

BAHRAIN

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

The khalifis are loathed by native Bahrainis; they must go

The holy month of Ramadan has now elapsed; the Muslims celebrated the Eid Al Fitr advent with differing moods and emotions. The people of Bahrain have marked the Eid with their usual feelings of disappointment and despair at the continuing repression by the khalifi dictators, the ongoing arrests and detention and the absence of their senior leaders either behind bars or in the diaspora. The regime has failed to gain the initiative on the political scene and has remained embattled both inside and outside the country. The apparent "successes" that its mouthpieces continue to claim have remained an illusion as the khalifis remain an anathema to the natives. What sometimes appears to be a status quo hides hard facts about the relations between the two sides. No love will be lost if the khalifi hereditary dictatorship disappears from the face of the earth; it is rejected and loathed by the people.

As the news from behind the iron curtain imposed on the natives continue to come about, the deteriorating health of many of the political detainees has caused a serious alarm among the people. Among those suffering serious illnesses are Mr Abdul Wahab Hussain, 68, Hassan Mushaima, 75, Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad, 62, Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja, 61 and Dr Abdul Jalil Al Singace, 61. It is a serious situation as the regime has decided to leave these elderly people in their cells until they perish. They are denied proper medical care, adequate time outside their cells and in the open air and reasonable family contacts. The evil intentions of the khalifi dictators have become clear in recent times as the families of the political prisoners raised their voices in protest against denying their loved ones adequate medical care. The regime gave death ears to their pleas and continued its ill-treatment of the political prisoners, relying on the Western support to defend it internationally and locally. The young people who roam the streets daily in their protests are aware of the vicious nature of the regime and that they would be tortured and abused when they are detained, but they are adamant that change must come at any cost. If they are not detained now, they believe, their turn to receive the wrath of the khalifi dictators will catch up with them one day as long as the rule of constitutional law is absent.

Despite the mounting evidence to the contrary, the regime appears to be conducting business as usual, beating the drums of normality and attempting to live in denial of the internal strife. In recent times, they have been attempting to mend their relations with the neighbouring states in response to the Saudi rapprochement with Iran and Qatar. But their problem is that they are negotiating with them from a weak position. Regimes are not respected if they are not supported by the people they rule. Both Iran and Qatar have been targeted by the khalifi dictators and accused of supporting the Bahraini people; both deny these baseless allegations. It is not unusual for embattled regimes to accuse outside powers of fomenting the troubles at home. But in the case of Bahrain the anti-regime strife has continued for a century. Since 1922 there has been constant opposition to their dictatorship. At almost every 10 years juncture of the recent history, the country has experienced one form or another of popular revolts that gradually led to the present state of affairs. Today, neither side wants to live alongside the other. Their total political, psychological and moral separation is irreversible. There is only one way out of this quagmire; each side should go in this direction. This is what the people wanted when they launched their Revolution in 2011. For the past 12 years the relationship between the two sides has completely perished and no amount of political work, gestures, initiatives or force can overturn that fact.

The khalifi tribal rule could have contained this opposition through adequate political change. They could have emulated the example of Kuwait which they had started in the immediate aftermath of the British withdrawal in 1971. But the khalif tribe has different nature from other tribal rulers in the Gulf. They have always suffered inferiority complex that they did not belong to the land, its history or culture and that they had invaded and occupied it by use of force. In the past decades they could have built on the only document in their history to grant them a conditional legitimacy, but have failed to do so. The 1973 which had been drafted jointly by the people and khalifi representatives in 1973 is the only legal document that binds

