rights for the past two years, these calls were his only communication with us," Zaynab al-Khawaja wrote on Twitter. Under-aged juveniles at Bloc 17 of the notorious Jaw prison also started a hunger strike yesterday to protest their inhumane prison conditions. Their demands for proper sanitation and proper treatment against the spread of rabies have been ignored by the Khalifa officials. They also demand to be allowed a longer time out of their cells. Currently they only get one hour to exercise. The group of children from the town of Samahej have had their detention extended 30 more days. They have already spent 60 days during which they were subjected to most horrific treatment and torture to force them to "confess" to crimes they

had not committed. Their lawyers were not allowed to be present in these torture sessions. Yesterday political prisoner Ali AlHajee was told he was being transferred to Jau Prison despite being in the middle of a dental treatment plan and is currently unable to chew food. Ali was forced to resort to a hunger strike in 2019 to demand necessary dental treatment.

The people of Sanabis have continued their daily protests against the Khalifa dictatorship's treatment of Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace who has spent 132 days on hunger strike. The protesters also called for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. Worldwide support of Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace has intensified. Freedom Forward said: "We are outraged by #Bahrain's treatment of political prisoner Dr. Abduljalil al-Singace. For 127 days, he has been on a hunger strike to protest his harassment by guards & demand that his research is sent to his family. He should be at a university, not behind bars." On Wednesday 10th November forces

Khalifi and Saudi polluters must not be trusted on climate policies

Six peers and members of parliament, including former Green Party leader Natalie Bennett, said in a joint letter sent to the Bahrain's khalifi prime minister that his commitment on climate change was undermined by Bahrain's continued participation in the Saudi-led "reckless bombing campaign" in Yemen. The group said the war had destroyed ecosystems and contaminated the soil and water, leading to unprecedented impoverishment and disease. "The war in Yemen has devastated Yemeni society and its unique and fragile landscape and heritage. Boasting about your green credentials while backing a coalition that bombs agriculture and water resources is textbook greenwashing," Baroness Bennett, a signatory, told *The Independent* newspaper. Bahraini opposition has repeatedly accused the ruling khalifi tribe of destroying the environment in the country with their reckless policies. These include deforestation, sea land reclamation that has destroyed the coral reefs and caused seawater infiltration to the underground freshwater aquifers, offshore and inland oil exploration projects.

Republican US Senator Marco Rubio has called for the immediate and unconditional release of Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace who has begun the fifth month of his hunger strike. Rubio said in a tweet that Al-Singace has been detained since 2011 due to his participation in a peaceful demonstration in support of human rights and democracy in Bahrain. Senator Rubio called for his immediate and unconditional release. He stated that the Bahraini academic, Abdul Jalil Al-Singace, had entered into an open hunger

strike in Jaw prison since last July 18 in protest against his ill-treatment inside the prison and the confiscation of the research that he had spent years writing.

Native political prisoner, Ali Hassan has repeatedly asked the prison officials to provide him with medical care for his ailments but with no success. His condition is rapidly deteriorating.

On 3rd November the United States added the Israeli spyware company NSO Group to its "entity list," a federal blacklist prohibiting the company from receiving American technologies. It has determined that its phone-hacking tools had been used by foreign governments to "maliciously target" government officials, activists, journalists, academics and embassy workers around the world. More than fifty Bahrainis had their phones targeted by the Pegasus spyware provided by the NSO Group, including Moosa Abd Ali, the London-based native Bahraini photo-journalist whose nationality had been revoked by the regime.

Last week the specialized criminal court in Riyadh issued a two-year prison sentence on Saud Al Fansan, the former chancellor of the Sharia Department at Imam Mohammad bin Saud. Saudi human rights group, ALQST said that Abdulrahman al-Dowaish was arrested by the Saudi authorities on 18 October 2021. This followed a phone call to the Public Prosecution in which he asked about his father, Saudi preacher Sulaiman al-Dowaish, who has been forcibly disappeared since 2016.

