

BAHRAIN

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A New Year with new hopes for future democratic Bahrain

As the year came to a close the mood in the region was more sombre than ever. In addition to the rising cost of living, the ever-shrinking circle of freedoms and rights is made worse by the regimes as they become more repressive and dependent on outside powers to prop up their fledgling rules. The Saudis, for example, have escalated their executions to exceed 200 in the past year alone. More people are rounded up each day to ensure total silence and blind obedience under the rule of Mohammad bin Salman. The Bahraini regime has also been more vicious in treating the citizens. Their repressive policies intensified with under-aged children receiving harsh sentences for taking part in protests. Their deception programmes intensified as they continued their policy of adopting modern terminologies but without their real meaning such as; elections, parliament, democracy and human rights. This was facilitated by outside powers especially the US, UK and Israel. It was a year of retrogressive policies, tactics and deception.

The political prisoners have endured deep agony as they were given even worse treatment when they rejected the khalifi new attempts to kill off the people's desire for change through alternative sentencing" and "open prisons". The prominent leaders, many of whom are serving life sentences for promoting reforms and rights were subjected to harsher regime of treatment. A prominent figure is Abdul Hadi Al-Khawaja, a life-long human rights activist holding dual citizenship from Denmark. He was singled out for ill-treatment and was tried for pity claims such as breaking plastic chair in his cell. There was an outcry at this mockery of justice. The European Parliament was swift to endorse a new resolution calling on the khalifi dictators to immediately and unconditionally release Al Khawaja. One of the reasons for keeping him behind bars for a longer period is the dictator's fear that Al Khawaja may file an international case against him for the vicious torture he had endured when he was arrested in 2011. His jaw was broken and he suffered various wounds to his eye and other parts.

The other prominent figures were denied proper medical care. Some of them are elderly; Hassan Mushaima is now 75 years of age, yet he is being held in solitude at the Kanoo medical centre. This is another dirty

ploy. For more than a year he has been held on his own at this place where he cannot mix with other prisoners. Yet the place is called a "medical centre" not a cell. Every time his family raises his case and protest the lack of medical care, a team of medics is rushed to show their concern, but that is the end of the matter. No further treatment is offered to Mr Mushaima. He has been suffering various ailments including knee malfunction, eye and ear disabilities and heart-related diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes. Another prominent figure is Abdul Wahab Hussain who has long suffered neurological diseases that had impaired his movement, speech and sight. He is denied proper treatment and the regime's strategy is to prolong his suffering until he loses his ability to function, given that he is now in his late sixties. The case of Dr Abdul Jalil Al-Singace is an outstanding story of struggle, perseverance and disability. He was born with polio disease and has always been using two crutches to move around. He was a prominent figure in the popular movement. He is a writer, blogger, university professor and a prolific researcher. In the past few years he completed a book of literary research linked to the native inhabitants of Bahrain. The regime confiscated the book and banned its publication. For the past 18 months Dr Al-Singace has been on hunger strike demanding the return of his book. Many international human rights bodies have called for his immediate and unconditional release and the return of his book. After such a prolonged hunger strike, he has become skin on bone, a shadowy figure in total isolation from the world, unable to see other prisoners. His case is one of the most horrific stories of jailed thinkers whose mission to improve the conditions in their countries.

Last month, Sheikh Ali Salam, the Secretary General of AlWefaq Society completed his eight year behind bars. His crime? Speaking out for reform and calling for dialogue. He refused to tow the line of the dictator and his clique and was made to pay a heavy price. He is a popular leader who commanded the largest parliamentary block with 18 out of 40 elected members to the largely symbolic "parliament". Yet he found himself accused of the most ridiculous charges; communicating with another country. In 2012 he was involved in a me-

