

BAHRAIN

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Four crisis challenge the khalifis and threaten their pseudo-elections

As the people continue their daily protests to pursue their political demands, the regime's agenda appears to gradually falter. Three areas that the khalifi dictators have been failing to achieve results are: the election for their "parliament" scheduled for next month, the adverse publicity associated with the Pope's visit and their economic policies that have infuriated most Bahrainis. **Firstly**, for two decades Bahrainis have shunned the regime's pseudo-elections after the total failure of the experiment that followed the uprising of the nineties. Those "parliaments" failed to stand up for their name and functions and became tools for the regime. They abetted in its crimes against the people. They always supported the khalifi serious violations of human rights. Furthermore, they were used to endorse the regime's repressive laws that aim at subjugating the natives through compulsion, use of force and various means of intimidation. For the past few months the people have made it clear they would not participate in any way in those elections but would continue their opposition to the dictatorship hoping to achieve a regime change in the near future. They are not in a hurry to reap results as their generational struggle continued relentlessly. The regimes is extremely worried that its flagship project to deceive the world is likely to produce negative results as the people insist on boycotting it. The activists, dissolved political societies, religious scholars and writers have vowed to ensure the failure of the khalifi election deception. The few who chose to defy the public mood are socially distanced and boycotted. At the same time the activists have planned to utilise the event to highlight the people's predicaments, including the plight of the political prisoners many of whom have languished behind bars for 12 years.

The second area of contention is the Pope's visits which has, so far, enthused the natives to address the visitor himself and urge him to cancel the highly politicised trip. But at the same time reports have been prepared to uncover the truth of the religious freedoms in the country. As the overwhelming native majority remains victim of institutionalised persecution, the Pope ought to have refused to visit the country. This would have led to much better results. His itinerary now lacks credible

meetings that could contribute to the stability of the country and proper rights for the native majority. For example, the Pope will not be able to meet the highest religious authority in the country, Sheikh Isa Ahmad Qassim. This leader who had played in the formulation in the post-British constitution was mercilessly treated by the regime for several years. After surrounding his home for two years, in May 2017 it was stormed by the regime's heavily-armed forces. Six of the young men guarding the house were martyred. The elderly Sheikh (80 years old), who was a member of both the Constituent and National Assembly had his nationality revoked, then he was deported. Many other clerics of the majority Shia Muslim natives were rounded up, several had their nationality revoked, some deported and several are have been languishing behind bars. At least ten of them have spent almost 12 years in jail and suffered severe torture, abuse and ill-treatment. The population has been living in a state of fear under the present khalifi regime. The Pope's visit is ill-timed and will undoubtedly be exploited by the hereditary dictatorship as a source of "legitimacy".

The third area is the adverse economic conditions of the country and the suffering of the people. While the regime continues to spend lavishly on the members of the khalifi family the people are forced to suffer under high inflation, rising prices and rising taxation. Many families are finding it hard to live under these conditions. Recently the dictator entered into a new agreement with the Israelis on agricultural cooperation between the sides, and it is feared that the Israelis may now be empowered to take part in the local agriculture despite the shrinking farming land. The signing of the agreement took place at the Red Sea port of Eilat whose focus included "innovation in aquaculture, as part of global efforts to address food security," according to Israeli officials. Also present were delegates from United Arab Emirates and Morocco, which also drew closer to Israel under the so-called "Abraham Accords" two years ago. Accordingly, Eilat would "become a centre for research and development of food from the sea and the desert". This is expected to be a futile exercise.

The fourth area of interest is the rising international concerns about the situation in Bahrain. Last month members of two parliaments tabled motions about Bahrain. The Scottish Parliament. At the Scottish Parliament Katy Clark from the Scottish Labour Party tabled a motion (S6M-06267) titled "Bahrain Human Rights". It protests against what it sees as "serious human rights violations, including the arbitrary detention of political prisoners in contravention of international law, torture, death penalty, arbitrary detentions." It also condemns "the imprisonment of political opposition leaders, and the deliberate systematic denial of adequate medical care reported in many of their cases." It says that the regime's elections "lack legitimacy and make a mockery of democratic principles while opposition leaders continue to be unlawfully detained". At the UK Parliament several MPs have tabled an Early Day Motion (EDM) titled: "Gulf Strategy Fund and potential rights violations against death row inmates in Bahrain". It condemns the death penalties passed against several native Bahrainis based on confessions coerced through torture and ill-treatment, and expresses "concern that Bahrain's judiciary and oversight bodies implicated in perpetrating violations against torture victims sentenced to death benefit from UK taxpayer-funded programmes under the GSF, and did so at the time of their abuse". It also calls to suspend the GSF pending an independent inquiry into its programmes'. Furthermore, several human rights bodies have condemned the khalifi treatment of Bahrainis. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International were among those bodies that have repeatedly issued statements about human rights violations in Bahrain. It is clear that the regime does no longer command respect or confidence of the world bodies and its forthcoming elections have not improved its bleak image worldwide. The people will thus not identify with the khalifi regime despite its vast propaganda and deception tactics. The world must stand up for these challenges and allow Bahrainis who are paying the price of repression to deal with the regime's excesses. Elections cannot solve the illnesses of the country.

