

BAHRAIN

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

Bahraini people will persevere until their mission is accomplished

The momentous participation by the people in marking the 12th anniversary of the Bahraini Revolution has confirmed the determination to achieve real political transformation and rendered the regime's claims totally inaccurate. There were popular protests in more than 20 towns and cities over one week period and are still continuing. The opposition outside the country organised several activities and published reports to highlight the situation and put the khalifi supporters on the spot to change their immoral policies. There were reports by human rights bodies and media outlets to expose the reality of the country under the current rulers whose power is derived, not from popular or constitutional roots, but from outside powers including Israel. It is a state of affairs that is unsustainable on the long run. No country can be run by the whim of dictators with their whips and torture machines overseeing the conduct of the people. This is a short-lived situation that could crumble at any crucial moment.

Despite the regime's total reliance on the outside for political, security and financial support, its regional backers are wary of its policies. Furthermore its sour relations with regional powers such as Qatar and Iran have denied it the ability to manoeuvre efficiently. In recent months it has attempted to placate the anger of the two countries by proposing to improve the relations, but to no avail. The khalifi dictators have committed serious crimes that annoyed these powers as well as the people. Their muscle-fletching through their normalisation of relations with the occupiers of Palestine has, in fact, weakened the khalifis morally and politically. They are seen as stooges of the outsiders who are hated inside the country. This fact has led to new realities that are likely to make their misfortunes irrevocable.

With over 1200 political prisoners the khalifi dictators have been bogged down in an immoral maze and any exit means giving up much of their power to the people. They have come to symbolise hate, dictatorship and corruption. In the eyes of the natives they have always appeared alien to the culture and history of the country. Despite the opportunities to repair the relations with the natives, the dictator and his clique have failed to extend sincere hands

to the people. Instead they have made the situation worse by arresting more people in the past few weeks. No less than 20 innocent young Bahrainis have been incarcerated for taking part in the activities to mark the 12th anniversary of the Revolution. Furthermore, the cries from behind bars by the victims of their ill-fated policies have led to a new wave of patriotism by the natives who view their political prisoners as hostages being held by a terrorist group intent on inflicting pain on the country and its inhabitants. They have failed to woo the people even with symbolic gestures such as releasing few political prisoners or respecting the natives and their culture.

The recent events have thus solidified the notion that the country is heading towards an eventual showdown between the revolutionary people and the khalifi clan that has failed to adapt to modern standards of governance. This is serious for both the country and the occupiers. But, on the other hand, it presents moral high grounds for those working to achieve democratic transformation. Although the supporters and defenders of the khalifis remain adamant on pursuing these unethical policies, change must come from within. Outside intervention is not conducive to security, progress or development. If the US and UK are serious about maintaining security in the region, they must come out with a positive approach to democratisation. They have abandoned their human rights mission and with it their commitment to democracy worldwide. They risk putting their own democracy in perils. If they thought the popular movements in the Arab World, including Bahrain, would go away under the intensive repression and human rights abuses, then they are far from reality. Freedom is a natural right and will not be abandoned by people with dignity and sense even if they are exposed to dangers. How many people in almost every country sacrificed his/her life in order to protect their freedom? This is a necessary component of the human psyche and cannot be taken away by force. It is one of the motives of people to seek change in their societies when they feel that their human nature is not fulfilled or that their humanity is threatened. The regime has denied them honourable life.

The people of Bahrain who have marked the anniversary of their Revolution are also contemplating another advent. On 14th March 2011 the country was invaded by Saudi and Emirati forces to cursh the people's revolution that was at its peak then. People were encamped at the Pearl Roundabout when, two days later, they were attacked by the invaders. Several people were martyred in the attack. Since then the country has been under virtual military rule despite the khalifi attempts to show otherwise. Twelve years later it has become clear that the objective of the invaders were not fulfilled. They may have killed and maimed many Bahrainis, but they failed to remove the love of the country and the desire for freedom from their hearts. The Saudi-Emirati crime has not and will not be forgotten by the people, especially the families of the martyrs of the invasion. The subsequent events led to new realities that will damn the attackers.

