

BAHRAIN

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

Accumulation of crisis leave only one exit; ending the khalifi regime

The internal tension in Bahrain is rising and is unlikely to subside in the coming months or years. As the people prepare to mark the centenary of the beginning of modern day opposition movement, the polarisation between the natives and the ruling tribe has never been more stark. The most recent phase of this generational struggle began on 14th February 2011 and gradually became decisive as the regime exhibited unprecedented ruthlessness, cruelty and hate towards those natives. Instead of heeding the calls for serious reforms, it embarked on a policy of unrestricted repression that led to hundreds of deaths, thousands of prisoners who were subjected to "systematic torture" according to the regime's own commission. The past decade has not witnessed any positive move to modernise the antiquate political structure, deal with the various crisis or its dealings with its opponents.

The crisis became deeper as the khalifi rulers made their own decision; to depend on foreign support totally and ignore the premise of statehood. Their reliance of foreign security and military help is not new, but goes back decades. This time, however, the sources of the outside support are multiple. In addition to the traditional help from the UK security and military agencies, the regime crossed all red lines and reached to the Israelis who are viewed as enemies by the Arab and Muslim people because of their occupation of Palestine. The ruling family has followed the lead by the United Arab Emirates rulers and made advances towards Tel Aviv that had not been imagined only a few years ago. Their advances have not stopped at the recognition of the illegal entity, but went as far as total reliance on the security help from the occupiers of Palestine. This has become the most outrageous move by the present ruler who is ruling the country with utmost ruthlessness. He has become the most hated ruler in the history of the country; his sons have not fared much better.

In the present circumstances, Bahrain has two sets of rulers; The first consists of Hamad, the self-proclaimed king, Salman; his son, the crown prince and prime minister and Nasser, his other son whose mother is an Emirati linked to the rulers in Abu Dhabi. They rule as a junta with no moral

or political references other than their own judgements and decisions, often imposed from the outside supporters. The second layer consists of the three most vicious figures; Khalid bin Ahmad, the head of the royal court, Ahmad AtiyatAllah, the head of the Statistics Department and Al Musheer. The agenda of this ruthless regimes is to ultimately subdue the natives, fundamentally alter the character and identity of the country and ensure total subservience of the country to those foreign supporters; the US, UK, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Israel. For the past several years, this junta has felt comfortable with this arrangement whose victims are multi-layered. The country is gradually becoming a property to these hated figures as the prisons continue to received more victims of repression. It is a process that the junta hopes will lead to the redrawing of the power map in the country decisively in their favour.

This strategy may appear to be working, at least in the media, but the underlying political currents cannot be underestimated. Under the surface there has been growing sentiments more powerful than those that had preceded the 14th February Revolution. The feelings among the people that the ruling family has gone too far in its repression, its links with the Israelis, its total submission to UAE and Saudi Arabia and its systematic suppression of the natives that amount to genocide are feeding the agenda for fundamental political change. The ruling family has sacrificed the sovereignty of the country to the foreign powers and became stooges in their foreign policy. They have become anti-thesis of anything Bahrani, that is native, deeply-dug in history and independent. This is at a time of increased domestic political, economic and moral crisis. The rulers of UAE and Saudi Arabia have bought off these dictators in return for exercising total control over the country. The khalifis have become mere agents to those powers as they gave up any chance of reconciliation with the natives.

The crisis of Bahrain resembles and is part of the regional crisis that have dominated the political scene for the past ten years. The total reluctance of the regional regimes to upgrade or open up their political

