

BAHRAIN

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A new year, full of hope for those struggling to achieve freedom, justice

Over the decades the people of Bahrain have been struggling for freedom and liberty and faced enormous hardship throughout. They have proven stronger than their foes. The over-filled prisons failed to deter them from pursuing their noble goals. The khalifis failed in their pursuit to crush with the following aims: to deter the people from calling for the end of despotism and dictatorship, second; to subjugate the country and its people to their authoritarian rule. Thirdly to convince the world that their rule is stable and secure. Fourthly, to attract some of the opportunists to their side in order to help them crush the popular movements. Accordingly, the only conclusion about the future trend in Bahrain can only be towards fundamental political change. The regime has adopted all kinds of torture techniques, yet the people remained steadfast. They are now used to jail, torture and abuse. The victim has become the master as people defied the dictators and have remained in the streets challenging its authority and that of its masters. Bahrainis have remained faithful to the principles of their great grandfathers who challenged the khalifis and forced them to seek help from outside powers.

There are several indicators to the steadfastness of the people. Among them are:

The past Martyrs Day on 17th December was marked with enthusiasm and vigour despite the repression of the khalifi dictators. Protests and demonstrations were abundant and lasted several days and nights. There were gatherings in mosques and congregation halls with speeches, poems and songs. Outside Bahraini Bahraini exiles organized similar activities including protests outside the Bahrain embassies in several cities. Seminars were held in person and online with foreign guests alongside native exiles. Social media were extensively used to propagate the message of the martyrs who would have at the forefront of activism to mark the anniversary. The Martyrs Day this time has become an icon of resistance against the hereditary rule and tribal occupation. The families of the martyrs felt the warmth of the public support. The regime was left in agony as it saw its authority continuously eroding as the people sought to uproot the tribal mentality that has caused hardship to the natives over the years.

The families have surprised their friends and foes alike as they continued their daily protests along the streets and village lanes raising the pictures of their loved ones whose lives had been cut short by the khalifi dictators. Since they started their daily vigils calling for the immediate and unconditional release of their loved ones they have continued despite the intimidation, detention and retribution against the activists. The scene of men and women lining the streets every night, carrying the pictures of those languishing behind bars is beyond expectation, given the cruelty of the khalifis. People have not forgotten that the regime had asked the Saudis and Emiratis to help in the crushing of the Revolution in mid March 2011. The result have been devastating; Scores were martyred, thousands detained and tortured, mosques demolished, leaders dragged to jails and political societies disbanded. Military courts were formed to try the native Bahrainis in one of the worst exhibition of hate of Bahrainis by a regime that had occupied their land. This time the khalifis failed to force the merchants and business to issue congratulatory messages and good wishes. The hearts of the natives have been broken by the criminal behaviour of the khalifis.

The unrestrained cruel treatment and tactics used against the peaceful protesters have failed to dislodge the people from their pro-active and, sometimes, hawkish positions that demand the removal of the khalifi dictatorship as a condition for a new Bahrain. When the regime imposed what it called the "alternative sentencing" mechanism with the hope that people would be humbled into accepting defeat, the whole episode crushed on the head of the dictator and his son. Very few people went through that channel designed to humiliate native Bahrainis and empower the regime to undertake harsher measures against them. The leaders of the people who have now spent 11 years behind bar have unreservedly rejected the alternative sentencing. Since then the families have advised their children against succumbing to the regime in this manner and advised them instead to remain steadfast, patient, dignified and confident of an eventual unrestrained or conditioned freedoms. The daily protest confirm the failure of the

regime in its pursuit of the alternative sentencing. It was a devastating blow to the dictator and his prime minister son; their luck appears to have run out of steam. The only route open to them is to capitulate to the people and raise the while flag.