First came the flushing of the protesters from the Pearl Roundabout on 17th March. Then came the declaration of Martial Law on the country and the formation of the military courts. Thirdly, the leaders of the people were swiftly arrested a week later and have remained behind bars since then. Finally, the invaders committed a historical cultural crime by demolishing the statue at the Pearl Roundabout that symbolised the six GCC countries. It was an act of cultural and political vandalism that exposed the real face of the khalifis and their backers.

On the 12th anniversary of the Saudi-Emirate invasion of the Bahrain, the people are more determined to end the khalifi hereditary dictatorship that facilitated the occupation of the country. They helped to build foreign bases using people's money to fund the construction. This is one of the rare events in history where a government pays for their invaders and build bases for them. To mark the bloody anniversary the people will renew their dynamic movement to call for an end of the occupation, that these invaders pay reparations for the people and that the facilitators of the invasion be removed from office and brought to justice. The khalifis will not be spared the wrath of justice; that is a fact.

MPs urge PM on Bahrain's HR, Saudi use of "sportswashing" condemned

At least 30 British MPs have signed a letter addressed to UK's prime minister, Ritchie Sunak urging him to put pressure on the Government of Bahrain to release the political prisoners. They also urge him to ask the khalifis not to execute 24 native Bahrainis condemned to death for opposing the hereditary dictatorship. In addition the MPs are calling on the UK to hold the Bahraini government to account in relation to foreign cyber attacks carried out on UK soil and hailed the judgement by the High Court to deny the khalifis the right to diplomatic immunity.

The regime in Bahrain has continued the arrests of natives as the widespread rejection of the hereditary dictatorship becomes deeply entrenched. Among the latest detainees are Hussain Ali Sari and his son Ali from Saar Town. This brings the number of native Bahrainis detained this month by the khalifi clan to 18. The regime's security apparatus has summoned several of the fathers of the martyrs to interrogate them about their objections to the murder by the khalifi killers of their children. Among them are Abdul Hadi Mushaima, Hajji Abdul Nabi Al Hawwaj, Ali Muhanna, Jawad Al Shaikh, Hajji Ali Hammam, Hajji Ali Nasser, Abdul Majeed Abdulla (Hajji Sumood) and the father of martyr Abbas Al Sami'e. Instead of bringing the killers to justice, the khalifi dictators are doubling their crimes by persecuting the bereaved fathers after murdering their sons.

As part of a programme of activities to mark the 12th anniversary of Bahrain's Revolution, Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) is launching a campaign under the motto "Prosecute Him". The US-based body is calling for the trial of Bahrain's minister of interior, Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, as the main person responsible for the hor-

rific violations of human rights towards political prisoners. ADHRB has highlighted the cases of six prisoners of conscience, including opposition leaders. They are the most prominent examples among hundreds of Bahraini victims who were subjected to the worst types of torture, unfair trials and other forms of violations. The UN Special Procedures offices have classified these violations as crimes against humanity. The six political prisoners are: human rights defender Dr. Abduljalil AlSingace, prominent opposition leader Mr. Hasan Mushaima, human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja, former Secretary-General of Al-Wafaq Society Shaikh Ali Salman, human rights activist Naji Fateel, and political prisoner Ali Hasan Al-Aradi.

Political prisoners have continued their appeals to the outside world to take action in order to relieve them from the pains caused by the continued persecution of those languishing behind bars. Salman Ali Salman (of Bloc1, Jau Prison) confirmed that he had repeatedly been threatened by a named officer and called for protection. He has been on hunger strike since 15th January. Another victim, Ali Hassan Hammad spoke of the catastrophic conditions in the torture cells and the suffering of the prisoners of conscience. Sayed Ahmed Sayed Mahdi gave a grave picture of the prison conditions the detainees have to endure.