MPs condemn death sentences on Bahrainis, more death verdicts in Sau-

On 18th October an Early Day Motion was tabled by British MPs titled: "Gulf Strategy Fund and potential rights violations against death row inmates in Bahrain". It refers to "evidence that Bahrain's courts have sentenced defendants to death following manifestly unfair trials, based on confessions allegedly coerced through torture and ill-treatment. It also "highlights that persistent rights violations which contravene international law underlie the convictions and death sentences of cases of eight men, who are among 26 on death row in Bahrain at imminent risk of execution". It further "expresses further concern that Bahrain's judiciary and oversight bodies implicated in perpetrating violations against torture victims sentenced to death benefit from UK taxpayer-funded programmes under the GSF". Finally the MPs "condemn the death sentences of Maher Abbas al-Khabbaz, Sayed Ahmed al-Abbar, Zuhair Ebrahim Jasim Abdullah, Husain Ebrahim Ali Husain Marzooq, Hussain Moosa, Mohamed Ramadhan, Husain Ali Mehdi and Salman Isa Ali Salman; and calls upon Bahrain to release them."

The regime in Bahrain has escalated its cruelty against the native political prisoners. On Sunday 23rd October the death row inmate, Mohammad Ramadan Essa was subjected to severe beating. He was condemned to death on the basis of false confessions extracted under torture. Yesterday an international lawyer, Joshua Colangelo-Bryan confirmed the lack of evidence to incriminate Mr Ramadan. He said that no physical evidence was provided against him, no DNA, no weapon or photographs to support the claim that he had killed a policeman. The lawyer was speaking at Press Conference at UK's House of Commons organized jointly by the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) and Human Rights Watch (HRW). Lord

Scriven gave a damning account of the ongoing human rights abuses by the khalifi regime. Jasmin Ahmed of HRW participated with Sayed Ahmed Al Wadaei to present a joint report on the death sentences of 26 native Bahrainis, many of them have exhausted the appeal processes and are awaiting the signature of the dictator to lose their lives. "The British government must immediately cease funding to Bahraini institutions implicated in grave human rights abuses", Jasmin Ahmed said.

Political prisoner, Ali Makki Ali Salman is suffering various ailments including what appears to be a tumor in his face. It is similar to the one that martyr Sayed Kadem Abbas Al Sahlawi had before his death. His complaints were neglected until he lost his sight. The tumour turned out to be cancer that led to his death. Mr Ali Makki Salman's life is now in jeopardy as a result of lack of medical care. Another victim of medical negligence is Faisal Al Alawi at bloc 10 of the notorious Jaw Prison. He had cancer and repeatedly asked for treatment but denied it. Since 18th October Faisal has been on hunger strike demanding medical treatment. Sami Al Meftah is another victim of medical negligence. So far he has spent 11 years behind bars, half of the total his sentence of 22 years. His health is rapidly deteriorating.

Three under-aged native Bahrainis were arrested this week as they appeared at the court of appeal: Yousuf Ali Yousuf Zayed, Sajjad Moosa Al Mutaghawi and Qassim Mohammad Al Bannai. The khalifi prosecutors have also ordered the detention of Jassim Madan from Al Sehla Al Janoubia for one week. He has called for the boycott of the pseudo-elections by the khalifi torturers.

The Kuwaiti authorities have handed a native Bahraini citizen to the khalifi torturers. Hassan Abd Ali, brother of UK-based ac-

tivist, Moosa Abd Ali, is now at the notorious CID department and fears are growing for his safety. The annual review of general freedoms in the world produced by Freedom House has confirmed that Bahrain is "not free". It ranked Bahrain at 12/100 on the global freedom score and 19/100 on internet freedom score. The report says: Bahrain's monarchy dominates state institutions, and elections for the lower house of the parliament are neither competitive nor inclusive. Since violently crushing a popular prodemocracy protest movement in 2011, the authorities have systematically eliminated a broad range of political rights and civil liberties, dismantled the political opposition, and cracked down on persistent dissent concentrated among the Shiite population.