the two sides in a power-sharing political formula. In 2002 the khalifis unilaterally opted out of this constitution. The present dictator tore that constitution and replaced it with his own set of articles and rules without the consent of the people. That "constitution" was never put to a vote but imposed by sheer force. The people have refused to be subjugated. Instead of adopting softer approaches to gain the hearts and minds of the public, the regime has engaged in relentless efforts to force its will on the native Bahrainis. It has failed. Today, the khalifi regime has become a liability to its own supporters. They may continue clinging to a bankrupt regime at their own perils. These developments, policies and aims have set the stage for the next phase of the people's struggle to achieve freedom and the rule of law. While demanding the immediate and unconditional release of the political prisoners, their political demands are clear: the uprooting of the hereditary dictatorship, drafting of a new constitution, ending the culture of impunity and a swift democratic transformation. After decades of strife, the khalifis must have realised that their days as absolute dictators are numbered and that they have overstayed their stay. It is time for them to give back to the people the affairs of their country. Occupation by force is unacceptable and so is the undemocratic rule by the tribal leaders. No amount of money will change the ugly face of dictatorship and dictators. The dictator's son has plundered the people's wealth to market himself as the champion of every possible competition starting with cycling, swimming, football and other sports, but this does not grant him or his father legitimacy to rule by force. In order to save the country, prevent more bloodshed and lives, the khalifi regime must be persuaded by its defenders in Washington and London to end this black episode in the land of peace and close its bleak and blood-stained chapter. Bahrainis deserve to live their own life, decide on their future, draft their constitution and elect a form of government of their choice. Denying them these rights will only harm the people and will not benefit the khalifis. It is time for them to pack up and go.

UK ministers embrace Bahrain's torture minister, Saudi detainees denied rights

Human rights activists and decent pro-democracy campaigners have expressed indignation at the UK officials who continue to support the khalifi torture regime of Bahrain. The latest is Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon, the Foreign Office minister who tweeted yesterday: "Productive meeting with Bahrain Minister of Interior, HE Sheikh Rashid Al Khalifa the minister of the interior of Bahrain. We discussed issues including Bahrain's positive security and justice reforms. The UK looks forward to supporting further initiatives with our close partner and friend." Baroness Natalie Bennett tweeted in response: Really?! What about Human Rights and Rule of Law? Ministry of the Interior is directly responsible for the bloody crackdown against protestors in 2011, the murder of 5 protestors in 2017, executing dissidents and torture in Bahrain." Human Rights activists consider him guilty of directing a massive programme of torture that resulted in the death of activists inside jails including Karim Fakhrawi, Zakariya Al Ashiri and Ali Saqr. They are calling for his arrest and trial for committing crimes against humanity. But it is clear that the senior British politicians do not criminalise torture. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) tweeted: "UK Ministers should not be hosting leading figures from regimes which continue to torture and imprison political opponents. It is high time the Bahraini regime was called to account for its human rights abuses, not given the red-carpet treatment in Whitehall." The khalifi interior minister was also met by the Home Secretary, Suella Braverman who appeared with him in a photo that disgusted his torture victims and human rights activists.

On 19th April native Bahraini Sadiq Al-Nisk was detained on the causeway connecting Bahrain with Saudi Arabia. The arrest was based on a warrant issued last March. The victim holds views on human rights and political change that the khalifis reject. Regime's forces have extended the detention of the renowned eulogist, Abdul Amir Al Biladi for 15 more days for reciting a poem against the occupation of Palestine. He was detained more than a week ago for this "crime". Poets, novelists and historians are targeted for holding different narratives.

The UN Working Group for Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) have found the detention of Bahraini human rights defender, Naji Fateel arbitrary. He was arrested in 2013, forcibly disappeared, tortured, denied access to his lawyer and convicted in an unfair trial. WGAD said he must be immediately, unconditionally released.

At the notorious Jau prison the health of the leading opposition activist, Abdulwahab Husain is rapidly deteriorating. He faces serious medical negligence and is deprived of appointments in external hospitals, putting his life at risk. Despite his age (68) and his urgent need for crutches, officials have imposed the punitive measure of denying him medical care. Mr Hussain led the first protest of the Revolution when he emerged at 7 am on 14th February 2011 with 100 people to launch the country's largest ever revolt against the hereditary dictatorship.