diation process by the Qatari Government of which the khalifi dictator was informed. As no other charge could be used to justify the incarceration of Sheikh Ali Salman he was accused of "unauthorized" contact with Qatar. It is one of the most stupid and outrageous cases of the political prisoners. The khalifi revenge took serious upturn when the regime issued a life sentence against him. He remains in the same cells as the other prominent figures despite his repeated calls for dialogue. The other leaders insist on achieving fundamental political change in the country in order to stop the political and economic rot that the khalifis have caused. On the advent of the New Year the people of Bahrain have shown outstanding resilience against the odds. The regime has dealt heavy-handedly with the political strife, detaining, torturing, killing the protesters with live ammunition of executing activists. Yet the khalifis have failed disastrously in the way they have been handling the crisis. Today, the people are more adamant than ever to achieve the a serious change that removes the khalifi rule and replace it with a democratic political structures. They believe that it is impossible for dictatorship to safeguard human rights. Any hope of changing the behaviour of the current dictators towards the people is futile. As the country's jails become overcrowded with more than 1200 political prisoners, there is absolutely no room for optimism on improvement of the situation. The past month has witnessed every more protests in the streets of Bahrain as the natives escalate their opposition to the khalif hereditary dictatorship especially after they normalized their relationship with the occupiers of Palestine. This generational struggle is likely to continue and the regional balance of forces will eventually determine the outcome of this struggle. The human losses suffered by the native Bahrainis over the past twelve years has removed any links between the two sides. The country will best be served by an elected political structure and government. This is the Bahraini message to those blindly supporting this hereditary dictatorship whose policies have disastrously failed. It is our hope that those powers will wake up to the need for a serious political change in Bahrain as a condition to achieve stability and civility.

Serious HR rights crisis in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia as the year ends

This week, a Bahraini court upheld the politically-motivated prison sentences against four young prisoners from the town of Duraz. Ali Ahmed, had been given three years jail sentence for opposing the regime. The other three: Yousuf Ali Zayed, Sajjad Moosa Al Mutaghawi and Qassim Mohammad Al Banna had one year jail sentence over their heads for joining peaceful protests. The confirmation of the sentence is a message against reforms

On his return to Bahraini last week, Hussain Jawad Parweez was arrested and taken to serve a five year sentence imposed on him by the khalifi regime. He was a political exile in France and was given assurances that he would not be detained if he returned to the country. He was summoned by the court which confirmed an earlier sentence on him. He was immediately taken from the court to the torture dungeons.

Political prisoner Ahmed Shakir Al Shawk has been held in solitary confinement for more than three weeks. There are 13 others with him who are also subjected to enforced political disappearance and isolation. Bahraini political prisoner, Isa Ahmad Ali has confirmed that he is suffering from lack of medical care. He said it is clear that the officials of the notorious Jau Prison are adopting a policy of slow death towards the political detainees.

A former Bahraini parliamentarian and a vocal critic of the clampdown on regime critics had his eight-year prison sentence upheld by the khalifi appeals court. Osama Al Tamimi was falsely accused of arson and fraud after his position on the regime's brutality was laid bare. He suffers kidney failure and partial paralysis due to a stroke. He also has blood cancer. He is not receiving adequate treatment for these ailments

and has been in and out of coma for more than one year.

On 28th December, Sheikh Ali Salman, the Secretary General of Al Wefaq Society completed eight years behind bars. He led the society inside the regime's parliament when it won 18 out of 40 of the "elected" members. He realized that the regime's "parliamentary" experiment was hollow and deceptive. When Al Wefaq decided to boycott the regime's ploys Sheikh Ali Salman was arrested. He stands defiant behind bars and has accepted nothing less than a serious political change.

People have been disgusted when it was announced last week that the dictator and his sons had travelled to Morocco for hunting and bird-catching. The cost of the trip is taken from the public purse at a time when the country has increased its borrowing. According to the regime's own figures, the loans have now reached BD 17 billion (\$45 billion). This is in excess of 130 percent of GDP.

