

BAHRAIN

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

Religious persecution escalates as people await Independence Day

Religious rights have always been an issue of contention past and present. This goes against the grains of the religious orders which mostly call for peace, respect and recognition of the other. Yet crimes have always been committed in the name of religion; people were killed for speaking out against aspects of corruption in the religious hierarchy; communities were divided along religious faultlines; strife often ensued on sectarian issues. Major wars were fought along all of these faultlines. This is certainly against the spirit of religions especially the divine ones. Those in positions of influence often failed to act in accordance with the spirit of their religions. It is argued that with religion come certain privileges that make beneficiaries reluctant to allow others to share. It is difficult to imagine any of God's prophets would differ with another. History does not record such differences or wars among the divine messengers. Conflicts happened in their absence, ie, after their demise. One the causes is the "officialization" of religion, ie, transforming them into officialdom and institutionalising them. Gradually the divinity fades away; spirituality transforms into rituals and followers often lose their sense of direction,

In modern world it has been hoped that religious tolerance would prevail. Notions of human rights have been upgraded to include articles and principles that protect religious freedoms and criminalise abuse of these rights. It had been assumed that through debate and interaction the sensitivities will give way to real tolerance and respect. It was also hoped that politicising religion would slowly disappear from the popular culture and modern officialdom. But several elements have contributed to the dilution of these hopes and assumptions. First is the ability of dictatorship to buy off the religious structures including preachers who are wooed by dictators and turned into useful tools to safeguard the interest of dictators through the adoption of religion as a means to neutralise the masses. Second, dictators have been able to hijack religion co-opt religious leadership through coercion or the use of force and exploitation. Third, through ignorance that proliferated under despotic rules. This ignorance succeeded into transforming religions and worship into rituals without spirit. This has led to the absence of God from

the public space, leaving the scene to the power-hungry elitist gangs.

The people of Bahrain have always been fond of religion. They saw it a means of cleansing their innerside and tame evil within them. They adopted islam soon after it had been revealed to Prophet Mohammad. Throughout history, the native of Bahrain have been tolerant, intelligent, humane and hard working. But they are also proud and adamant on freedom. They would not compromise these values at any cost and under any circumstances. For them to be denied their basic rights is tantamount to being deprived of life. For this they are ready to sacrifice themselves rather than to accept servitude or humiliation. The khalifi regime has always been aware of these facts and sought to alter the facts. They failed. In addition to denying the natives their freedoms and political rights, these dictators have persistent in denying them their religious rights. They were persecuted beyond limits as they strived to secure their true faith and their loyalty to the house of Mohammad. As Muharram approaches they are gearing themselves up to this annual season when Shia Muslims mourn Imam Hussain who was martyred in October 680 at the hands of the Umayyad dynasty. Within hours of the outburst of the battle of Karbala, the Imam (who was Mohammad's grandson) was martyred together with 72 of his relatives and supporters. Bahrainis have always marked the anniversary in their own style, with processions, lectures, lamentations, poetry and mass attendance of the proceedings that extend over ten days. In the past few years the khalifis, after embracing the Wahhabi salafi policies, decided to deny the Bahraini natives of their right to exercise their religious rituals. That often led to serious confrontations. This year the conflict has started early. When the people started raising their banners, flags and writings on the walls to highlight the revolutionary ideology of Imam Hussain, they were mercilessly attacked. Many of the Muharram signs were removed, preachers, Imams and lamenters summoned and head of the congregation halls summoned and threatened with serious reprisals if they did not stop the preparations. Many youths were summoned, some jailed and others warned of severe consequences if they went ahead with their

plans. There were several incidents of defiance, but with harsh consequences.

The situation has come a head when the khalifi regime targeted the people who participated in a religious song that calls on a Shia Muslim Imam who is said to be preparing a comeback after his disappearance a long time ago. The native people have always pledged allegiance to the "hidden Imam" whose re-appearance is widely expected by the Shia Muslim people. The khalifis hate that idea that their rule will come to an end when the Imam appears. So they intensified their persecution of the natives who, in turn, have proven be more resilient and steadfast. They are questioning the khalifi leaders and their supporters who are waging a relentless war with the hidden legitimate leadership. Both sides have been engaged in a war of attrition for the past 14 centuries The symbolism of the coming of the Imam is haunting the khalifi leaders and belittling them as they are seen frightened and disoriented.