These facts point in one direction; The people of Bahrain will pursue their noble struggle to achieve their noble goals. Those in Washington and London who have abandoned their moral duty to support the pro-democracy activists or call for the release of the political prisoners are not helping their interests or people. In the 21st century it has been traumatizing to see governments of the "free world" trailing behind dictator and despots in their quest to get more money and secure large arms deals. While some money will keep flowing to the industrialised nations, the blood of the innocent will continue to be shed. There is a need for new moral codes to end the misery of the world and pity of those leaders who have abandoned their roles as defenders of rights, values and ethics. For the people of Bahrain life goes on unhindered by these dictators and their supporters.

As the new year approached the hopes of the people will be enhanced greatly by the worldwide awareness that is spreading fast. This is not good news for Gulf dictators especially the khalifs who have lost the trust of the Bahraini natives. The tide of change will shortly sweep the Arab countries whose people were crushed during their Arab Spring eleven years ago. The hearts of the people are bleeding as prisons become overcrowded and more lives are lost everyday. As the counter-Revolution forces attempt to impose their will and bring down representative governments in several Arab countries, like Tunisia and Sudan the enthusiasm for change becomes bigger. Money and arms cannot remain the source of power, legitimacy or morality. They are doomed. For the dictatorships it is a race against time. For the people, time is what they need to complete the mission they had started in 2011. The result is almost guaranteed; the end of dictatorship and the dawning of freedom, liberty and dignity.

Anniversaries of Sh Ali Salman detention & Sh Al Nimr beheading

New calls have been made to release Sheikh Ali Salman, the head of Al Wefaq Society, as he completed seven years behind bars. He had been detained on 28th December 2014 for his insistence on political and human rights reforms. He was subsequently accused of links with the State of Qatar with whom he had negotiated in 2011 a possible solution of the Bahrain crisis with the knowledge of the khalifi officials. Instead of a peaceful solution, the regime and its Saudi and Emirati backers opted for the use of force against native Bahrainis. On the eve of 14th March 2011, hours after the last meeting between Sheikh Ali Salman and a Qatari emissary in Manama, the invading troops crossed the Bahrain-Saudi causeway, occupying the country and crushing the protests. In the past few days there have been many protests, pictures on the walls, tweets and articles about Sheikh Ali Salman. Protests were held in Sanabis, Bilad Al Qadeem, Demstan, Abu Saiba and Sitra calling for the release of Sheikh Ali Salman and the other political prisoners. The case of Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace who is in his sixth month on hunger strike, has also been marked by the protesters. International statements, calls and parliamentary debates continue to call for his immediate and unconditional release.

Yesterday five under-aged youth were detained after they had been summoned by the khalifi-run prosecution office. They are: Mohammad Jaffar Al Kuwaiti, 15, his two brothers, Muqtada, 15 and Muntadar, 14, Ahmad Fadel Ahmad Hubail, 15 and Mohammad Abdul Zahra Mansoor, 15. No reason was given for their unlawful arbitrary arrest. Political detainee Ali Aqeel Khadhem, 19, has been suffering excruciating pain for some time. He is also experi-

encing weakening sight in his right eye for four months. Prison authorities have refused him specialist treatment. In September Ali had informed the prison authorities of his eye problem but his pleas were ignored. Ali was convicted as a child in a mass trial with 138 others where he was tried as an adult, in clear violation of his human rights. He is serving 7 years jail sentence for uncorroborated charges. The UN Chief, Michelle Bachelet had condemned Ali's trial due to "serious concerns [...] court proceedings failed to comply with international free trial standards".

The life of political prisoner, Hassan Abdulla Habib is in danger. Last week the prison officials called his family and asked them to visit him at the Salmaniya Hospital. His health had deteriorated following their visit to him in jail last week when he appeared to be in bad shape. He has been calling for proper medical care for some time but has been denied it

Before taking up his job as the new US Ambassador to Bahrain is under pressure to take pro-active stands in support of democracy and human rights. Steven Bondy, who has been confirmed to be ambassador to Bahrain, was accused of using insulting and prejudicial or racist language about Arabs when he was a top official in the U.S. Embassy in the UAE. One said he used it "all the time." Miguel Correa, who was replaced with Bondy as defense attache in the UAE, accused him of making belittling comments about Arabs during his tenure as chargé d'affaires in the UAE from September 2017 to October 2019. "I would hear him say disparaging remarks about Arabs all the time." In a statement, Bondy defended himself. "I vehemently and categorically deny these accusations... I have a deep and abiding respect for the peoples and cultures of

the Middle East and harbor none of the prejudices attributed to me." A notable NGO, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) has urged Mr Bondy to ask the khalifi regime to: Immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, enter into meaningful dialogue with the people to find ways of transforming the country into a democracy and ending impunity.