systems have transformed into deep regional crisis. With the absence of the major powers like Egypt, Syria, Iran and Yemen from the Arab frontline political leadership, the new power brokers are simply unable to stee the region out of internal and external crisis. They could have gained politically from the Ukrainian problem, but their gains have been confined to the economic sphere. The oil prices have risen sharply but the local economies have not made big leaps. The soaring commodity prices have rendered the oil price increases redundant and most probably problematic. The life of many citizens is becoming more difficult as incomes remain and increases under the soaring inflation rates. The regime seeks to rule people with an iron fist, largely reliant on foreign support, most notably from the Israelis. These multi-faceted problems combine to keep the country in a permanent state of crisis. The lack of khalifi human compassion is another factor that solidifies opposition to the ruling tribal junta. Its insensitive attitudes towards the native political prisoners helps to bring together the various political and ideological groupings to present a united front in pursuit of regime change. One of the fighting fields is the regime's pseudo-elections planned for November. The opposition groups have presented a united front calling for total boycott of what they see as window-dressing exercise by the khalifis. It is expected that the boycott will be comprehensive and that the regime will resort to major fraud tactics to present them as a success.

With the major issues of the people haunting the country, the regime will be powerless to achieve successful results of those elections. The political prisoners, the lack of any political reform, the rising prices and the normalization of relations with the Zionist regime will only entrench the people's feeling of hatred to the khalifi dictatorship. There are no short-cut solutions to these problems; the only viable route thus remains; the fundamental change of the political regime and the empowerment of the people to run their own affairs and secure the sovereignty, independence, self-reliance and honour of Bahrain.

Serious abuse of Bahraini prisoners, Saudis accused of starving Yemenis

A senior religious and political leader who has been in jail since 2011 has been severely abused in the past two weeks. Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad was subjected to most horrific treatment at the hands of the khalifi torturers for refusing to sign a false statement. They wanted him to sign a statement that he had refused to go to hospital but he rejected their order. He was surrounded by four heavily-built torturers who were about to set upon him if it were not for other policemen who stopped them. Yet he received horrible verbal abuse. Political prisoners were furious and started shouting and chanting slogans. Khalifi dictator and his torturers must be tried for persisting in their crimes against humanity.

Bahrainis are expected to boycott the khalifi elections in November. They are presented as the showcase for an antiquated political regime that lacks constitutional or popular legitimacy. The main political groups including Al Wefaq Society, Bahrain Freedom Movement, Haq Movement, Islamic Action Organisation and others have signed statements calling for the boycott. Senior jailed opposition figures have urged the people to snub the dictator and his clique. From his cell Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain said that anyone who takes part in the elections will endorse the regime's policies including its betrayal of the Palestinian cause and siding with the occupiers. The conditions inside jails continue to deteriorate. Political prisoner, Mohammad Yousuf Al Marzooq has been placed in solitary confinement for the past week for a pity offence; breaking a hearing aid. Another political prisoner, Mohammad Juma' Al Khor is facing systematic persecution for demanding medical treatment. Since 10th August he, with another group of detainees have been subjected to harsh punishment. He has been repeatedly transferred to solitary confinement and prevent-

ed from calling his family. Political prisoner, Ahmed Jaffar, who had been handed to the khalifis by Serbia is facing several forms of persecution. He suffers bone weakness for which he is not receiving adequate medical care. He has been denied medical glasses, books or even regular family visits. Sayed Ahmed Sayed Ali Mohammed who is on death row for opposing the hereditary dictatorship has been riddled with various ailments. He is not receiving the necessary treatment and his situation is becoming increasingly dire. He had received horrible torture at the notorious CID department which was sanctioned by the Bissioni report in 2011.

More than 85 young political prisoners at the Dry Dock prison (Bloc 17) have stopped eating the meals provided by the prison management. This is due to the low quality of the food, its quantity and its state of hygiene. The prisoners, three of them under 18 have asked the management to improve the food but it claimed it did not have the budget to do so. Khalifi court has refused to free a woman prisoner undergoing severe persecution at the hands of the dictators. The lawyers of Mrs Fadeela Abdul Rasool said their application for her release has been refused. She is serving a one-year prison sentence with her husband and brother for sheltering their son.