The natives have never attempted to engage in religious wars. Their aim is to propagate faith, peace and justice. If they are left alone they are likely to perform well in the battles of wills. Bahrainis will not give up their natural rights in any circumstances. They will not submit to the will of the khalifi occupiers whose occupation of the lands has been rejected by the natives. To add salt to the injury the regime has attempted to criminalise native Bahrainis for taking part in mass recitals of patriotic and religious cultural activities and arts. In recent days the khalifi dictator and his clique summoned many young boys and girls for participating in a religious song. Heads of congregation halls have been warned of severe consequences if they allowed artists to perform in those places. Politics, arts, cultural activities and youth programmes may only be carried out by the regime and its supporters. The persecuted natives continue to suffer serious persecution for engaging in lawful activities that are not rubber-stamped by the khalifi occupiers. These facts underpin the popular efforts to end this bleak era of Bahrain's history and replace it with modern statehood. Supporters of this tribal dictatorship standing on the wrong side of history. They must change their position.

Executed Bahrainis remembered, calls to release Emirati, Saudi activists

Today marks the third anniversary of the criminal execution of two native Bahrainis by the blood-stained khalifi hands. In the early hours of 27th July 2019 Ahmad Al Malali and Ali Al Arab were led from their cells, blindfolded and taken to the gallows. They were shot dead in cold blood. The orders came from the current dictator, Hamad bin Isa al-khalifa after a farce trial that was condemned by international human rights bodies like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the UN Human Rights Council. Three years on and their mothers have not stopped weeping for their sons whose lives were cut short and brought to an abrupt end by the ruling gang. Bahrainis marked the anniversary in various ways. Many people visited their families to comfort them and made a presence at their graves to pay tributes.

The leader of the UK's House of Commons has supported calls for the release of imprisoned Bahraini opposition figures, the first time campaigners say the government has made such a call publicly. This came after the foreign secretary, Liz Truss failed to remember any time that he raised any human right case with any GCC official. The comments from Mark Spencer came during business questions on 21st July in the commons. He was responding to concerns raised by Scottish National Party MP Martyn Day over Dr Abduljalil al-Singace, an academic who is serving a life sentence over his participation in Bahrain's 2011 uprising. Singace, 60, has been on a hunger strike from eating solid foods for just over a year, in protest against his treatment in prison, including the confiscation of a book on linguistics that he had been working on for four years.

Yesterday regime's forces detained young native Bahraini Fadel Khdaier from Sitra

area for no lawful reason. It is seen as part of the persecution of the majority Shia Muslim population. Two days ago, two Bahrainis were also detained from the town of Daih: Hussain Mohammad Eid and Hussain Hani. Last week Ahmad Hussain Hamadi was snatched from the khalifi court which issued a lengthy prison sentence against him on orders from the royal court. His crime: demanding an end to the khalifi hereditary dictatorship.

When the political inmates at the Central Jaw Prison defied the khalifi orders and held celebrations last week to mark an important religious function on the advent of Eid Al Ghadir they were punished severely. They were denied family visits and were banned from calling their relatives. They could also face more severe punishments and some of them may be transferred to solitary confinement as had happened in the past. Taekwondo champion, Ali Omran who was given 42 years jail sentence has begun hunger strike to protest the lack of medical care.

As a result, his left arm has been paralysed. The mother of political prisoner, Mohammad Jaffar Mohammad has confirmed that she had been denied visits to her son. All contacts with him have been cut for the past three weeks. She is extremely concerned for his well-being.