On 2nd November the *Washington Post* published an Opinion article about a legal case brought by a former Saudi intelligence officer, Saud Aljabri, that said:

MBS (Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman) is facing a series of legal and diplomatic setbacks that could derail his case against Aljabri while leaving him open to the counterclaim. Last week, U.S. District Judge Nathaniel M. Gorton ruled that Aljabri "cannot fairly defend" himself against the fraud charge without disclosing "privileged information" about U.S.-Saudi intelligence activities in which he was involved. The case is so sensitive that the Justice Department moved in August to invoke the "state secrets" privilege to block any disclosure that might reveal intelligence sources and methods. With Aljabri's defense thus foreclosed, Gorton ordered MBS's lawyers to file a memo by Nov. 9 "to show cause why this case should not be dismissed." His ruling could also lead to dismissal of a similar case brought by the Saudis in Ontario, Canada.

Two weeks ago the Netherlands delivered a joint statement on behalf of 37 countries to the UN General Assembly voicing deep regret at the UNHRC's failure to renew the mandate of the Group of Eminent Experts (GoEE), which since 2017 has been investigating violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in Yemen. The statement urged UN member countries to "use all opportunities within the UN-system to assess facts on the ground in an impartial manner, and work towards accountability." The Saudis spent millions to buy off the votes of member states at the Human Rights Council. They voted against extending the mandate of the experts who had been appointed to examine war crimes committed by the aggressors.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
10th November 2021

from the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Israel and the United States Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) began a multilateral maritime security operations exercise in the Red Sea. The joint exercises continued for five days. They were seen as a threat to regional security and stability and had the potential to lead to conflict, polarization and fragmentation in the region.

On 12th November Congresswoman Ilhan Omar introduced a bill to block a \$650m arms sale to Saudi Arabia: "The US should not sell any weapons to Saudi Arabia or other abusive governments, period," she said. Reprieve, the anti-execution campaign body has urged people to express support for a Jordanian labourer in Saudi jails. Hussein Abo al Kheir is a brother and a father of eight. He could be executed any day now because of a 'confession' he was tortured into giving. Right now, his sister and the rest of his family are struggling while he sits on Saudi Arabia's death row. They haven't

seen him since before his arrest and live every day in fear they will see the worst possible news shared on social media. In 2014, Hussein was arrested on drug smuggling charges. One year later, he was sentenced to death because of the 'confession' he was forced to give after being tortured. Hussein's health is deteriorating in prison and our investigators fear that he could die there.

On 14th November a rights group has warned of Saudi Arabia neglecting medical treatment for prominent Shia Muslim cleric

Sheikh Hussein al-Radi and the gradual killing of the dissident scholar in prison. The Gulf Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (GIDHR) tweeted that "the detained Sheikh Hussein Al-Radi is being killed slowly as he is deprived of receiving the necessary treatment despite the many diseases he suffers from." He was arrested in 2016 over his calls to stop the war on Yemen," it added.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
17th November 2021



No 10 accused of failing to act against states accused of NSO spyware abuses

Thu 11 Nov 2021

Boris Johnson's government has been accused by MPs of prioritising trade agreements over national security in its handling of surveillance abuses on British soil by governments using spyware made by the Israeli company NSO Group.

A letter to the British prime minister signed by 10 MPs and peers has called on the government to end its cybersecurity programmes with countries that are known to have used NSO spyware to target dissidents, journalists and lawyers, among others, and to impose sanctions on NSO, "if they are at all serious about our national security".

NSO is regulated by the Israeli defence ministry and sells its powerful Pegasus spyware to governments around the world. While the spyware is meant to be used by the governments to track criminals and terrorists, experts have documented dozens of cases in which NSO clients have abused the surveillance tool to use it against their own perceived enemies.

The letter was sent to Johnson as news broke in Israel that Isaac Benbenisti, who was serving as chief executive officer-designate of the company, had resigned, citing a decision by the Biden administration last week to place NSO on a US blacklist. Benbenisti, an NSO co-president, was named in the top role on 31 October but had yet to start. NSO declined to comment on the resignation.