Former British army officer Bob Stewart who is now a Conservative MP said he had been "kind of a torturer" when he was posted to Northern Ireland during The Troubles. "We don't like torture," he told Emma Barnett on BBC 5 Live. "No one likes torture. Not even Trump likes torture. But the fact of the matter is . . . sometimes it might work, and sometimes it might be justified. Asked about the types of torture techniques that might be suitable in those situations, he replied: "Sleep deprivation. Lack of food. Perhaps, as I've done, showing people pictures of their friends that have been blown up. That sort of thing." He told the programme: "Technically as you look at it today, I was a kind of a torturer. Of course it was acceptable then. It's now unacceptable and now it's defined as torture."

Last week Saudi academic Dr Khaled Al-Ajimi was given 23 year prison sentence. He was detained in November 2021. Saudi activists have called for the release of activist Abdullah al-Duraibi who was arrested in May 2022, with no news about him since. It has been 60 days since jailed Saudi activist Mohammad al-Qahtani was forcibly disappeared. It is one month since he was supposed to be released. He was detained for 3,575 days and torn from his family. Activists, including his wife, Maha have been asking: Where is Qahtani? The Director of Education Department at Khamis Mshait city in South Western Arabia has been arrested. Professor Safar Ben Saed Ben Daraam was detained after he had expressed an opinion on Twitter.

The UK Government has been warned that Saudi Arabia plans to go ahead with several executions over Christmas in order to steer clear of a diplomatic 'blowback'. In a letter to the Foreign Secretary James Cleverly British MPs said the Kingdom would use Christmas as 'cover for committing atrocities'. This was the case in 2016 when almost 50 people, including children, were executed around late December. 'We are gravely concerned that Saudi Arabia may carry out a mass execution over the holiday period, when the world's eyes are elsewhere and Saudi authorities feel they will face less diplomatic blowback,' stated the letter to Mr Cleverly.

On 21st December MENA Rights group and 20 other NGOs urged the UAE government not to deport political commentator Sherif Osman to Egypt. An outspoken critic of the Egyptian government, Osman would be at high risk of being subjected to torture.

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28th December 2022

Police investigates MP's rants on Bahraini, UK urged to pressure Saudis

Scotland Yard is investigating an allegation of racial abuse after Beckenham Tory MP Bob Stewart told an activist to "go back to Bahrain" during a confrontation. It happened on 16th December outside Lancaster House where the khalifi regime was holding its annual reception to mark the enthroning one of its despots in 1961. Mr Stewart lashed out at the protesters using inappropriate language. Since then the British press have published several articles about the MP's verbal attack which has exposed the lack of morality or humanity among some right-wing MPs. The Independent, The Daily Mail, The Guardian and the BBC reported on the incident. Today The Times newspaper said: Bob Stewart made the remarks to Sayed Alwadaei, who has been imprisoned and tortured for protesting at human rights abuses in the Middle Eastern country. Stewart, the MP for Beckenham since 2010, apologised and denied that his comments were racist, arguing that he was suggesting the activist

should be campaigning in Bahrain. A video made last Wednesday shows him telling Alwadaei that he is "taking money off my country" as the activist challenges him on his ties with Bahrain. Stewart says: "Get stuffed. Bahrain is a great place, end of. Go away, I hate you . . . go back to Bahrain." Last month Bob Stewart went on a trip to Bahrain, apparently paid for by the regime's London embassy. He attended an air show and met the regime's foreign minister. He had made similar trips to the country which were also sponsored by the khalifi regime in 2021 and 2016.

On 15 December 2022, the European Parliament overwhelmingly adopted an urgent resolution on Bahrain calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Danish-Bahraini citizen Abdul-Hadi Al-Khawaja, other prisoners of conscience, and death row inmates in Bahrain as well as the end of the use of the death penalty. The resolution was adopted by 316 votes in favour, 6 against with 38 abstentions. The passing of

the resolution came despite serious attempts by the Embassy of Bahrain in Brussels to influence MEPs by smearing Al-Khawaja and sharing private and confidential information about him. Their efforts backfired disastrously as they proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the khalifis are vicious dictators who are not open to debate or moderate demands.

UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Dowler expressed relief at the resolution. She tweeted: I'm glad to hear @Europarl_EN today debates a resolution on Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja. I have received disturbing reports of pushback by some MEPs. This is not an ambiguous issue: Al-Khawaja is an EU citizen, imprisoned and tortured in #Bahrain for his human rights work. The khalifi foreign affairs ministry rejected the resolution issued by the European Parliament regarding the case of the most prominent human rights activist in the region. Abdul Hadi Al-khawaja has been in jail for almost 12

Amnesty calls for Al-Khawaja release, Campaign to stop Saudi executions

On 13th November Amnesty International issued an Urgent Action about the persecution of a prominent Bahraini human rights activist, Abdul Hadi Al-Khawaja. It said: Danish-Bahraini prisoner of conscience Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja was convicted and fined in two separate cases on 28 November 2022 following an unfair trial. The Bahraini authorities have long targeted Al-Khawaja for the peaceful exercise of his human rights and he is serving an unjust life sentence stemming from his role in the 2011 popular uprising in Bahrain. He is a prisoner of conscience who should be immediately and unconditionally released.

On 10th November regime authoritarian tribal rule detained native Bahraini activist, Sayed Mahmood Ahmed Al Mahfood. He was summoned to appear at one of the torture centres where he was abused and arrested for harbouring views on freedom and human rights that are inconsistent with those of the dictator and his clique. The political prisoners continue to suffer torture, abuse and ill-treatment as the khalifi dictators continue their policy of attempting to subjugate native Bahrainis. Political detainee Hassan Sarhan from El-Ekr town described the ongoing persecution, torture and abuse at the hands of the khalifi torturers. Since 10th August at least 14 other prisoners have been routinely abused at an alarming pace. He said he was subjected to torture when he protested his treatment during the daily outing which lasts only 45 minutes. Despite reporting his predicaments to the officials no action has been taken to stop the abuse.

years for advocating the need for political change in the country.

On 17th December young native Bahraini political prisoner, Sadeq Jaffar Ali Al Madani died as a result of medical negligence by the prison officers. He was released only three days before his death when his condition had become hopeless. When in jail Sadeq would call his family and ask them to send an ambulance to the notorious Jau prison, knowing that the regime's officials would not let him use it. His condition deteriorated and when it became clear that he had no chance of recovery he was released to spend the last three days of his life with his family and to be added to the long list of the Bahraini martyrs.

A letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights about the deteriorating health of Mr Hassan Mushaima has been signed by the jailed political leaders. Among them were Abdul Wahab Hussain, Sheikh Ali Salman, Sheikh Abdul Hadi Al-

Political prisoner, Ali Hussain Yousuf Al Mughanni who is held at Bloc 9 of the notorious Jau Prison has been infected with Covid-19. Due to overcrowding inside the bloc and the lack of proper medical attention fears are growing for other detainees. The inmates at Room 7 in Bloc 7 have been isolated but that is not enough to contain the spread of the virus. Bahraini political prisoner Muhammad Hassan Al-Raml continues to be denied access to desperately needed medication. Bahraini political prisoner Muhammad Hassan Al-Raml continues to be denied access to desperately needed medication and proper medical care. In an audio recording shared by activists, Al-Raml said he was still waiting for medicines he had requested back in October.

The family of Hassan Mushaima has confirmed that he has not received any real treatment in the past weeks despite the promises given by the security officials. They performed public relations shows to deceive the outside world that they were taking the accusations of medical negligence seriously, but in reality they have not changed their inhumane treatment of the native Bahraini political prisoners.

The Saudi regime has detained a senior academic without giving a reason. The lecturer at the Media Department at Umm Al-Qura University, Professor Mohammed bin Mohsen Basra was arrested recently.