Antonio Guterres, the United Nations secretary-general, has warned of the serious threat spyware programmes like Pegasus pose to the UN's work on human rights in a damning report set to be debated next week. Expanding digital surveillance by states and non-state actors has impacted the ability of civil society actors to submit information to the UN and has made them more vulnerable to intimidation and reprisal, Guterres cautions. "United Nations actors have pointed to growing and concerning evidence of online surveillance, privacy

intrusion, and cyberattacks by state and non-state actors of victims and civil society communications and activities," the UN chief writes. In particular, he singles out the potential repercussions that Pegasus, the military-grade spyware made by the Israel-based NSO Group, has had for Palestinian, Bahraini, and Moroccan organisations and human rights defenders who have cooperated with the UN.

The World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), a global network of over 200 NGOs fighting for human rights and against torture, said in a report Friday 23rd September that the naval blockade against Yemen by the Saudi Arabia had substantially contributed to hunger and acute malnutrition among Yemeni civilians and amounted to a war crime. "The tens of thousands of civilians who die due to malnutrition, waterborne diseases, and the lack of access to healthcare are no collateral damage of the conflict", said Helene Legeay, legal director at OMCT's Middle East and North Africa office. "They are the direct victims of a combination of war crimes committed by the various sides, in which the naval blockade imposed by the Saudi-led Coalition plays a major role. The blockade threatens to plunge the country into famine and violates international norms, including the United Nations Convention against Torture," she added.

The Saudi Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) has issued prison sentences against Abdul Nasser Ahmed Al-Hwaiti for 27 years, Ahmed Abdul Nasser Al-Hwaiti for 20 years and Mahmoud Ahmed Al-Hwaiti for 35 years. The SSC also issued an unfair 16-year prison sentence, against the young Nasser Al Mubarak because he expressed his opinion on Twitter.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

28th September 2022 (info@vob.org, www.vob.org)

Agony of Bahrainis and Saudis intensifies as dictatorship deepens

After a string of repressive measures by the regime's prison officials, Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace has decided to escalate his hunger strike as his last means of protest that he hopes will make a difference. From this week he stopped taking fluids, salts and supplement. He has been on hunger strike for over 430 days in protest at the lack of medical care, the confiscation of his literary book and disruption of his contacts with the outside world including family visits. His condition is now desperate and his survival is on the balance.

A leading figure of Al Wefaq Society and former member of parliament, Abdul Jalil Khalil said that the number of unemployed professional native Bahrainis is on the increase. He said there are currently about 900 engineers and 400 doctors who are unable to find jobs.

The mother of political prisoner on death row, Hussain Ibrahim Marzooq has complained of the denial of humane treatment

to her son. She said that he had not been taken to the Salmaniya Hospital for pre-arranged medical consultations and urgent medical treatment to his back and joints. He is experiencing excruciating pain and inability to move. Another political prisoner, Mansoor Khalaf is also denied proper medical care. After months of complaints he was diagnosed on 5th September to have a blood virus. He had earlier been given the wrong medicines for stomach and heart ailments which may have led to the new diagnosis.

Maryam Al Khawaja has tweeted about her father, Abdul Hadi al Khawaja who has been behind bars for almost 12 years. She said: "My father, Danish/Bahraini HRD, is being targeted in prison because he stood up to torturer Marwan Alkhudairi. The prison administrators, most of them politically naturalized, want to use him as an example so no one dares to do what he is doing; speaking up." She added: "My fa-

ther and everyone with him shouldn't be in prison to begin with. Eleven years he has been sitting in a prison cell, having survived torture and multiple hunger strikes. He is a human rights defender and has chosen to use his right to free expression." Yesterday Human Rights Watch tweeted: "Danish-Bahraini citizen and human rights defender Abdulhadi AlKhawaja has been imprisoned in Bahrain since 2011 for his involvement in peaceful protests. 11 years in prison are 11 too many." Death row political prisoner, Mohamed Ramadhan has been in "severe pain" for two months and asking Jau Prison authorities for help, but his pleas have been met with silence. His wife said that his pleas for treatment have been ignored. After insistence, the doctor finally saw him from a distance of two metres, without accurately diagnosing his condition. But he prescribed some medicines that have not yet been dispensed to him. —>

Bahraini detainees denied medical care, Saudi persecution continues

Four children from Sitra have been summoned by the torture department. Fadel Khudair, Hussain Mohammad Ali, Majeed Hussain and Ahmed Sheikh Ali Hubail were asked to appear for interrogation about their peaceful activities relating to the political demands of the Bahrainis.