On 16th October Saudi court sentenced at least seven young citizens to death by beheading and crucifixion: Yousuf Al Manasif, Ali Al Maybooq, Mohammad Al Labbad, Mohammad Al Faraj, Ahmad Al Edgham, Jawad Qurairis and Abdul Majid Al Nimr. None of them was accused of killing. Pressure is needed to stop these executions.

The Saudi court of Appeal has overturned the acquittal of Yemeni journalist Marwan Al-Muraisy and issued a 5-year prison sentence against him. It is now known that any appeal process will, most likely, result in harsher sentences. This is to deter defendants from appealing against what is believed political decisions, not judicial.

Mahdiya Al Marzooqi who was resident in Saudi Arabia has been given 15 years jail sentence because of a tweet. She was accused of "attacks on the Saudi state bodies, undermining the national fabric and the public order". She has been languishing in jail since 2020.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
26th October 2022

Pope is urged to cancel Bahrain visit, Saudis condemn three to death

Calls have been for Pope Benedict XVI to cancel his visit next month to Bahrain, whose regime has one of the worst human rights records in the world. Religious scholars, activists, politicians and victims have appealed to his Holiness not to grant legitimacy to the khalifi regime that jails, tortures, executes and abuse freedom activists. In 2017 the most senior religious figure was stripped of his nationality and exiled. The native majority is persecuted.

Members of the Scottish Parliament have tabled a motion on Bahrain's human rights. It protests against what is seen as "serious human rights violations, including the arbitrary detention of political prisoners in contravention of international law, torture, death penalty, arbitrary detentions." It also condemns "the imprisonment of political opposition leaders, and the deliberate systematic denial of adequate medical care reported in many of their cases." It says that the regime's elections "lack legitimacy

and make a mockery of democratic principles while opposition leaders continue to be unlawfully detained".

Meanwhile in London Jeremy Corbyn, MP, has tweeted the following: "Last year, Britain gave £1.8m to Bahrain, whose security services have been accused of torture, sham trials & executions. The UK govt must immediately stop funding institutions implicated in human rights violations. Until then, it has blood on its hands."

Politicians and human rights groups have renewed calls for the University of Huddersfield to end its relationship with the Bahrain security services. The university runs a Masters degree in security sciences at the Royal Academy of Police in the gulf state. A new report from two human rights groups confirms that prisoners in Bahrain had been tortured at the academy. A spokesperson for the university said it would not comment on the new allegations. More than 80 political prisoners at wing 1

of Bloc 9 at Jaw prison have refused to receive their breakfast meals in protest at the continuing lack of care and harsher conditions. Young political prisoner, Hussain Muhanna was recently forcibly disappeared for three months. During this period he was severely tortured and abused for 65 days. Only when most of the torture signs disappeared was a family visit allowed recently.

Regime's courts have imposed a two-month detention on two young native Bahrainis: Ahmad Al Sheikh and Ahmad Al Hadi. It also imposed two-weeks detention on Ali Al Ajooz.

The wife of a native Bahraini man has tweeted about the denial of medical treatment to her husband who is on death row for opposing the khalifi dictatorship. She said: "My husband, who is sentenced to death in #Bahrain, Mohammed Ramadhan, is still suffering aggravation from the growth in his neck. Jau prison authorities

Pinter Prize to AlSingace, calls to stop execution of Saudis & Bahrainis

On Monday 10th October Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace was named PEN Pinter Prize International Writer of Courage 2022. The Writer of Courage is awarded to a writer who is active in defence of freedom of expression, often at great risk to their own safety and liberty. The winner of the PEN Pinter Prize 2022, Malorie Blackman, made the announcement in an address at the British Library whilst accepting her award. Dr Al-Singace was selected as co-winner by Blackman in collaboration with English PEN's Writers at Risk Programme. PEN Pinter Prize 2022 winner, Malorie Blackman, said: 'When I first heard of the plight of Dr Al-Singace – engineer, blogger and activist, I was immediately struck by his commitment regarding effecting change in his homeland, including by highlighting the methods used to suppress freedom of expression. He has been incarcerated for over a decade and has been on hunger strike and without solid food for over 400 days, which shines a spotlight on an immensely brave man who defines the word courage.'

The khalifi dictators have stopped free transportation to university students at a time when native Bahraini families continue to suffer severe hardship due to spiralling prices. The students have reacted angrily to this decision, many of whom may be forced to withdraw from the university. The predicaments of the political prisoners and their families has continued. The mother of two political prisoners, Muhsin and Abbas Ibrahim Al Majid is demanding to know their fate. She has not heard from them since the beginning of the month. Political prisoner, Mahmood Najji Ali has been suffering severe headaches and stomach pain without being referred to a specialist. He attended the prison clinic five times without tangible results. Ali Aqeel Al Aali has been suffering chronic diseases

for more than one year. He has been trying to get a doctor appointment but his calls have not been heeded.