A bizarre development within the ranks of the khalifi tribe has spilled over and began to affect Bahraini citizens. One of their academics, Dr Mail Al Khalifa who has been an ally of the former prime minister, khalifa bin Salman, was abruptly sacked from her position at the ministry of culture for refusing to shake hands with the Israeli ambassador to the khalifi court. The dictator's office took an immediate decision to sack her and relieve her of her other "royal"

duties. One of her associates, Dr Nader Kadem, a native Bahraini Shia Muslim citizen, was arrested. No reason was given for his detention and speculations have gone wild about the whole episode. The internal rivalries within the khalifi circles have been laid bare at a time of tension in the country resulting from the khalifi normalization with the Zionist regime. Calls from academics and journalists have been made for Dr Nader Kadem to be released immediately and unconditionally.

On 17th July Dr. Mohammed Al-Roken completed his eight-year prison sentence passed by the UAE government against him. On 2nd July 2013, the Abu Dhabi Federal Supreme Court issued verdicts convicting 69 accused members of the UAE94 group, with Dr. Al-Roken sentenced to 10 years in prison and placed on probation for another three years. The trial lacked minimum international standards of fair trial and due process. Dr. Mohammed Al-Roken is an internationally recognised human rights lawyer and an academic specialising in constitutional law. He previously held the position of head of the Emirates Jurists Association, which the authorities arbitrarily dissolved.

On 18th July Saudi businessman, Dr. Abdullah Mohammed Ahmed Baaboud, was arrested, in a raid on his house in Jeddah, without knowing the reasons for the arrest. Dr Abdulla Al Awdah, son of detained scholar, Salman AlAwdah has expressed dismay at the efforts of the US administration to rehabilitate the Saudi murderous regime. He tweeted: "If the US admin gives MBS immunity in court over the most documented assassination, it would give MBS a licence to kill."

Bahrain Freedom Movement
27th July 2022

Biden's visit was betrayal of Bahraini and Saudi torture victims

In Bahrain the khalifi regime's intelligence officers have summoned for interrogation and possible torture, people who had celebrated a religious function marked by the native majority of the country. More than 40 cars have been impounded by regime's forces after their drivers chanted religious lyrics that the dictator does not identify with. The systematic persecution of the native majority Shia Muslims of Bahrain has continued unabated. In recent days several clampdowns were carried out by the regime forces against them in their native land. First came the physical attack on the religious symbols associated with Ashoora to mark the martyrdom of Imam Hussain ibn Ali. Then the regime used force to ban a song that has become popular in recent days due to its religious and cultural roots that the khalifis consider offensive.

The mother of political prisoner, Murtada Mohammad Abdul Reda said that her son has not moved his legs since he had an

operation few weeks ago. He was infected with TB (Tuberculosis). The khalifi torture centres are now infested with various diseases; TB, rabies (skin disease), Covid-19, cancer, epilepsy and various forms of back deformation. Ali Hussein Al-Tarifi and Ahmed Al-Sami', two prisoners jailed on political grounds, have begun hunger strike demanding a retrial after the first one had been described by human rights bodies as unfair.

As tension inside Jau prison intensifies, more than 20 political prisoners decided to protest by refusing to return to their cells. They are protesting against the ill-treatment and the new guidelines for medical care. The khalifi forces attacked them using chemical substances, leading to some of them being transferred to hospital. As a consequence and in an attempt to hide the wounds inflicted on some of them, families of the detainees at Blocs 10 and 12 of Jau prison have had their scheduled visits cancelled without giving a reason.

Reprieve has once again raised the case of the two Bahraini prisoners on death row. It said; Two years ago, Bahrain's highest court upheld the death sentence imposed on two pro-democracy protesters Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa. The sentences were based on torture-tainted "confessions". To this day, they remain on death row while Bahrain's criminal justice system is sustained by UK-taxpayer support. Reprieve has repeated its call for an immediate release of the two political prisoners.