The wife of a native Bahraini political prisoner on death law has spoken about her husband. She said: My husband Mohammed Ramadhan, sentenced to death has been suffering from pain in his neck and the left side of his face for more than two months. He has made multiple requests for treatment to Jau prison authorities which have been ignored. Today she tweeted more information: "My husband Mohammed Ramadhan, who is on death row in Bahrain, told me that the tumour in his neck had increased in size and is causing numbness and pain on the left side of his face." Women detainees at Isa Town rehabilitation centre have been asking to be transferred to another place of detention after serious skin diseases spread among them. These women prisoners are mostly foreigners and linked to criminal activities. Their rights must be preserved.

Young native Bahraini political prisoner, Fawzi Ahmed Ibrahim has exposed the khalifi lies about providing adequate medical care to the political prisoners. Like many others, he has complained of lack of medical treatment to his various ailments and that he has been in severe pain as a consequence.

Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain, one of the leaders of the revolutionary opposition, who has been behind bars for almost 12 years has appealed to the people to take up the case of the political prisoners seriously.

ly. He expressed his fear for them as they continue to be denied proper medical care. Unless they are released some of them may succumb to their illnesses and die.

Khalifi dictators have prevented many native Bahrainis from leaving the country for Iraq to perform their religious duty. Among those banned are: Sayed Majeed Al Mesh'al, the president of the dissolved Scholars Council and Sheikh Maitham Al Salman, president of the Religious Tolerance Centre. As part of its policy of religious persecution of the natives, the khalifi regime has banned visits to the holy shrines in Iraq and Iran without special permits that are often denied when requested.

The khalifis have refused a request by the lawyers of woman political prisoner, Mrs Fadeela Abdul Rasool to release her from incarceration. She was arrested together with her husband, Sayed Radi Al Alawi and brother Sayed Jaffar Al Alawi for sheltering her son who was wanted for his peaceful political activities. The regime adjourned the final decision until 21st September.

The mother of political detainee, Hussain Al Sahlawi has appealed for an immediate medical care to him. He has serious problem in his eye which may lead to permanent loss of sight. He also suffered a broken nose and ailment to his foot. Jau Prison authorities are still refusing to take him for examination or treatment

A call for the unemployed youth to protest was made by Abdulla Hashim, a lawyer who had participated in the protest movement in the past. He was subsequently summoned by the khalifi agents and released after intensive interrogation and threats of persecution if he continued such calls. Further action against him is still possible. The

lawyer has nationalist background and his call alarmed the regime as it came from the Sunni sector of the population which has been largely neutralized by the khalifis.

In a message of support, Australian academic and activist, Professor Tim Anderson said: This is a message of solidarity with the people of Bahrain struggling for more than a decade against a regime which has oppressed them and engaged disgracefully against the will of the people of Bahrain with the Israeli entity. I am sure they will prevail just as the Palestinian people will prevail"

The Saudi Specialized Criminal Court (SSC) in Riyadh has issued a prison sentence of eight years against Dr. Rashid Al-Almai, who has been detained since July 2021. The SSC has also sentenced Abdulilah al-Huwaiti, Abdullah Dukhail al-Huwaiti and Osama Khaled to prison terms between 32 and 50 years, and travel bans of the same time length. The SSC also sentenced Muhammad bin Ali Al-Hazmi to 23 years in prison. Furthermore, it issued an 18-year sentence against the famous media activist Mansour Al-Raqeaba.