It has now been more than 20 days since Bahraini political prisoner Muhammad Hassan Al-Raml started his hunger strike in protest over medical negligence, but the prison authorities are continuing to ignore his appeals for treatment. The 63-year-old's health is worsening, with his blood sugar

dropping to dangerously low levels. Al-Raml had already been suffering from a number of illnesses. His daughter, Fatima, has repeatedly appealed for his release so that he may receive proper treatment that he cannot get inside prison.

It is seven years since Saudi preacher Sulaiman al-Dowaish was forcibly disappeared. When his son, Malik talked about the detention of his father he was arrested in September 2022 in reprisal for his advocacy for his father; his whereabouts are not known. Six months ago, Mohammad al-Qahtani was detained and forcibly disappeared. His crime? Founding Saudi Arabia's first civil and political rights organisation. His wife Maha and kids have been waiting a lifetime for him to be released, now they don't even know where he is.

Saudi authorities have condemned 64 prisoners to death, 37 of whom face imminent beheading and crucifixion. In April 2019 Munir Al Adam was killed after he lost his hearing as a result of torture.

Two British journalists, Iain Overton and Max Colber have uncovered £2 million donations from Gulf states accused of human rights abuses in February. Out of this sum £231,000 was from Bahrain. Much was paid to MPs on APPGs, with 59 of 160 MPs accepting donations sitting on a related one (James Sunderland, MP is on the Bahrain APPG. He was the guest of Bahrain's government in March. He registered £9500 paid by the regime for that trip). Analysis by Byline Times newspaper reveals Conservative MPs make up the majority of the recipients – as post-Brexit trading opportunities appear to be trumping ethical concerns for the Government.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
26th April 2023

Scores arrested in Bahrain, UN experts concerned about Saudi detainee

Regime forces have detained many young native Bahrainis in the past week. A young man was arrested for holding views that do not conform to its policies. Sayed Reda Sayed Jum'a from Aali Town was remanded in custody and could face a lengthy jail term. A known eulogist has been arrested by the khalifi regime forces. Abdul Amir Al Biladi was detained on 12th April for reciting lamentations last week to mark the martyrdom of Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. Another victim from the town of Sitra is Hajji Ali Nasser, an elderly man was arrested and taken to the torture chambers. Six other citizens from Sitra were also summoned by the torture apparatus and detained: Ahmed Ali Hbail, Muslim Aqeel Hbail, Ali Abdul Rasool Aal Abbood, Hasan Jaffar Marhoon, Mahmood Abd Ali Aal Abbood and Ali Saeed Ali Sdaif. Abdullah Muhammad Al-Qazzaz was also apprehended. According to monitoring network (Rasid Bahrain),

Abdullah was arrested near the Sitra police station. Two other youths were also detained: Ahmed Mohammadi and Ammar Yasser. The security authorities arrested two teenage boys from Wadyan Town: Reda Yasser Ahmed and Fadel Abbas Khudair, after summoning them for investigation.

The health of political prisoner, Mohammad Hassan Al Raml, 63, is rapidly deteriorating without getting medical attention. His family says that the only course of action available for him now is to go on hunger strike despite the health dangers associated with it. Mohammad Al Iskafi has now spent ten years behind bars for taking anti-regime stands. How much longer should he be denied freedom and enjoy a meaningful life?

Large crowds marched in the streets of Bahrain in solidarity with the Palestinians and to condemn of the ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestine. On 14th April,

political prisoners at the notorious Jau prison issued a statement in support of the Palestinian people who continue to resist the Israeli occupation and pay dearly for their steadfastness. They said: "Despite harassment and denial of our basic needs, we, the Bahrain's prisoners declare our support of the Palestinian cause." They also raised the Palestinian flags inside their cells. Human rights woman activist and former political prisoner, Ebtisam Al Sayegh commented: The case of Bahrain is not but another Palestine"

Ten human rights bodies have written to Mr. Josep Borrell, The EU foreign affairs chief urging him to take up the case of Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja on political level. After outlining the case they said: "We urge you to press for his release, both directly to the Bahraini authorities and in international fora, both privately and publicly."

