

BAHRAIN

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

The futile policies of the tribal dictators & their impact on Bahrain

The rush to entrench their relations with the occupiers of Palestine confirms how the khalifi regime in Bahrain is becoming increasingly desperate for survival. The political stalemate has persisted for years and neither side of the internal conflict is in a position to co-habit with the other. The tribal rule has antagonised the natives so much that the relations cannot be described except as irreconcilable hostility. The people, on their side, have been striving to achieve some degree of accommodation with the khalifis but to no avail. The relations have been made impossible by the bloody nature of the rulers who have killed, tortured, jailed and exiled thousands of natives. The aim of the rulers is to fundamentally alter the balance of power inside the country. To achieve this they have left no stone unturned. This problem does not exist in other Gulf or Arab country. It is particular to Bahrain which is ruled by a foreign tribe that has failed to adapt to the culture of the country and its people. It is a situation that has stagnated for decades, with both sides unable to embrace the other. It is a classic situation where foreign powers exploit the weakness of the regime as an opportunity to gain influence by forming alliance with the weaker party, in this case the ruling khalifi family. Neither of the two sides believes in the legitimacy of the other and are thus engaged in relentless efforts to exclude the other. This transforms the crisis from a limited problem of lack of representation of the massed in the government into an open conflict that often gets out of bounds and transform into a long-term existential crisis.

When the present dictator became ruler following his father's death in 1999 he already had a plan to change the demography of Bahrain. Once in power, he started implementing his plan. Tens of thousands of foreigner were brought into the country, settled and naturalised. It led to loud cries from the natives, especially the Sunni Muslims who saw their position untenable with the influx of the new "Bahrainis". The plot became so outrageous that the regime's plan turned into a serious embarrassment, but it continued to pursue it. The dictator, Hamad Alkhalifa went on record to declare on TV that Bahrain had no history before the khalifi occupation in 1783. He was sowing the seeds of obliterating

the history, culture and religious identity of the native Baharna people who make the overwhelming majority of the population. He started changing the school textbooks to remove references to anything that confirm the historical facts that make the Baharna the natives of the land. He then started a campaign of historical distortions, employing mercenary writers to falsify the history of the land to support the khalifi political plans. As the years dragged on, the distance between the two sides continued to widen until a point of no-return was reached. The eruption of the people's revolt in 2011 stands as a reminder of that unsolved crisis could always become catalyst for change if they are unsolved. When the regime is weak and is exploited by the foreigners, it is unlikely that amicable solutions may be reached between the protagonists. It is a situation of significant importance as it points to certain political rule in the future. It will take into account the stands of those who betrayed humanity.

In recent years the dictator has adopted several other initiatives. First he went out of his way to break away from the Arab position on Palestine. He established relations with Israel and gave the occupiers unlimited access to the country. These relations have exceeded the normal diplomatic links and have become total normalisation and cooperation. The aim is to establish a new status quo in the Gulf and make it impossible for political change in Bahrain. He went as far as re-drawing the internal map of the country, especially the capital, Manama. For decades he has been working to get the natives out of the capital until it was depleted of its native inhabitants. Then he drew new maps to include new districts that had not existed before. A new "Jewish district" was formed. Many see this as exploitation of Jewishness to attract support from the West. Yet, he has always faced staunch resistance from the natives and human rights group who have followed his policies of oppression, marginalisation and attempts of obliteration of the native culture. Bahrain stands out as one of worst countries in terms of respecting the political and human rights of its people, often with low indices on democratic, freedom and rights scales. The rulers of Bahrain

have embarrassed even their supporters who have had not made efforts to understand the regime or study the extent of its ability to withstand political pressures. The khalifi regime is simply indefensible, given its tribal roots, culture and alliances. Those who have defended it in the past fifty years will soon realise that they are betting on a losing horse at the expense of their commitment to human rights and moral values.