As the sixth anniversary of the martyrdom of Sheikh Nimr Al Nimr approaches, many groups are preparing to mark the event with protests, statements and seminars. On 2nd January 2016 the Saudi regime committed the heinous crime of beheading the outspoken cleric who had called for political and human rights reforms in his country. Despite pleas from governments, scholars and human rights groups not to carry out the sentence ordered by the senior figures of the House of Saud, the crime was committed in cold blood. The groups planning to mark the anniversary have agreed on the slogan "Champion of the truth" to describe Martyr Al Nimr.

Yesterday the trial of Dr Hassan Farhan Al Maliki was again adjourned until Tuesday 1st February 2022. He has been in jail since September 2017 for expressing his views and methodology with regards to the Islamic history. His views are rejected by the Salafi-Wahhabi school of thought. The prosecution has called for his execution and his trial has been repeatedly adjourned. In August, one of his sons, Farhan died suddenly in suspicious circumstances. No investigation has been carried out to unearth the truth behind his sudden death at young age.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
29th December 2021

Targeting exiled opponents: Khalifi-Saudi extra-territorial war on liberties

In a serious human rights violation Lebanon's interior minister on Wednesday 15th December ordered the deportation of Bahrain's dissolved opposition al-Wefaq group after some of them criticised the khalifi leaders at a news conference in Beirut. Lebanon became enmeshed in a diplomatic problem last month after former information minister George Kordahi criticised Saudi Arabia over the Yemen war. Bahrain's interior minister, Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, called his Lebanese counterpart, Bassam Mawlawi, to tell him that events such as the Wefaq news conference, or Kordahi's comments, "harm Lebanon and its people", a statement from Bahrain's interior ministry said. The episode has angered Arab liberals and human rights and political activists. Al Wefaq has received moral and political support from many quarters in the Arab countries and worldwide.

On Monday the khalifi criminal court continued to hold secret trial of several under-aged children from Samahej town. Their

mothers were banned from entering the court. The children were told to remain silent about the torture they had endured at the notorious CID building. They were threatened with more torture if they spoke. Among those who are on trial are two under-aged children. The defendants include: Hassan Mubarak, Salman Ali Salman, Yousuf Yasser and Jassim Mohammad.

On 13th December, Human Rights Watch said Bahraini authorities should use the customary pardon of prisoners on the country's National Day, December 16, 2021, to free everyone imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, including rights defenders, opposition activists, and journalists, Human Rights Watch said today. The most prominent opposition leaders have been behind bars for more than a decade for their roles in the 2011 pro-democracy protests. These include Hassan Mushaima, the head of the unlicensed opposition group Al-Haq; Abdulwahab Hussain, an opposition leader; Abdulhadi

al-Khawaja, a prominent human rights defender; and Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, the spokesman for Al-Haq. All four are serving life terms following manifestly unfair trials. "Bahraini political activists and rights defenders who should not have spent a single day in detention have languished in prison for over a decade," said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. "The Bahraini authorities should unconditionally release all those sentenced for their political beliefs on abusive charges or after unfair trials." But the regime has released only few political prisoners who had already served most of their sentences.