The Saudi authorities have continued their vicious campaign of prosecutions against members of the Huwaitat tribe who objected to their forcible eviction in 2020 for the construction of the Neom megacity. A report by Alqst (a Saudi human rights NHO) titled "The Dark Side of Neom: Expropriation, expulsion and prosecution of the region's inhabitants." Said the Saudi authorities are still pursuing a vicious campaign of prosecutions against members of the Hu-

waitat tribe who objected to their forcible eviction in 2020 for construction of a futuristic megacity, Neom. The findings are based on first-hand testimonies from victims and witnesses as well as open-source data. It paints a disturbing picture of the serious human rights violations being committed in connection with Neom, the \$500 billion megacity being built on Saudi Arabia's Red Sea coast as the centrepiece of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's "Vision 2030" economic programme.

Saudi's sovereign wealth fund is attempting to "sportswash" the country's egregious human rights record via LIV Golf, whose 2023 tournament kicks off later this week. The PIF owns 93 percent controlling shares in LIVGolf. Human Rights Watch has tweeted against this practice saying: FIFA's decision to award Saudi Arabia's state tourism authority sponsorship of the 2023 Women's World Cup shows shocking disregard for the suffering and repression of Saudi's courageous women's rights defenders. FIFA's decision World Cup has shocked human rights bodies. It shows shocking disregard for suffering and repression of Saudi's courageous women's rights defenders. It points to the need for FIFA, soccer's global governing body, finally to carry out its promised human rights due diligence on the impact of its decisions and to enforce its own human rights and non-discrimination policies across all FIFA operations—including future World Cup hosts and sponsorships. Human Rights Watch said: FIFA's decision to award Saudi Arabia's state tourism authority sponsorship of the 2023 Women's World Cup shows shocking disregard for suffering and repression of Saudi's women's rights defenders.

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22nd February 2023

Bahrain's Revolution anniversary marked, Saudi executions increase

The 12th anniversary of the Bahrain Revolution was marked by the people in the past few days with vigour and determination. Protests were held in most areas despite the regime's brutality, intimidation and arrests. The demonstrations called for fundamental political change and were held in towns and cities including: Samahij, Al-Ma'amir, Saar, Demstan, Dar Klaib, Sanabis, Karbabad, Sehla, Sitra, Karranah, Karazakkan, Shahrakkan, Al-Musalla, Al Dair, Nuwaidrat, Barbar, Abu Saiba, Al-Daih and Duraz. Many walls were covered with slogans. Calls were also made by relatives who stood along the main roads, for the release of political prisoners.

To pre-empt the renewed people's revolt, the regime waged an all-out attack on native Bahrainis, arresting many people. Among the detainees are: Mohammad Sayed Mahmood, Ahmed Ibrahim and Sayed Hassan Sayed Isa from Al Markh Town. From Sanabis Ahmad Radhi was

detained for expressing anti-regime views. Another young Bahraini was hauled off to prison after being sentenced to six months behind bars. Ali Abdullah was taken to Dry Dock prison over politically motivated charges. Two native Bahrainis from Al Malkiya were also detained: Hussein Kadhem Abdullah Ali Al-Shakhour and Al-Sayyed Ali Al-Sayed Adnan.

Yesterday, hackers said they had taken down the websites of Bahrain's international airport, state news agency and chamber of commerce to mark the 12th anniversary of an Arab Spring uprising in the country. A statement posted online by a group calling itself Al-Toufan, or "The Flood" in Arabic, claimed to have hacked the airport website, which was unavailable for at least a half hour in the middle of the day. It also claimed to have taken down the websites of the state-run Bahrain News Agency, which was sporadically unavailable midday, and the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce, which was taken down in the afternoon before

access was later restored. The group posted images showing 504 Gateway Timeout Errors, saying the hacking was "in support of the revolution of our oppressed people of Bahrain." The group appears to have hacked and changed articles on the website of Akhbar Al Khaleej, a pro-government newspaper in Bahrain. The newspaper's website was still down Tuesday night.