The Court of Appeal has tightened the jail sentence imposed earlier on Sheikh Essam Al-Owaid to 27 years. Al-Owaid had completed the earlier sentence in January 2020. Instead of releasing him a new but harsher sentence has been issued. ALQST has received news that the #Saudi authorities arrested engineer Mahmoud Abdul Baqi in November 2021, and Othman Abdulaziz (right) in January 2022. Both arrests appear to be linked to the peaceful expression of their opinions.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
14 September 2022

Under the heading "UK boosts funding for crackdowns in Gulf states guilty of human rights abuses" The Independent yesterday published an article that said: "Bahrain is accused of abusing children detained without access to a lawyer or their parents, is being given funding for "the implementation of the juvenile justice law". It went further to say: "Bahrain's corrupt judiciary and sinister so-called 'human rights' oversight bodies have been repeatedly involved in covering up torture against children and people on death row, as well as justifying unlawful executions."

US citizen Carly Morris has been summoned by Saudi authorities on charges of "disrupting public order." She risks being detained. Morris and her 8 year old daughter have been trapped in Saudi Arabia since 2019 due to oppressive male guardianship laws. Mrs Wujdan Al Shanti has been expelled to Jordan by the Saudi authorities after one week detention at Al Shumaisi deportation centre. She is the wife of Dr Mohammad Al khudari.

Two members of the Howeitat tribe

in Saudi Arabia forcibly displaced to make way for the \$500bn Neom megacity, have received lengthy sentences over their protests against the project, a UK-based rights group has reported. Abdullah al-Howeiti and his relative, Abdullah Dukhail al-Howeiti, were both handed a 50-year prison term and 50-year travel ban for supporting their family's refusal to be forcibly evicted from their homes in the Tabuk province of northwestern Saudi Arabia, according to Alqst. 'The lengthy prison sentence handed against members of the Howeitat tribe follow a dangerous pattern we are seeing unfold in Saudi Arabia' - Ramzi Kaiss, MENA Rights Group.

The Saudi crown prince was forced to cancel his invitation to Queen Elizabeth II's funeral

on Monday following outrage over his visit to Britain. Mohammed Bin Salman (MBS) was invited to attend the grand event, despite evidence that he ordered the killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018. News of his visit to Britain sparked protests and condemnation from rights groups, which accused MBS of using the funeral to whitewash Saudi Arabia's appalling human rights record. The last-minute decision was the result of public opposition to his visit. However, other leaders from repressive Gulf states remained on the guest list for the Queen's funeral, including Bahrain's dictator. "It is shameful to see dictator Hamad greeted at Buckingham Palace, while there are hundreds of political prisoners suffering the worst conditions for daring to demand democracy." Commented Sayed Ahmed Al Wadaei to comments to Bethany Rielly for the Morning Star. Human rights activists staged a protest outside the BBC against Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa of Bahrain's visit to the UK.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21st September 2022



UK boosts funding for crackdowns in Gulf states guilty of HR abuses

By Rob Merrick, Deputy Political Editor
20th September 2022

The UK is quietly boosting funding to help Gulf countries condemned for human rights abuses improve “public order” and implement crackdowns, including on children.

Saudi Arabia, which executed 81 men in a single day in March, is receiving cash for “counter-terrorism” as well as for “strategic communications” and “influencer engagement”, a document shows.

The regime in Riyadh has also provoked outrage by handing a 34-year jail sentence to a Saudi student and mother-of-two at Leeds University for retweeting posts by dissidents.

Bahrain, accused of abusing children detained without access to a lawyer or their parents, is being given funding for “the implementation of the juvenile justice law”.

Oman’s funding is partly for “public order” and “public safety training”, the Foreign Office says, while the United Arab Emirates gets support for its prosecution service.

The vice-chair of a parliamentary group shining the spotlight on abuses in the Gulf vowed to “demand answers” from ministers as soon as Westminster returns from its shutdown following the Queen’s death. And the UK Director of Human Rights Watch accused ministers of “shady aid for trade deals”, saying: “British taxpayers’ money is being sent to repeat and unrepentant human rights abusers.”

Pointing to funding for Bahrain’s “juvenile justice law”, Yasmine Ahmed added: “Human Rights Watch has documented grave abuses of children under this law, but the UK praises the initiative and provides more funding.”

The controversy follows criticism of Liz Truss’s failure, when foreign secretary, to name a single occasion when she challenged a Gulf state on human rights abuses.