The native Bahrainis snubbed the regime's celebration to mark the grabbing of power in 1961 by the former ruler, Isa al-khalifa. The large crowds who were strolling along the Abu Subh beach near Duraz town left the area when the regime's forces began their shows last week. On the other hand, the people flocked to mark the Martyrs Day on Friday 17th December with pro-

Bahrain under pressure to release prisoners, Saudis oppress detainees

The khalifi regime has been under intense pressure to release native political prisoners as it marks its national day on 16th December. Amnesty International and others has repeated calls to end this saga and set more than 1500 prisoners of conscience free. The issue of the political prisoners has become a test of will between the people and the regime. Daily protests in several towns and villages calling for the immediate and unconditional release of their children has continued for three months. As they mark the Martyrs Day on 17th December, the khalifis and their backers are losing the moral and political grounds and are expected to raise the white flag, admit their defeat and leave the political scene. Fundamental political change is the ultimate goal of natives.

Worrying reports have been circulating in recent days that Dr Abduljalil AlSingace has been refusing his IV for over two weeks and has stopped taking supplementary diet. This is in protest against the decision by the khalifis to arbitrarily suspend his weekly video calls to his family, as a punishment for his hunger strike. As a result, Dr Abduljalil AlSingace has lost more weight, appearing more fragile and pale than he had been before. His sugar levels remain dangerously low, and his physique much weaker.

The case of Dr Al Singace and other political prisoners has become central to the protest outside the Bahrain Embassy in London by Ali Mushaima who had launched his hunger strike on 15th November. Several MPs, journalists, human rights and political activists have been visiting him daily and issuing statements of support to the cause of the Bahraini people. On 13th December Charlie Flanagan, Chair of Parliamentary Committee on

Foreign Affairs Defence at the Irish Parliament tweeted his support to Ali Mushaima. He said: "Today I stand in solidarity with @AMushaima protesting outside Embassy of Bahrain in London seeking the release of Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace & his father Hassan Mushaima. Please visit him if nearby & show your support for his relentless efforts." Yesterday, Bredon O'Hara, MP (SNP) put a question to the FCDO on the issue: "On what recent dates the Government has raised the case of Dr Abduljalil AlSingace with authorities in Bahrain regarding (a) Dr AlSingace's ongoing hunger strike and his demands for his confiscated research to be given to his family and (b) his immediate and unconditional release from prison?" Forty MPs have signed a Parliamentary an Early Day Motion (EDM) calling for the release of the opposition leader Hassan Mushaima from Bahrain's jail. If you are in the UK, Please write to your MP and urge them to sign it.

The death of a prominent lamenter outside Bahrain has re-opened one of the deep wounds of the Bahraini people, Sayed Amir Al Mousawi died in Iran as a result of health complications coupled with the psychological pressures of forceful banishment. On Thursday 1st February 2018 he was forcibly taken to the airport, together with wife, Maryam and two brothers, Sayed Mohammad Ali and Sayed Abdul Nabi to the airport and forced to board a plane to take them into exile. His sudden demise reignited the debate on the khalifi policy of exiling natives who had committed no punishable crime. Three days earlier (29th January) Adnan Kamal and Habib Darwish had also been banished. The day before (28th January) Isma'il Darwish and his brother Ibrahim had also been banished. The deportees are among 31 native Bahrainis whose

nationality had been revoked by the khalifis in the first week of November 2012.

Loujain al-Hathloul, the prominent Saudi women's rights activist, has filed a lawsuit against three former US intelligence and military officers who have admitted in a US court to helping carry out hacking operations on behalf of the United Arab Emirates. In her lawsuit, which was filed in a US district court in Oregon in conjunction with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Hathloul alleged that the actions of three men – Marc Baier, Ryan Adams, and Daniel Gericke – led to her iPhone being hacked and communication being exfiltrated by UAE security officials. The hacking ultimately led, the lawsuit alleges, to Hathloul's arrest from the UAE and rendition to Saudi Arabia, where she was detained, imprisoned and tortured.

A Saudi national, Saud Al Sarhan has been in forced disappearance since the end of October. His place of detention or reasons for his arrest are not known. He had published an analytical article on the future of the Saudi economy under the notorious killer, Mohammad bin Salman (MBS).