On Monday, Mary Lawlor UN Special

Political prisoners persecuted, Newcastle Utd's Saudi link scrutinised

Last week, another Bahraini scholar has been thrown in jail without a proper reason. Sheikh Ali Al-Awainati was detained after returning to the country from abroad. According to local monitoring network (Rasid). It is now a week since the cleric was detained and he remains behind bars.

The political prisoners at the notorious Jau prison have continued their protests against their ill-treatment, lack of medical care and disruption of family visits. Prison officials sought the help of Sheikh Hassan Isa, a detained cleric to convince the prisoners to go back to their cells. Meanwhile other political prisoners have also continued their strikes. They are getting the lion share of the regime's brutal moral failures and are paying the price with their health and freedom. The family of Hassan Abdul Hussain Al Asfoor is extremely worried for what amounts to "enforced disappearance". They have not heard from him for more than one month. The wife of Mohammed Yousuf Hassan has also complained that she had not heard from her husband for over a month and is extremely worried for his well-being. The brother of Mujtaba Sadiq has also said that the family had not heard from him for more than one month. Political prisoner, Abbas Abdul Hussain Al Saib'ei who is serving 15-year prison sentence has not contacted his family for more than two months and his family fears for his life.

A senior cleric has, once again, been prevented from attending a pre-arranged medical appointment. Sheikh Abdul Jalil Al Miqdad was supposed to see a consultant on 5th April but prison officials did not take him to the doctor. This is part of a pattern to deny senior figures medical treatment in the hope that they will die inside the prison. He has been protesting outside his cell to get medical care.

Mohammed Hassan Al Najjar, one of the eldest political prisoners has told his family in a phone call yesterday that he would continue his protest as his health continues to deteriorate. He suffers from several ailments and pains and has developed hernia. His daughter, Fatima has appealed for medical treatment to her father who is continuing his hunger strike since his appointment for surgery was cancelled last week.

Yesterday marked 12 years since prominent Bahraini human rights activist Abdulhadi al-Khawaja was brutally arrested. He was later tortured and sentenced to life in prison - and is now said to be at risk of heart attack or stroke as his health deteriorates in detention. Abdulhadi was recently rushed to hospital after experiencing difficulty breathing, yet he has since been prevented from seeing a doctor several times. The regime is now putting his life at risk by denying his right to medical care and keeping him imprisoned. Mary Lawlor UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders tweeted: Ahead of the anniversary of the arrest of human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja in Bahrain, I call on the Government to release him.

Saudi Arabia has carried out the first known execution during Ramadan. Denigrating this time of year which traditionally provides brief reprieve from the execution chamber shows how emboldened they have become by the world turning a blind eye to their atrocities. This crime has raised fears that others could be killed in the holy month. Authorities have escalated court cases of death row defendants who committed "crimes" as children. Saudi detainee, Hilal Hussein Al-Qurashi has lost sight in his right eye inside the prison. He has also developed diabetes, hypertension, and other health issues, because of deliberate medical negligence at Al-Ha'ir prison in Riyadh.

The anti-capital punishment network Re-

prieve has asked its members to urge the Chairman of Newcastle United to investigate the Saudi human rights records. It said: The legal team for Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund submitted a document in a US court that states that the Chairman of Newcastle United is "a sitting minister of the Saudi government." The Premier League's Chief Executive, Richard Masters, said when the takeover of Newcastle United was happening that he had "legally binding assurances" that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would not have any control over the club. In November 2021 he said: "If we find evidence to the contrary, we can remove the consortium as owners of the club." So let's remind Richard Masters of his words and ask him to act. Child defendants' lives are at stake. Saudi Arabian authorities have executed 15 people for childhood "crimes" since 2011. And our client, child defendant Abdullah al-Howaiti, currently faces a death sentence.