A Saudi women's rights activist has been sentenced to 17 years in prison, despite having already completed his sentence earlier this year, the US-based rights organisation Freedom Initiative has reported. In April 2021, Saudi Arabia's Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) sentenced Moham-

Mokhowdar and others. It is a powerful indictment of the khalifi regime by the most senior political figures who have been under systematic persecution since their detention twelve years ago. It called for the immediate and unconditional release of Mr Mushaima and the rest of political prisoners.

Detained Saudi activist Essa al-Nukheifi remains forcibly disappeared since 15 October, when he started a hunger strike. He was protesting the regime's refusal to release him from jail, having served an earlier prison sen-

med al-Rabiah to six and a half years in prison, with two years suspended, on charges related to his activism and defence of women's rights. He was expected to be released in late September when his prison term (including his time awaiting sentencing) expired, but his case was transferred back for a retrial to the SCC, which sentenced him to a further 17 years, Freedom Initiative tweeted yesterday.

Around 22,500 people have signed a petition calling on Saudi Arabia to release 57-year-old Reprieve client Hussein Abo al-Kheir from death row and imprisonment. Hussein is mentally and physically unwell. He has been sentenced to death twice in the last seven years, his eyesight is deteriorating and he suffers from chronic pain, and in the last two weeks his cellmates have been executed. He has been told that he will be transferred to a death cell – where executions are carried out.

Reprieve, the NGO that campaigns against capital punishment has raised the alarm about the increasing implementation the death penalty by the Saudis. It said: 20 men have been executed in the past three weeks for alleged drug related offences. 81 men were executed in one single day earlier this year in March – more than 50% were charged with protest related crimes. And child defendant Mustafa al-Darwish was executed just last year. This is not judicial or legal reform. This is Mohammed bin Salman overseeing killing in cold blood and believing he can get away with it. But I know this community will not let that happen.

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14th December 2022

tence. His family have not been allowed any contact with him or receive news of his fate. Kuwaiti player Osama Bu-rahma has pulled out of the Asian Triathlon Championship held in Bahrain to avoid facing an Israeli player. His decision was praised by most Bahrainis who have been outraged by the khalifi treachery through their normalisation policy with the occupiers of Palestine.

In a new policy paper, the Saudi NGO Alqst has urged the UK government to respond positively to parliamentary calls for more resolute public and private pressure on the Saudi authorities to respect and promote human rights and hold the perpetrators of abuse accountable. This should include bilateral action, such as sanctioning Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman under the UK Global Human Rights regime, and action through multilateral fora, such as supporting proposals at the UN Human Rights Council to establish a UN monitoring mechanism to report and advise on human rights in Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
21st December 2022



Profile in Persecution: Ebrahim Yusuf AlSamahiji

Ebrahim Yusuf Ali Ebrahim AlSamahiji is a 46 year old Bahraini from Al Freij, who was warrantlessly arrested in 2015, tortured, and charged in a terrorist case known as the “Nuwaidrat warehouse case”. He is currently serving his sentence at Jau prison.

On 15 October 2015, police cars and masked officers in civilian clothing surrounded Ebrahim’s house. He was arrested while he was asleep at home with his wife and children. The masked officers did not present an arrest warrant or state the reason for the arrest. They searched the house and confiscated electronic devices including cellphones and computers. He was led by the officers, some of whom were holding cameras, to a small black bus with tinted windows.

Ebrahim was disappeared for 23 days, starting from the time of his arrest at 3 am at the Criminal Investigations Directorate (CID). He managed to call his family when he arrived at the CID to let them know his location and then the line was cut. After 23 days he was able to place a second call but unable to tell them what happened and what he was subjected to.

Ebrahim’s torture began when he was transferred to the bus on the day of his arrest and continued during interrogation. He was threatened and severely tortured in order to coerce a confession for something he did not commit. He was beaten all over his body, kicked, stripped naked, and sexually assaulted. Officers also verbally abused him with insults and curses against his religion.