On 14th July Bahraini and international NGOs signed a letter to President Biden as he prepared to meet GCC rulers in Riyadh. It was titled: Make any meeting with King Hamad contingent on tangible human rights reforms. They urged the president to meet with independent civil society organisations and listed few demands: the unconditional and immediate release of political prisoners, the return of Dr Abdul Jalil AlSingace's manuscript and granting him

AlSingace's case exposes khalifi criminality, writers lobby Biden on Saudi

On 8th July Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace completed one full year of hunger strike. The human rights world has shown unanimity in praising this first-class freedom fighter and called for his immediate and unconditional release. Amna Guellali, Amnesty International's Deputy Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said: "It is utterly outrageous to see how the Bahraini authorities have idly watched 60-year-old Abduljalil al-Singace's health deteriorate as he goes through unnecessary suffering, over the past 365 days of his hunger strike, during which he consumed only liquids. He has been behind bars for over a decade solely for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and should never have been jailed in the first place. "Bahraini authorities must immediately and unconditionally release him. They must urgently ensure he receives all the medication he requires without delay, has access to adequate and timely healthcare and is protected from further torture and other ill-treatment. There were similar statements from several British MPs including Martyn Day, Wendy Chamberlain, Andy Slaughter, former MP Katy Clark MSP, Lord Scriven and others. Human rights activists also joined the calls for Dr AlSingace release including Brian Dooley (Human Rights First), Reporters Without Borders (RSF), PEN America and English PEN. In light of the persistent persecution of Dr Al Singace and hundreds of prisoners of conscience, member countries at the UN Human Rights Council are urged to take strong stands when they deal with the fourth Bahrain's UPR in the Autumn. Several Bahraini children have been summoned by the torturers to appear at Sitra police station. After a cruel interrogation session in which various methods of psychological and physical abuse were used,

the children were transferred to the prosecutors who work in liaison with the torturers. They will be interrogated once more by the prosecution torturers on 25th and 26th of July. False charges will follow to justify harsh sentences.

The demise of a young native Bahraini citizen has led to widespread anger. Mr Ammar Al Aa'bid had been detained on 12th March 2013 and released one year later. He was immediately sacked from his job and was riddled with cancer of the breathing system. He struggled to get his due payments from the ministry of education and was denied proper medical treatment. Yesterday Mr Al Aa'bid submitted his soul to God.

As the US president prepares to leave to the Middle East calls have been called for him to raise human rights concerns with the Saudi authorities. He is on a mission to promote normalization of relations between some Arab regimes and the occupiers of Palestine and is not thought to be seriously concerned about democracy or human rights. Yet 44 writers have signed a letter urging him to take up the issue. In the letter they said: "We the undersigned writers, journalists, creative artists, and supporters of PEN America, are writing to urge you to raise your grave concerns about the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia, specifically freedom of speech and artistic expression, with Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Salman when you visit Saudi Arabia in July 2022." They ended the letter saying: "We encourage you to fulfill your commitment to placing human rights at the center of your foreign policy and to use this opportunity to make it clear to the Kingdom that the US will stand up for free expression and human rights.

The Biden administration is discussing the possible lifting of its ban on U.S. sales of offensive weapons to Saudi Arabia, but any final decision is expected to hinge on whether Riyadh makes progress toward

ending the war in neighboring Yemen, according to four people familiar with the matter. When he was a presidential candidate Biden denounced Saudi Arabia as a "pariah," declared in February 2021 a halt to U.S. support for offensive operations in Yemen, including "relevant arms sales." The U-turn in his policy has baffled many who consider it "shameful".

On 8th July Saudi cleric Sheikh Mohammad al-Habib completed six years of unlawful incarceration. Al-Habib is serving two prison sentences totaling 12 years, on charges linked to his defence of the rights of Saudi Arabia's Shi'a Muslim community. Calls have been made to Saudi authorities to release him immediately.

On Sunday 10th July Saudi political dissident Manea al-Yami was killed in Lebanon, the Saudi opposition National Assembly Party (NAAS) and a Lebanese security source said. Yami, a member of the Saudi Shi'ite Ismaili Muslim minority, had been living in Lebanon since 2015, said senior NAAS member Yahya Assiri. He had been trying to secure safe passage to a third country. Yami helped establish NAAS in 2020. The group advocates for an elected parliament in Saudi Arabia, as well as constitutional safeguards to ensure separation of the legislative, judicial and executive branches. In a statement posted on Twitter, NAAS, said Yami was "assassinated in suspicious circumstances". It demanded a "just, clear and transparent investigation" of the killing, saying it held Saudi authorities responsible for failing to safeguard citizens seeking more freedoms abroad.