On 4th April the website of DAWN (Democracy for the Arab World Now) published an article titled: U.S. Congress: Don't Meet with Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. It said: Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, an agent for the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and her firm, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP (Akin Gump), are contributing to, and benefiting from, human rights abuses in the UAE by lobbying for military support for its repressive, authoritarian government, omitting material information about its deplorable record. DAWN urges members of Congress to publicly pledge not to meet with Ileana Ros-Lehtinen - or any other lobbyist representing abusive governments in the Middle East - to act urgently to ban their access to U.S. government officials and to ban U.S. officials from working for foreign governments after they leave office.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
12th April 2023

Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders tweeted: In 2022, @SR_Disability (Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities) and I started the Breaking Barriers campaign, seeking experiences of HRDs with disabilities. Abduljalil Al-Singace cannot share his own as he's serving a life sentence in Bahrain. He's old and infirm and should be released as mercy for Ramadan.

Saudi security forces have detained Ahmed Amin Aal Hani, the son of martyr Amin Aal Hani who was killed by them on 24th June 2017. The reason? Praying for the release of detained Sheikh Hassan Al Khuwaildi. They also detained Hajji Ali Al Aali, who is in charge of the mosque at which the detained cleric was leading the prayers.

Microsoft announced a new datacenter in Saudi Arabia despite the government's infiltration of tech platforms and severe repression. Human Rights Watch demands Microsoft suspend the investment until it can explain how it will

meaningfully mitigate human rights risks.

Nine years ago, Saudi human rights defender Waleed Abu al-Khair was arrested on 15th April for his peaceful activism. He remains in prison today, serving a 15-year sentence. A campaign has been launched to put pressure on the Saudi regime to release him.

The Saudi state broadcaster has brazenly laid bare the authorities' determination to suppress free speech online, by interviewing a man jailed for a single tweet that he "hadn't expected" could land him in prison and

clearly signaling that nobody is safe on social media in Saudi Arabia. The Thursday night programme "Blind Spot" interviewed five social media users now in prison for cybercrime offences, including one man - unidentified and shown only in silhouette, to a soundtrack of sinister music - jailed for a single tweet that he had believed to be innocent. He has now realised, he told the interviewer, that what he had thought was mere "criticism" was a criminal offence.

UN experts have published a letter in which they express grave concern over the fate of Hassan al-Rabea. According to their communication, the Saudi national who was extradited from Morocco faces torture, an unfair trial and possibly a death sentence. Yesterday, Hassan AlFaraj celebrated his birthday, but behind bars, away from his family, and under threat of imminent execution. He was arrested at 17 and faces charges for when he was 14.

Bahrain Freedom Movement
19th April 2023



UN Watchdog urges Bahrain to release leading HR activist Naji Fateel

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) provided a strong opinion regarding the case of imprisoned Bahraini human rights defender Naji Fateel.

The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy who submitted the complaint welcomed the decision and urged the Government of Bahrain to abide by the decision and release Naji Fateel immediately.

Sayed Ahmed Alwadaei, Director of Advocacy, The Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy:

“It was heartbreaking for me to hear and document a harrowing first hand account of the torture Naji was subjected to during his arrest and interrogation. This important and timely decision by the UN Working Group comes after he has been forced to endure almost a decade of arbitrary imprisonment.

It follows international condemnation of Naji’s unlawful imprisonment by the UK Parliament, the European Parliament, and the US Congress. Bahrain must immediately and unconditionally release Naji Fateel and other political prisoners.”

Biography of Naji Fateel:

He is a Bahraini national, aged 48. He is married and has five children. Mr. Fateel was a member of the Board of Directors of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights. He was a human rights activist who advocated for the documentation of human rights violations and encouraged people to form monitoring committees.

He was arrested on 2 May 2013, between 2013 and 2016, Mr. Fateel was found guilty in three separate cases and sentenced to a total of 25 years and six months in prison. He remains detained in Jau Prison.