Juvenile political prisoners at the Dry Dock prison have started hunger strike after their appeals for retrials were rebuffed. Fifteen of them had been sentenced to jail terms ranging from 7 to 21 years while under 18 years of age. They have been asking to be retried by the juvenile court which may protect them against abuse. Their calls have fallen on deaf ears.

On Monday 10th October rights groups appealed to Bahrain's ruler Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa to commute death sentences of 26 men and take steps to end capital punishment in the Gulf nation. Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy said the men, who include those convicted on "terrorism" charges as well as for drugs, can be executed as soon as the dictator ratifies their sentences. "King Hamad should commute all outstanding death sentences, starting with defendants convicted on the basis of false confessions and those who have been sentenced to death for other than the most serious crimes," a joint report read. Bahrain should also "take steps to formally end the application of the death penalty in all circumstances", it added.

On 10th October, The US government was asked to restrict arms sales and security cooperation with Bahrain amid charges of serious human rights abuses against the Gulf state's police and judiciary. A 61-page report said: "The court is satisfied with the admission: death sentences in Bahrain follow torture, sham trials". Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD) point to serious and persistent human rights violations in Bahrain's justice system. They allege that courts in Bahrain have dismissed credible allegations of torture and ill-treatment of suspects and have routinely violated a suspect's right

to a fair trial, including the right to legal counsel and the right to question prosecution witnesses. "In case after case, courts convicted defendants of the crime of manslaughter and sentenced them to death solely or principally on the basis of admissions that the defendants (or co-defendants) were allegedly coerced through torture and ill-treatment," the report said. The European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights has also appealed to the Saudi authorities to stop executions. It documented 37 cases of people facing death including 8 under-aged youths. At least 3 young men are at imminent risk of execution for "crimes" that occurred when they were under the age of 18. On World Day Against the Death Penalty, calls were made end death penalty!

The Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) in Saudi Arabia has sentenced 10 detained Egyptian Nubians to prison sentences between 10 and 18 years for organizing an event that recognized the participation of Egyptian Nubian soldiers in the October 1973 War. A former member of the local council of Ranieh Governorate, Sheikh Al Hamidi Alfrana was arrested. He was banned as an imam of prayers and orator of sermons. In an interview with Arabi 21 media outlet, Raed Jarrar, director of Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN), slammed the administration of US President Joe Biden for adopting a "very weak" position on Khashoggi's murder, despite promises of making the Saudis "pay the price, and make them in fact the pariah that they are," adding: "We regret the weakness of President Biden's position, which was reflected in the US relationship with most of the authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, especially at the level of relations with Israel, the Egyptian regime or the Saudi regime. These relationships have become cheap and disappointing."

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continue to deny him access to an MRI scan and treatment, despite our repeated requests."

In the first week of this month the Saudi



authorities quietly sentenced three brothers to death after they refused to move out of their homes to make for the new futuristic city of NEOM. Shadli, Attaullah and Ibrahim al-Howeiti – of the Howeitat tribe from the northern Tabuk province – were sentenced to death by The Specialised Criminal Court (SSC). In September, other Howeiti people were sentenced to 50 years in prison by Saudi Arabia's SSC, which tries terror-related cases, but it is mainly used to charge human rights activists and dissidents. Their brother, Abdul Rahim al-Howeitait, was shot dead by Saudi special forces in April 2020 after he criticised the compulsory eviction in his final social media post, in which he accused Saudi Arabia of "state terrorism".

Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Basfar has been sentenced to 12 years in prison. His crime: accepting an invitation to lead prayers in the courtyard of the Hagia Sophia Mosque in Turkey. On 18th October. The SSC also sentenced Sheikh Mujtaba Al Nimr to 12 years in jail. He is from Qatif in the Eastern Province. On 16th October, the trial of religious

scholar and thinker, Dr Hassan Farhan Al Maliki was postponed for the 16th time. He has been in detention since September 2017. The Saudi regime cannot try him because he is innocent. The SSC has overturned the acquittal of Yemeni journalist Marwan Al-Muraisy and issued a 5-year prison sentence against him. Saudi Arabia has issued a royal decree appointing a detective involved in the cover up of Khashoggi murder as President of the notorious SSC, and other loyalist security officials lacking basic training as judges.