The Saudi human rights NGO, ALQST has said that the life of a prisoner of conscience is being put at risk, with Ibrahim Mohammed Ha'il al-Yamani having been moved to a cell with four "takfiris" who have threatened several times to kill him. A "takfiri" is someone who believes it lawful to kill any Muslim they consider guilty of apostasy. Islamic scholar Ibrahim al-Yamani was arrested in September 2017, during the same wave of arrests that swept up prominent cleric Salman al-Odah, Islamic scholar Dr Hassan Farhan al-Maliki and dozens of others. The regime remains adamant on targeting anyone who calls for reform.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th December 2021

tests and civil disobedience. It was yet another referendum on the khalifa dictatorial regime which has lost its purpose of existence.

The families of two Bahraini youth condemned to death by the Saudi authorities are extremely worried for their safety after their case has been adjourned. The Saudi Appeal court in the case of Jaffar Mohammad and Sadeq Thamer who has been adjourned until 9th January. Two months ago they were sentenced to death on false charges of smuggling weapons into Saudi Arabia. They have been in detention since May 2015 when they were detained at the Bahrain-Saudi causeway and were subjected to severe torture.

The puzzle of one of the Saudi political prisoners has now been solved. After two years of forced disappearance it has now been confirmed that Bandar Al

Jahdali had been detained following a tweet in which he criticized the high rate of unemployment and called for a proper policy to employ them. He disappeared in November 2019 and was taken to an unknown place. Calls have been made to free Mr Al Jahdali immediately and unconditionally.

A powerful spyware was placed on the phone of journalist Jamal Khashoggi's wife,

Hanan Elatr, months before Khashoggi was murdered by Saudi agents in October 2018, according to new reporting by The Washington Post. The revelation is part of an ongoing investigation coordinated by the journalism nonprofit Forbidden Stories and involving a consortium of news organizations, including FRONTLINE, into a spyware, called Pegasus, that has been sold to governments by the Israeli company NSO Group and used to monitor journalists, politicians and human rights activists. The company said it had no evidence its spyware was used to target Elatr. But a forensic analysis of her phone by Bill Marczak, from the cybersecurity research group Citizen Lab, found evidence that Pegasus had been manually put on Elatr's phone while she was being held by UAE authorities in April 2018.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
22nd December 2021



Bahrain: Free Leading Opposition Activists



December 13, 2021

(Beirut) – Bahraini authorities should use the customary pardon of prisoners on the country's National Day, December 16, 2021, to free everyone imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and expression, including rights defenders, opposition activists, and journalists, Human Rights Watch said today.

The most prominent opposition leaders have been behind bars for more than a decade for their roles in the 2011 pro-democracy protests. These include Hassan Mushaima, the head of the unlicensed opposition group Al-Haq; Abdulwahab Hussain, an opposition leader; Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, a prominent human rights defender; and Abdel-Jalil al-Singace, the spokesman for Al-Haq. All four are serving life terms following manifestly unfair trials.

“Bahraini political activists and rights defenders who should not have spent a single day in detention have languished in prison for over a decade,” said Michael Page, deputy Middle East director at Human Rights Watch. “The Bahraini authorities should unconditionally release all those sentenced for their political beliefs on abusive charges or after unfair trials.”

Bahrain has one of the highest incarceration rates per capita in the Middle East. Between June 2020 and May 2021, Bahraini authorities arrested and prosecuted 58 people for their online activity.

The Supreme Appellate Court has upheld the convictions and lengthy sentences of the leading opposition leaders and activists imprisoned for their roles in the 2011 protests and initially tried by a military court. The civilian appellate court found, for example, that the terrorism charges and life sentence against Abdul Wahab Hussain were justified because he had founded a group dedicated to establishing a republican form of government in Bahrain. The court similarly found that Mushaima's and al-Singace's “terrorism” consisted of “moral pressure” rather than any use of violence: they had participated in meetings of Al Haq and possessed “publications advocating for the group.”