Meanwhile, the UK is seeking a controversial trade deal with a six-nation bloc including Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, in its hunt for the post-Brexit agreements it promised.

Priti Patel, as home secretary, hosted a Bahraini minister blamed for the torture of political prisoners and toured a notorious police department in the country where they were said to have suffered abuse.

Britain has more than doubled funding through the Gulf Strategy Fund to both Saudi Arabia (which is receiving £1.86m) and Bahrain (£1.8m), it emerged last month.

Further “transparency data”, for 2021-22, has now revealed some detail of how that money was spent in six countries, also including Kuwait and World Cup-hosting

Qatar.

The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) pointed out that Saudi Arabia used its terrorism laws to imprison Salma al-Shehab, the Leeds student, “merely for tweeting”.

“It is sickening to aid Saudi on countering terrorism whilst they execute unprecedented numbers of pro-democracy protestors,” added Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, the group’s advocacy director.

“Bahrain’s corrupt judiciary and sinister so-called ‘human rights’ oversight bodies have been repeatedly involved in covering up torture against children and people on death row, as well as justifying unlawful executions.”



Al-Khawaja & other prisoners of conscience face reprisals

Reliable local reports confirmed that the Jaw Prison administration is currently targeting prominent human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and other prisoners of conscience in Bahrain with reprisals. They are serving prison sentences handed down against them in courts that lack the minimum international standards for fair trial, and on charges that violate their rights to freedom of expression, solely for carrying out their peaceful and legitimate work in the field of human rights.

The Jaw prison administration has recently promoted a number of the perpetrators who have tortured prisoners of conscience in the past, and are now performing tasks that require their presence in the cells of their victims. Al-Khawaja and his fellow prisoners of conscience vigorously protested their presence.

One of those who was surprised to see the man who tortured him among the administrative staff of Jaw Prison was Zuhair Ashour, a prisoner of conscience.

On 17 September 2022, Al-Khawaja was cut off during a call with his family, and he was not allowed to obtain the necessary medical care in retaliation for his demand for his rights and the rights of his fellow prisoners. Among his demands is that the perpetrators of the crime of torture among the administrative staff of Jaw Prison should not be allowed to visit the prisoners’ cells, and instead should be brought to justice.

Al-Khawaja also said in his phone call that, “This is the effect of impunity, as long as

Lord Scriven, the vice chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and Human Rights in the Gulf, said ministers “refuse to listen” to protests about the fund.

“They have responded by pouring yet more money into the moral vacuum of this scheme,” the Liberal Democrat peer said.

In Bahrain, the UK is also funding “criminal justice reform” and “capacity building of Bahrain’s National Communication Centre”.

The fund is bolstering “World Cup preparations” in Qatar, as well as “improved market access intelligence for UK companies”, the document shows.

Campaigners say human rights have deteriorated in both Saudi and Bahrain since the fund began in 2017 – with Bahrain ending its death penalty moratorium, leading to executions rising sharply.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office declined to respond to the criticism, but has argued the fund also supports work for human rights and that assessments are carried out.

they are dealing with the approach of impunity and promoting the torturers instead of holding them accountable, the torture will not stop, the ill-treatment will not stop, and the prison conditions will remain as bad as they are.”

Al-Khawaja, who co-founded the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR) and the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), won the 2022 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders for his continued activism for prisoners’ rights. His supporters are calling for his release and ask you to follow the hashtag #FreeAlKhawaja and tweet your support starting on 20 September 2022.

GCHR declares its full solidarity with its founding director Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and prisoner of conscience Zuhair Ashour, and strongly condemns the ongoing violations by the Jaw prison administration of the civil and human rights of prisoners of conscience. The government of Bahrain should release all detained human rights defenders and prisoners of conscience, and fully implement the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules) while they are in prison.

Noting that Bahrain’s Universal Periodic Review is coming up in November 2022, GCHR further calls on the members of the United Nations Human Rights Council to press Bahrain to comply with its recommendations, and uphold its human rights obligations.