OMCT, the international committee against torture has tweeted about a Saudi woman political prisoner; "Israa al-Ghomgham asks for rights for all citizens of #SaudiArabia..." Many in her country share her dream of justice, but not the Saudi government. She has been in jail for 7 years." Saudi Human rights activist Issa Al-Nukhaifi has been on hunger strike since Saturday 15th October. He is protesting his illegal detention.

Bahrain Freedom Movement

19th October 2022

Dr Al-Singace named International Writer of Courage

NEWSOCT 10, 2022BY SIAN BAYLEY Bahraini academic, activist and blogger Dr Abduljalil Al-Singace, who has spent more than a decade in prison where he is serving a life-sentence for his role in the 2011 pro-democracy protests, has been named the International Writer of Courage at the PEN Pinter Prize ceremony.

The award is given to someone who has been persecuted for speaking out about their beliefs and is announced by the winner of the PEN Pinter Prize. This year's winner, Malorie Blackman, made the announcement at a ceremony at the British Library on 10th October.

The award was accepted on Dr Al-Singace's behalf by Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, director of advocacy at Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy (BIRD), who made a moving speech to guests delivered in Arabic and in English.

Blackman said: "When I first heard of the plight of Dr Al-Singace – engineer, blogger and activist, I was immediately struck by his commitment regarding effecting change in his homeland, including by highlighting the methods used to suppress freedom of expression. He has been incarcerated for over a decade and has been on hunger strike and without solid food for over 400 days, which shines a spotlight on an immensely brave man who defines the word courage."

Prior to his detention, Al-Singace taught engineering at the University of Bahrain, where he was the head of the mechanical engineering department before being removed from the position in 2009 following a trip to Geneva. He holds a PhD in impact mechanics from the University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology, now the University of Manchester. He also authored his own blog "Al-Faseelah". According to colleagues at the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, the website was blocked by the Bahraini authorities in 2009.

In the summer of 2010, Al-Singace visited the UK to attend a seminar at the House of Lords where he described the deteriorating human rights situation in his native Bah-

rain, speaking at length about the "triad of suppression". He said: "[There are] three pillars ensuring that activists and NGOs who work on exposing violations are seized and [condemned] somehow, ensuring that they are suppressed. The first is the use of force, torture and ill-treatment. [The] second is the use of the law. And [the] third is the judicial apparatus and procedures."

On returning home to Bahrain with his family, Al-Singace was arrested at Bahrain International Airport. The official Bahrain News Agency reported that an unnamed security official claimed the arrest was in light of concerns that Al-Singace could "damage the country's stability" and that he had "abused the freedom of opinion and expression prevailing in the kingdom".

Al-Singace was held incommunicado and in solitary confinement for six months, during which he was reportedly ill-treated: reports suggest that security officials subjected him to torture and ill-treatment, including verbal and sexual assault and beatings. A fellow activist has described how distressing it is to revisit footage from the seminar years later, knowing that Al-Singace has since been subjected to many of the forms of torture he described

at the House of Lords.

Dr Al-Singace at the House of Lords

Dr Al-Singace and others on trial with him were freed in February 2011 following widespread calls for political reform and the release of political prisoners. However, he was re-arrested shortly afterwards, on 16th March 2011, after publicising the deteriorating human rights situation in the country, and was later placed under house arrest.

On 22nd June 2011, Dr Al-Singace was among 21 opposition activists to be convicted by a special military court following the wave of protests which had swept the country in February and March that year, and in September 2011 the military-run National Safety Court of Appeal confirmed the conviction.

On 30th April 2012 the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial in the case. Dr Al-Singace was sentenced to life imprisonment, a decision confirmed by the High Court of Appeals in the Bahrain Court on 4th September 2012.

In the decade since, the international community, including the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and leading human rights organisations, has continually raised his case and called for his immediate and unconditional release.

Dr Al-Singace relies on a wheelchair for mobility. He also suffers from post-polio syndrome, and heart, eye and sinus problems. Despite this, prison authorities have frequently denied Dr Al-Singace the specialist medical treatment he requires, often citing his refusal to wear a prison uniform as the reason he cannot attend appointments outside the prison compound. Previously, Dr Al-Singace had also been denied access to books, television, radio and even pen and paper.

Dr Al-Singace has gone on hunger strike on numerous occasions during his time in detention. In July 2021, he launched his latest hunger strike in order to protest his ill-treatment in prison and the confiscation of a manuscript he had been working on for several years.

After more than a year of refusing solid food, PEN said it is "seriously concerned" for his health and wellbeing and continues to call for his immediate release. Meanwhile, they continue to work closely with his family and colleagues to call for an improvement to his prison conditions, in particular the return of his manuscript to his family, and are highlighting his case through their international letter-writing campaign PENWrites.