Other prominent opposition figures, notably Sheikh Ali Salman, secretary general of the dissolved Al-Wefaq National Islamic Society (Al-Wefaq), the country's lead-

ing political opposition group, also remain imprisoned. Salman was initially convicted in June 2015 and sentenced to four years on speech charges. In November 2017 the government filed trumped-up charges against Salman for allegedly spying for Qatar. After he was acquitted by a lower court, a court of appeals convicted him and handed him a life sentence.

At the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, in March 2020, the Bahraini authorities pardoned or released to non-custodial sentences 1,486 prisoners. Neither the Covid-related releases nor previous National Day releases included high-profile political prisoners.

Prisoners' health and the lack of adequate medical care across Bahraini prisons remain of great concern. Al-Khawaja, Mushaima, and al-Singace have frequently protested inhumane prison conditions, ill-treatment, and medical negligence. Al-Singace has been on a hunger strike since July 8. In 2021, at least three prisoners died due to alleged medical negligence.

In April, after the authorities attributed the death of prisoner Abbas Malallah to a heart attack, his family and other prisoners blamed it on the lack of medical attention to his chronic ailments. Protesters then took to the streets demanding accountability. During the April riot in Jau Prison, the police allegedly used disproportionate force to disperse a sit-in of prisoners decrying the lack of medical care in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In September, Bahraini authorities released 30 prisoners, many of them children or who were children at the time of their alleged offenses, after an amendment to the 2017 alternative sentencing law allowed the earlier release of prisoners to complete their sentences under house arrest or alternative correctional programs.

Very few persons sentenced to long prison terms for their roles in the 2011 protests, and none of the most prominent, have been released under the alternative sentencing law. Ali Mushaima, who has been on a hunger strike in front of the Bahraini embassy in London to support his father and al-Singace, told Human Rights Watch that senior Interior or Ministry officials in July 2021 suggested to his father that he could be eligible for alternative sentencing. Hassan Mushaima, despite his poor health, refused on the grounds that his release would be contingent on his remaining “totally silent and desist from all political activity.”

“Bahrain's most prominent dissidents remain confined after more than a decade to degrading prison conditions, in part because Bahrain's powerful allies like the United States and the United Kingdom do not speak out against Bahrain's serious human rights violations,” Page said.

Lebanon to deport non-Lebanese members of Bahrain opposition

BEIRUT, Dec 15 (Reuters) - Lebanon's interior minister on Wednesday ordered the deportation of non-Lebanese members of Bahrain's dissolved opposition al-Wefaq group after some of them criticised the Gulf Arab kingdom at a news conference in Beirut

Lebanon became enmeshed in a major diplomatic dispute with the Gulf last month after former information minister George Kordahi criticised Saudi Arabia over the Yemen war.

Bahrain's interior minister, Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, had earlier on Wednesday called his Lebanese counterpart, Bassam Mawlawi, to tell him that events such as the Wefaq news conference, or Kordahi's comments, “harm Lebanon and its people”, a statement from Bahrain's interior ministry said.

The Gulf Cooperation Council, whose leaders met on Tuesday in Riyadh, condemned the news conference held by “a terrorist organization with support from the terrorist Hezbollah” and voiced support for Bahrain in “any measures it takes to protect its security and stability”. At its news conference, Wefaq released a report detailing what it said were rights abuses in Bahrain from 2019 to mid 2021.

Gulf monarchies have been alarmed by the rising influence of Lebanon's armed Iranian-backed Hezbollah group.

Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Iran have long battled for influence in the region, including in Lebanon, which is struggling with a deep economic crisis.

Bahrain's Wefaq did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Bahrain has kept a tight lid on dissent since a Shi'ite-led uprising in 2011 was quelled with the help of Saudi Arabia. The government denies discrimination against Shi'ites and accuses Iran of stoking unrest, a charge which Tehran denies. In 2017, courts in Bahrain, where the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet is based, dissolved the main opposition groups Wefaq and the National Democratic Action Society (Waad), accusing them of helping to foster violence and terrorism. Both groups have campaigned for social and political reforms in Bahrain.