Saudi forces have detained another innocent citizen. Hassan Al Ali from AIDalwa district of Ihsaa Province. The detention happened when he went to the Dammam Intelligence office to ask about his detained wife.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
13th July 2022

adequate medical care, annulling the death sentence on two political prisoners and halting capital punishment. The letter was signed by: Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), PEN America and Reprieve. The most senior Bahraini religious leader has issued a categorical call for boycotting the regime's ploy through pseudo-elections. These are scheduled to take place in November and have been used in the past as a source of legitimacy of the illegitimate khalifi regime. Exiled Sheikh Isa Qassim said: Carrying out the elections in accordance with the regime's oppressive and reactionary plan to achieve its dictatorial aims that affirm the dictatorial nature against the people's interest can only lead to a new catastrophe to the country. It will intensify the people's sufferings, enforce the dictatorial regime and extend the predicaments of the people.

The security agents of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have detained US citi-

zen, Asim Ghafoor at the Dubai International Airport. The lawyer was convicted in absentia by a local court for his role as a member of Democracy for Arab World Now (DAWN). Mr Biden was urged to cancel his meeting with Mohammad bin Zayed (MBZ) in Riyadh but he refused. Asim Ghafoor acted as a lawyer for Jamal Khashoggi and DAWN Board Member

Dr Abdulla Al Awdah, whose father has been in Saudi detention for five years has reacted angrily to President Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia. He said: Today the US president



stood just miles away from where my father was tortured. Instead of speaking up for my dad and other loved ones who suffer under MBS, Biden fist-bumped their oppressor and blew a major chance to advocate for freedom and democracy.

Last week the health of Saudi political prisoner, Nasser Al Omar deteriorated further. He is suffering several ailments including hearing loss. He has been transferred from his solitary confinement to an open jail. Malik al-Duwaish, son of Suleiman al-Duwaish, has told the story of his father's arrest and enforced disappearance. Malik was arrested at the beginning of this month, and his whereabouts are not yet known. The health of detained cleric Mohammad al-Habib has been deteriorating due to lack of adequate health care he needs for nerve pains resulting from torture. The Saudi human rights body, ALQST has called on the Saudi authorities to fulfil their responsibilities regarding his health needs and release him.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
20th July 2022

UK Commons leader calls for Bahrain to release opposition figures

The leader of the UK's House of Commons has supported calls for the release of imprisoned Bahraini opposition figures, the first time campaigners say the government has made such a call publicly.

The comments from Mark Spencer came during Thursday's business questions in the commons. He was responding to concerns raised by Scottish National Party MP Martyn Day over Abduljalil al-Singace, an academic who is serving a life sentence over his participation in the kingdom's 2011 uprising.

Singace, 60, has been on a hunger strike from eating solid foods for just over a year, in protest against his treatment in prison, including the confiscation of a book on linguistics that he had been working on for four years.

Bahrain: Rights groups criticise treatment of jailed hunger-striking academic
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"Could we have a statement from government calling on Bahrain to return Dr Al-Singace's research and to release him and other political opposition leaders immediately from [prison] and unconditionally?" Day said.

Spencer responded: "Well I join the honourable gentleman in that call and I hope the government of Bahrain will be listening." He then urged Day to raise the matter again during Foreign Office questions

when the house is back in session in September.

Bahraini pro-democracy advocates said it was the first time the UK government had taken such a stance publicly and called for further action. "It's time for the UK government to stand in support of courageous human rights defenders such as Abduljalil Singace and put an end to his suffering," said Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, advocacy director for the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (Bird).

'Rare call'

Alwadaei noted that Spencer's comments come during the same week that two UK ministers - Lord Ahmad, the minister responsible for human rights; and Amanda Milling, Minister for Asia and the Middle East - confirmed that they raised Singace's case with senior members of Bahrain's government and oversight bodies during recent visits to the country.

Lord Ahmad also said he raised the cases of Mohamed Ramadan and Hussain Moosa, two Bahraini men convicted of killing a policeman in 2014 in what Amnesty International has called a grossly unfair trial, during his February visit to the kingdom.

Milling said in an 18 July letter to Liberal Democratic MP Wera Hobhouse seen by MEE that she had raised Singace's case during a visit this month to Bahrain.