A Bahraini youth, Hussain Al Qassab is still carrying his scars after being severely tortured when he participated in marking the 4th anniversary of the Revolution in February 2015. Human Rights activist and veteran victim of torture, Mrs Ibtisam Al Saegh went to visit him recently and asked him about his feelings He proudly said: I am steadfast and determined. Khalifi torture failed to break his will.

Mrs Fadeela Abdul Rasool, her husband, Sayed Radhi and his brother, Sayed Jaffar will, once again, stand trial on 20th February. Last year they were acquitted of the charge of helping a political prisoner who

Two Bahrainis win High Court case, Lawlor defends Saudi detained HRDs

Today, the High Court in London issued its verdict in a case brought by two native Bahrainis against the khalifi regime. Dr Saeed Shehabi and Moosa Abd Ali lodged the case after it was confirmed by experts that the regime in 2014 had hacked into their computers and compromised their privacy. The case lasted several years before the court issued the verdict. It has finally decided to indict the Government of Bahrain for its criminal actions. The verdict is a victory for justice, rights and human and state sovereignty. The audacity of the Bahraini regime to wage a transnational attack on individuals that had not committed any punishable crime is shameless and criminal. Judge Knowles based his decision to dismiss the defence of the Government of Bahrain on two fundamentals: that states are not immune from prosecution and that the hacking of the computers can cause psychological and not just physical trauma as a form of injury. Jeremy Corbyn MP tweeted: Today, the UK High Court indicted the Bahrain government for hacking the computers of British-Bahraini activists. This is a crucial step towards justice. It's a reminder of the brutality of Bahrain's security services that the UK continues to fund and support.

As the 12th anniversary of Bahrain's Revolution approaches preparations are underway to mark it in style. Yesterday an Early Day Motion (EDM 843) was tabled at the UK Parliament to mark the pro-democracy uprising. It noted the continued protests "over 200 years of the AlKhalifa ruling dictatorship, state repression and structural inequalities, which authorities brutally crushed". It says that "Hassan Mushaima, Dr Abduljalil AlSingace and Abdulhadi AlKhawaja, remain behind bars and calls "for their immediate and unconditional release". The EDM "decries that Bahrain holds 26 prisoners on death row at immi-

nent risk of execution, many of whom allege torture including Mohammed Ramadhan and Husain Moosa. It also condemns UK's support to the regime which "has failed to lead to demonstrable human rights or democracy improvements and yet continues the provision of assistance through the Gulf Strategy Fund despite its repeated implications in violations of international law and cross-party calls for its suspension;"

The Bahraini opposition held a landmark conference to review the political, organizational and dynamic situation in order to prepare for a strong programme of civil resistance action against the hereditary dictatorship. The regime was angry that Bahrainis are now more united than every in their struggle to achieve better results. The khalifi mouthpieces were mobilized against native Bahrainis who have escalated their civil resistance to the reactionary, corrupt and torturous regime. Most towns and villages are planning to mark the anniversary.

In a statement Bahrain's Prisoners of Conscience said: "Are we sentenced to a slow death? We have been surprised by the intransigence and denial (of wrong doings) by Jau prison's administration; yet we will continue our peaceful movement until our just demands are met". Political prisoner Salman Ali Salman who has been complaining of his detention with other common law criminals has been transferred to hospital after his condition worsened. He has been on hunger strike since 15th January. Another political prisoner, Mohsin Baddao from Duraz has decided to let out a high cry from within. He has been under intensive methods of persecution but remained quiet for long. He has now shouted for help and called for medical treatment for his various ailments. In an audio message, a third prisoner, Sayed Ahmed Sayed Mahdi has given a graphic description of the ill-treatment of other political prisoners. Taher Sayed Amin described