Dubai ruler hacked ex-wife using NSO Pegasus spyware, high court judge finds
Since 2019 researchers have documented a string of cases in which governments used NSO spyware to hack the phones of individuals in the UK. Targets whose phones were confirmed to have been hacked include Princess Haya bint al-Hussein, ex-wife of Dubai's ruler, Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum; five of Haya's lawyers, including Fiona Shackleton; the late Emirati activist Alaa Al-Siddiq; Bahraini activists living as refugees in the UK; and the Saudi satirist Ghanem Almasarir, a frequent critic of Saudi's royal family. Governments who use the spyware against UK-based targets are believed to include the UAE and Bahrain. It has been reported that NSO no longer allows clients to target UK-based phone numbers.

"The UK government's credibility has been shot to pieces by its handling of the NSO surveillance scandal – a credibility already damaged by their cybersecurity programmes with Gulf states implicated in human rights abuses," said the Liberal Democrat MP Layla Moran. "Prioritising free trade deals with countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE must not

mean handing them a blank cheque to commit abuses on UK soil with impunity."

The Pegasus project, an investigation into NSO by a consortium of journalists led by the French non-profit Forbidden Stories, and which included the Guardian, found dozens of British mobile phone numbers on a leaked list of potential surveillance targets of NSO clients. They included Roula Khalaf, the editor of the Financial Times, and Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, the director of the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy.

It is not known whether Khalaf or Alwadaei's phones were successfully hacked by governments using Pegasus, though forensic analysis of dozens of phones on the leaked list were later found to have been infected by the spyware or contained traces of it following analysis by Amnesty International's security lab.

NSO has denied that the leaked list represents individuals who were targeted by its clients and has said it investigates credible allegations of abuse.

Alwadaei said that as someone whose mobile appeared on the Pegasus project list, it was difficult to describe the "pain of knowing that NSO's malicious spyware may have put my family, loved ones and those who trusted me to defend their human rights at risk".

He was equally shocked that the UK had not sought to censure those governments who have been accused of perpetrating the abuse and contrasted British policy with that of the Biden administration.

"The US has taken action and blacklisted this dangerous organisation; Boris Johnson should follow their example by sanctioning NSO and halting exports of surveillance equipment to abusive Gulf states," he said.

Andy Slaughter, the Labour MP for Hammersmith, said: "The use of NSO Group's Pegasus spyware by Gulf regimes against UK residents and nationals, including members of the House of Lords and refugees living under British protection, poses a threat to our national security and reveals the contempt with which our so-called allies in the Gulf view our laws. As well as immediately sanctioning NSO Group, the government must investigate the harms caused by these hacking operations and ensure consequences, starting with a fundamental reassessment

of their relationship with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE."

In their letter, the MPs said the cyber-attacks represented "egregious breaches of domestic and international human rights law", which prohibit "arbitrary or unlawful interference" with an individual's correspondence.

"We are concerned that your government has failed to publicly condemn the actions of either NSO Group or the Saudi, Emirati, or Bahraini governments or take substantive action to protect UK nationals and residents, including those living under British protection as refugees, from cyber-attacks," the letter stated.

It also called for the suspension of all UK spyware licences and cybersecurity contracts with Gulf nations implicated in cyber-attacks in the UK, namely the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, pending an independent investigation. Signatories include Brendan O'Hara, Paula Barker, Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Richard Burgon, Martyn Day, Paul Scriven, Natalie Bennett and Jenny Jones.

75% of Yemeni children suffer from acute malnutrition: WHO

November 15, 2021

Seventy-five per cent of Yemeni children suffer from acute malnutrition, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said today.

In a Twitter post, the UN body added that 16.2 million – more than half of the country's population of 30 million – are food insecure.

Last month, the UN Security Council expressed "grave concern for the dire humanitarian situation [in Yemen], including prolonged starvation and the growing risk of large-scale famine, which is compounded by the dire economic situation."

Yemen has been engulfed by violence and instability since 2014, when Iran-aligned Houthis captured much of the country, including the capital Sanaa.

A Saudi-led coalition aimed at reinstating the Yemeni government has worsened the situation, causing one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian crises with 233,000 people dead, nearly 80 per cent or about 30 million needing humanitarian assistance and protection, and more than 13 million in danger of starvation, according to UN estimates.

Conflict has escalated in recent months in various parts of the Arab country, including the central city of Marib where Houthi rebels have stepped up attacks to take control of the oil-rich province, which is also one of the most important strongholds of the legitimate government and home to the headquarters of Yemen's Defence Ministry.