When his family was finally allowed to visit Ebrahim, they noticed traces of beatings on his hands, legs, and observed the difficulty he had in moving. He told his family that he had been severely tortured, deprived of sleep for long periods, and taken to court early one morning to confess to unrelated charges after having been threatened with rape. At one point, after officers sexually assaulted him, he confessed to fabricated charges. As a result of the torture, Ebrahim has been having recurrent headaches, back and leg pain, recurrent eye inflammation, and teeth damage.

Ebrahim was charged, along with 12 other defendants, in the Nuwaidrat Warehouse case. However the Nuwaidrat warehouse incident took place in November, a month after Ebrahim’s arrest. Additionally, many of charges that were brought against Ebrahim during the trials were different to that of what was revealed during the investigation. Some of these charges were clearly fabricated during the investigation period and used in the trial. For instance, he was accused of smuggling weapons by sea because he is a thalassophile and owns a cruiser. Another charge – training on using weapons – was completely fabricat-



ed during the investigations and brought against him during the trial. He was charged with joining a terrorist group whose purpose is the disruption of the constitution, state institutions, and harming national unity.

Moreover, on 10 May 2017, Ebrahim was summoned to appear before the High Criminal Court on 10 May 2017, and was sentenced for insulting a public employee. He tried unsuccessfully to appeal this sentence. It is important to note that the judge in the case did not have the authority to preside over this case however, he insisted despite objections from the lawyers. On 27 December 2017, the Fourth Criminal Court issued a sentence of life imprisonment for the charges that were attributed

to him as part of the case, and ordered the revocation of his nationality. On May 30, 2018 the verdict was upheld by the court of appeal, and his citizenship revoked. His citizenship was later reinstated by a decision of the court of Cassation on February 8, 2020, but the sentence was upheld.

Ebrahim’s warrantless arrest, torture, and unfair trial are violations of the Convention Against Torture and other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment of Punishment (CAT) and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), both of which Bahrain is a party to. Moreover, the violations which he faced during his imprisonment, in particular medical negligence, are a violation of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Therefore, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (AHDHRB) calls on the Bahraini authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Ebrahim, and the impartial investigation of his torture to hold the perpetrator accountable. ADHRB also urges Bahrain to provide Ebrahim and all prisoners with the adequate health care and end the practice of medical negligence.

Stewart: I was ‘kind of a torturer’ in N. Ireland

Former army officer Bob Stewart said he had been “kind of a torturer” when he was posted to Northern Ireland during The Troubles in an interview with BBC *Radio 5 Live*. *Audio: BBC Thu Jan 26 2017 - 15:16*

Torture is sometimes “justified” and can work as an interrogation method, a senior Conservative MP has said.

Former army officer Bob Stewart said he had been “kind of a torturer” when he was posted to Northern Ireland during The Troubles. It comes after US President Donald Trump used his first television interview since coming to office to indicate his support for waterboarding.

He is understood to be preparing to order a review of interrogation methods and the possible reopening of “black site” prisons outside the US.

#The former Army colonel said he opposed waterboarding but techniques like sleep and food deprivation could be acceptable in certain situations. “We don’t like torture,” he told Emma Barnett on BBC 5 Live. “No one likes torture. Not even Trump likes torture. But the fact of the matter is . . . sometimes it might work, and sometimes it might be justified.

“I don’t agree with waterboarding but a certain amount of persuasion might be justified if someone for example had the knowledge about where a nuclear weapon that was going to explode in London was.

That is where I suggest that people might say a certain amount of persuasion could be justified.

“I’m qualifying it all the way through. In circumstances where a great number of people, or indeed one person, is going to be killed, you have to think very carefully about what pressure you can put on people in order to give that information to stop peoples’ lives being lost.”

Asked about the types of torture techniques that might be suitable in those situations, he replied: “Sleep deprivation. Lack of food. Perhaps, as I’ve done, showing people pictures of their friends that have been blown up. That sort of thing.”

Mr Stewart completed seven operational tours of Northern Ireland during The Troubles. He told the programme: “Technically as you look at it today I was a kind of a torturer. Of course it was acceptable then. It’s now unacceptable and now it’s defined as torture.”