the serious lack of rights in Jaw Prison. Other prisoners who cried for help include Ali Hassan Hammad and Ali Hassan Al Aradi. Khalil Al Qassab has appealed to Amnesty International to put pressure on the khalifis to provide the basic rights of prisoners. Also, Mujtaba Jaffar Fateel has complained of the policies of humiliation adopted against the political prisoners. The wife of Sayed Ahmed Ali Mohammad, from Al Malikiyah Town has demanded to know his fate after a long period of news blackout with no contact from him. He joined other prisoners to protest against the policies of the prison officials. Political prisoner, Mohammad Hassan Al Qayem has complained of the lack of freedom of religious freedom inside the jail.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor tweeted: "I've written to the Government of Saudi Arabia expressing concerns over the continued arbitrary detention after the expiry of their sentence of Mohammad al-Rabia, Issa Al-Nukhaifi and risk to life of Dr. Mohammad al-Qahtani." In the letter Ms Lawlor said: We are concerned that due process has not been followed and that the above-mentioned human rights defenders have not been released upon completing their sentence, in violation of international standards for fair trial. We are particularly concerned by what appears to be an emerging trend to keep human rights defenders in prison after having completed their sentence by overturning their original sentence and ordering new trials without providing them with sufficient information o878r legal assistance, in violation of the 'non bis in idem' principle (the prohibition of double jeopardy). On 2 February the Saudi Specialised Criminal Court upheld prison sentences ranging from 10 to 18 years on ten Egyptian nationals belonging to Nubian civic associations in Saudi Arabia.

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had escaped from jail. The prisoner was no one other than their son who had been illegally detained. The regime's prosecutors had appealed against the acquittal, on orders from the royal court. The family is now, once again, facing an uncertain future for sheltering their son.

The British foreign secretary, James Cleverly, has been urged by humanitarian organisations to issue a correction over a "misleading" Foreign Office (FCDO) report on Bahrain, as they say it represents a "dangerous whitewash" on human rights that risks emboldening abusers in the Gulf state. A letter to the foreign secretary, signed by Human Rights Watch (HRW), Reprieve and the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (Bird), said the report is "fraught with inaccuracies" and amounts to disinformation that could be used as propaganda by the government.

On October 3, 2022, Saad Almadi, a Saudi-American citizen was sen-

tenced by the Saudi Specialised Criminal Court to 16 years in prison in relation to tweets he had posted, on the basis of the Counter-Terrorism and Cybercrime Laws. His sentence was increased to 19 years on appeal. He is currently detained in al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh. On November 21, 2021, Saad Almadi flew to Saudi Arabia to visit his family. After landing at the King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, he disappeared.

Though his family later informally learned that he had been arrested, they did not obtain further official information on his fate and whereabouts. It was only four months later, in late March 2022, that the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia confirmed that he had been detained in al-Ha'ir prison after visiting him. The U.S. Embassy visited him again on August 10, 2022.

The Saudi state executed 148 individuals during 2022, more than twice as many as in 2021, including the execution of 81 men in a single day. Executions for drugs-related offences made a dramatic comeback, despite the previous announcement of a moratorium on such punishments.

Saudi Arabia has sentenced preacher Awad al-Qarni to death for tweeting "his opinion" on the Kingdom. It's the latest in a long list of oppressions against the Saudis by the regime led by Mohammed Bin Salman.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
15th February 2023



High court rules Bahrain activists' case against kingdom can proceed

By Dania Akkad, 8 February 2023

Two UK-based activists who allege that Bahrain installed spyware on their computers can proceed with their lawsuit against the kingdom, the High Court ruled on Wednesday, their lawyers and one of the claimants has said.

Saeed Shehabi, a leading figure in Bahrain's opposition movement, and Moosa Mohammed, pro-democracy activist and photojournalist, allege that their computers were infected with surveillance software called FinSpy in September 2011.

Seven months after anti-government protests started in the island nation, the men were using the computers to communicate with other activists, journalists, political prisoners, torture victims and their families.

In court proceedings a year ago, lawyers for the Bahraini government argued that the kingdom had state immunity and the case, therefore, should be thrown out.