Summary of the opinion and selected quotes:

The Working Group thus considers that Mr. Fateel was deprived of his liberty on discriminatory grounds, namely his political or other opinions, contrary to articles 2 (1) and 26 of the Covenant and articles 2 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His detention is arbitrary according to category V. Paragraph 121

“The Working Group notes with alarm the severity of the torture alleged. It urges the Government to immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Fateel and ensure that he receives medical care.” Paragraph 122

“The Working Group notes that many of the cases involving Bahrain follow a familiar pattern of arrest without a warrant, pretrial detention with limited access to judicial review, denial of access to lawyers, forced confession, torture and ill-treatment and denial of medical care. The Working Group recalls that, under certain circumstances, widespread or systematic

imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty in violation of the rules of international law may constitute crimes against humanity”. Paragraph 123

“The Working Group urges the Government to ensure a full and independent investigation of the circumstances surrounding the arbitrary deprivation of liberty of Mr. Fateel, including the allegation that he was tortured, and to take appropriate measures against those responsible for the violation of his rights.” Paragraph 128

“There is thus no legal basis which justifies Mr. Fateel’s arrest and detention.” Paragraph 57

“Mr. Fateel was detained on discriminatory grounds based on his political and pro-democracy views, making his detention



political in nature, in violation of articles 2, 19 and 26 of the Covenant and articles 2 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. His case thus also constitutes a category V deprivation of liberty.” Paragraph 65

Mr. Fateel was subjected to an unfair trial under Bahraini and international law. Bahrain failed to inform Mr. Fateel promptly and in detail of the nature and cause of the charges against him within the meaning of article 14 (3) (a) of the Covenant. He was not made aware of the charges against him until after his arbitrary arrest and detention. Paragraph 66

The court relied almost exclusively on torture-tainted confessions to sentence Mr. Fateel. Paragraph 69

Borrell urged to raise AlKhawaja’s case with khalifis

7 APRIL 2023

Mr. Josep Borrell Fontelles
High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Dear High Representative,

The undersigned organisations write on the occasion of the 12th anniversary of the arbitrary detention in Jau prison of prominent Danish-Bahraini human rights defender Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja.

Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja is an internationally respected human rights defender who won the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders in 2022, elected by a jury of ten of the world’s leading human rights NGOs. He has a long history of working to promote human rights in the MENA region and championing the protection of human rights defenders at risk, including working as the MENA Protection Coordinator for Front Line Defenders, serving as President of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR) and Founding Director of the Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR).

Mr Al-Khawaja was arrested on 9 April 2011, and was detained, tortured and subjected to an unfair trial on fabricated charges, that led to him being sentenced to life in prison because of his human rights work. That sentence was deemed arbitrary by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention as far back as 2012.

Throughout his detention, Mr Al-Khawaja has endured various forms of reprisals, including physical and mental torture. On 28 November 2022, the Second Lower Criminal Court in Bahrain upheld two additional, separate criminal charges levelled against Abdulhadi Al-

Khawaja. On 28 February 2023, the human rights defender experienced intense elevated and rapid heartbeats, in addition to laboured breathing, and was transferred to an emergency room for several hours. He was actively prevented from seeing a cardiologist by the Bahraini authorities, contrary to the advice of the prison doctor.

In December 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the release of Mr Al-Khawaja. This resolution also called on you as the High Representative and Vice President of the EU to publicly and privately raise Mr Al-Khawaja’s case and to demand his unconditional release.

While the above updates on the human rights defender’s situation have been shared with your services as well as the Danish government, it remains unclear how Mr Al-Khawaja’s case is being taken up at the political level. As Mr Al-Khawaja’s medical condition deteriorates, it is crucial that all diplomatic channels are mobilized to ensure his immediate and unconditional release. We therefore urge you to press for his release, both directly to the Bahraini authorities and in international fora, both privately and publicly.

Sincerely, Signatories:

Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), CIVICUS, Danish PEN, DIG-

NITY - Danish Institute Against Torture, #FreeAlKhawaja campaign, Front Line Defenders, Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), Human Rights Watch, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR), Martin Ennals Foundation