Their disclosures come after repeated, unsuccessful attempts in recent months by MPs and peers to ascertain when specifically UK officials had raised Singace's case with Bahraini officials and bodies during meetings.

In a statement on Thursday, Day said he welcomed "this rare call" from the UK government for the immediate and unconditional release of the imprisoned opposition leaders.

"This includes people like Dr Al-Singace and Hasan Mushaima who have been languishing unlawfully behind bars for over [a] decade in retaliation for leading calls for democracy," he said.

"The UK government should now issue a formal statement making their call clear. Ahead of elections in Bahrain this November, the regime must heed growing international demands for these political prisoners to be freed."

Also on Thursday, Liberal Democrat MP Wendy Chamberlain presented an early day motion, signed by 30 cross-party MPs, raising Singace's ongoing hunger strike.

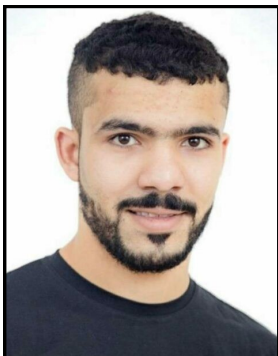
MEE asked the Foreign Office whether or not it shared Spencer's position on the calls for the release of imprisoned Bahraini opposition figures but did not receive an immediate response on record by the time of publication.

Profile in Persecution: Yusuf Ahmed Kadhem

Yusuf Ahmed Kadhem, a 21-year-old political prisoner, has been arrested several times on various charges pertaining to his political activism and participation in peaceful demonstrations. He was last arrested in June 2022 and is currently serving his sentence at Jau Prison.

Yusuf was first arrested on 23 September 2018, and he was detained for three months. He faced charges of illegal assembly, rioting, and manufacturing explosives and was sentenced to one year in prison. However, the execution of the sentence was suspended, and he was released after the trial. On 12 February 2019, Yusuf was arrested a second time from his house. He was detained in the Central Investigation Department (CID) for 20 days, after which he was transferred to the Dry Dock Detention Center. He was tried in two different cases with the first being illegal assembly and rioting, and the second a Highway bombing. He was sentenced to one year for the former case and two years for the latter. He was imprisoned for two years and two months and released under alternative sentencing in April 2021.

Yusuf was arrested for the third time on 7 October 2021.



Officers summoned Yusuf on the evening of October 6 through a phone call to appear at the 17 Roundabout police station for questioning without mentioning the reasons. However, he was detained for one night and taken to Dry Dock Detention Center on the next day, where he was detained for three months on charges of opposing the normalization agreement between the Bahraini government and the Israeli occupation. He was then released as the trial continued.

The fourth and final arrest took place on 13 June 2022. At 4:30 in the morning, security forces raided the house, along with officers wearing civilian clothes and two women in civilian clothing. Some of the arresting forces were wearing masks in green jackets which read "Security accompanied by riot forces". When the parents opened the door, they told Yusuf: "Come with us. You know you've been sentenced to a year in prison. You served 3 months in custody, and there are 9 months left. You can apply for alternative sentencing." They handed over the arrest warrant to his father. This occurred after the First High Criminal Court had sentenced

him in absentia to one year's imprisonment on 31 May 2022 on charges of illegal assembly and rioting on 7 October 2021 and possession of flammable devices in an attempt to object to the normalization agreement between the Israeli occupation and Bahraini government. Yusuf missed court sessions because he couldn't leave his job out of fear of being fired. The family filed for an appeal on 26 June 2022.

Yusuf's family believes he did not mention the details of his torture and mistreatment out of fear for their feelings. Furthermore, Yusuf did not have access to a lawyer at any point of the interrogation, investigation, and trial.

Bahrain's conviction of Yusuf for practicing his right to freedom of expression and assembly by opposing the normalization as well as the previous legal procedures against him on the grounds of illegal assembly violate international law, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which Bahrain is a party to. Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain calls for the immediate release of all political prisoners, including Yusuf. ADHRB also calls on the government of Bahrain to take the necessary measures to ensure that all prisoners have a fair and impartial trial.