But on Wednesday, Judge Julian Knowles ruled that the High Court has jurisdiction to hear the claim.

Mohammed called the judgement "a huge victory", particularly since, he said, he and his family continue to face persecution in Bahrain.

Last month, a Bahrain court sentenced his brother, Hasan Abdali Mohammed, to seven years in a case of alleged terrorism which Mohammed and rights groups say was brought in reprisal for the photojournalist's activism.

"This decision demonstrates that we can prevail in our fight for justice and that our voices will not be muzzled by the Bahraini regime's reprisals or intimidation," Mohammed said.

Shehabi also welcomed the ruling, saying it was a recognition of "the psychological torture that authoritarian regimes exercise transnationally", and called for clearer consensus over the criminality of these acts in international law.

Middle East Eye has sought comments from the Bahraini Embassy in London and the lawyers representing the kingdom.

Ida Aduwa, solicitor at the London-based Leigh Day which is representing Shehabi and Mohammed, said she was pleased that the case will now move forward to trial.

"This judgement comes as a huge relief to our clients who are determined to hold the Kingdom of Bahrain to account for what they believe was a gross invasion of their privacy which caused personal harm and put their friends and family at risk," she said.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, director of the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and



Democracy (BIRD), said the ruling ensures that Bahrain will face accountability and that the activists have an opportunity

to seek justice, but questioned whether the UK government could do more.

"While the UK court has delivered a damning ruling overturning Bahrain's immunity, it is the UK government that is failing to send a signal to the Al-Khalifa regime that they cannot continue to pursue and intimidate dissidents on British soil with impunity."

The decision comes six months after the same judge ruled that a Saudi Arabia dissident could proceed with his spyware claim against that kingdom also being heard in the High Court.

Ghanem al-Masarir alleges that the kingdom installed Pegasus spyware on his phones and ordered an assault on him in Knightsbridge in August 2018.

Legal experts said the ruling in Masarir's case would likely set precedent for similar cases of alleged state-sponsored surveillance, with former UN special rapporteur

David Kaye describing it as "a blow against states seeking judicial protection against victims of their transnational repression".

No dates have been set for the next court proceedings in either case.

Statement by Saeed Shehabi on the court case

7 February 2023

I welcome today's verdict after a long and grueling case for justice. It is a recognition of the psychological torture that authoritarian regimes exercise transnationally. In this case, hacking into my computers caused myself and many other victims like me severe mental distress and may have harmed many others whose information was compromised. There needs to be clearer consensus over the criminality of transnational hacking in international law and an end to commercial hacking companies who are enabling it.

The decision by the High Court in London today to indict the Government of Bahrain for hacking the computers of two British-Bahraini activists is a victory for justice, rights and human and state sovereignty. The audacity of the Bahraini regime to wage a transnational attack on individuals that had not committed any punishable crime is shameless and criminal. Judge Knowles based his decision to dismiss the defence of the Government of Bahrain on two sound fundamentals; that states are not immune from prosecution and that the hacking of the computers can cause psychological and not just physical trauma as a form of 'injury.'

The Bahraini regime has inflicted colossal amounts of physical and psychological injuries on its native population, confiscated basic freedoms and placed the "sovereignty" of the ruling tribe above any other consideration. This verdict offers only a modicum of justice in the face of brutal repression inside Bahrain.

The judgement is a victory for thousands of voiceless political prisoners who are languishing behind bars in Bahraini jails. The decision to criminalise the hacking of the computers of Bahraini activists in other countries sends a strong message that dictatorial regimes cannot target dissidents wherever they want.

From the Judge's verdict: "As with the foreign act of state doctrine, English courts may not question the acts of a foreign sovereign within its own borders, but where personal injury is caused by a state official overseas outside of the embassy compound, sovereignty is not impeached by bringing the state before the forum state's court. The acts of the foreign government are a direct challenge to the UK's sovereignty within its own sovereign borders."