The political crisis of Bahrain has thus become a locked situation which cannot be deconstructed beyond the natural boundaries of each of the two sides. The Western powers in Washington and London always lacked the will to effect change and have pinned their hope on the disappearance of the internal resistance. But that is not a real solution. The most likely scenario is for the hostilities to explode again as has happened in the recent past. While the regime has been heavily dependent on foreign support especially from US, UK, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Israel, the people have re-organised themselves and become convinced of the need to re-organise themselves, widen the scope of the opposition and avoid being sucked into the quagmire of relentless conflicts and wars. It is ironic that their jailed leaders have not blinked once despite the passage of time (over 12 years) of unlawful incarceration. Messages from behind bars suggest to the people to continue their steadfastness and ignore any overtures from the embattled regime whose overtures in the past have always been empty. The khalifi dictator has missed several opportunities to contain the situation and end up the ongoing muscle-stretching. But it has not heeded the calls to present new initiatives for possible solutions. It is too weak to present an initiative for solving the ongoing political crisis. The people, on their part, are not in a hurry to accept half-hearted gestures or full-hearted ploys. They have sacrificed so much that nothing short of total revamp of the political system is acceptable. This may take some time but the steam of one of the most repressive regimes in the world is running out at a high pace. The time will soon come when the people of Bahrain have been liberated from this hated antiquated tribal regime.

Calls for ethical policy by UK on Bahrain, German MPs adopt Saudi HRDs

The Saudi authorities detained a Bahraini religious scholar for reciting a prayer that the Saudis think it carries political connotations. Shia cleric Sheikh Jamil Baqeri was arrested after he read a prayers that appeal to God for help. His whereabouts are unknown and the khalifi authorities did not bother to ask about his fate. There are serious concerns that he may be harmed by the Saudis who feel they are under no obligation to respect the right to life This month they executed more than ten people including two innocent Bahraini natives.

On 22nd June Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission issued a statement calling for the release of Abdul Hadi Al Khawaja. It further tweeted: 12 years ago, human rights defender and former Front Line Defenders regional coordinator, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, was sentenced to life in prison. Bahrain must release him immediately and without conditions. Frontline Defenders also issued calls for his release.

Dr. Abduljalil AlSingace, the academic and activist who has been on hunger strike for two years, has decided to suspend visits and telephone calls with his family in protest against the poor healthcare provided to him at Kanoo Medical Centre. He informed his family of this decision last Friday during a visit by his wife. The decision is extremely difficult for his family since visits and calls are the only means to ensure his wellbeing, especially considering that he has been on a hunger strike from solid foods for 719 days. Dr. AlSingace is suffering from complex health problems and deliberate medical negligence. He was deeply upset when he learned that the prison administration was engaging in deception and lying to Red Cross officials about his health. The delegation visited him on June 13th after news had spread that they were initially prevented

from meeting him.

Last week the hospital appointment of political prisoner Hussain Al Sa'di was cancelled by the prison officers. He was due to see a specialist dentist at the Salmaniya Hospital. An earlier appointment on 31st May was also cancelled. He suffers excruciating pain in his teeth and gums and is in desperate need for an operation. He also has sickle Cell disease which places him at high risk of catching attacks that could be fatal.

Six under-aged political prisoners at the Dry Dock prison have continued their hunger strike that they had begun on 17th June. They have been calling for proper medical care after their cells were infested with skin diseases. Among them are Khalil Sabah and Faris Salman. They were taken only once to be seen by a specialist although their conditions had worsened.

The Bahraini political prisoners at Bloc 13 of the notorious Jau Prison continue to bleed from their wounds after they had been subjected to a ferocious attack by the torturers earlier this month. Bloodstains are still visible at the walls of the main passage. The attack was carried out by two known officers and recorded by the monitoring cameras.

On 26th June, Martyn Day, MP (of the Scottish Nationalist Party SNP) tweeted: "Today is the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. I hosted an event last week to mark the occasion, where we heard harrowing testimonies from Bahraini torture survivors. The UK must do more to highlight these injustices and adopt a more ethical foreign policy."

Last week two more members of the German Bundestag (MdBs) adopted Saudi human rights defenders (HRDs) as part of the Bundestag's "Parliamentarians Protect

Parliamentarians" programme. The programme aims to protect the rights of persecuted HRDs around the world by drawing the attention of key political decision-makers to their plight. Four Saudi HRDs have now been adopted by German parliamentarians, the most recent being humanitarian aid worker Abdulrahman al-Sadhan, adopted by Peter Heide MdB, and women's rights defender (WHRD) Aziza al-Yousef, adopted by Ophelia Nick MdB. Al-Sadhan is currently serving a 20-year prison sentence for his peaceful social media posts, and al-Yousef, although released from prison in 2019, remains under heavy restrictions.

The people of Qatif in the Eastern Province of Arabia have been complaining of the new Saudi policy to alter the identity of the region through mass displacement. Over 25 percent of the area has been confiscated by the government. Aramco has abetted in this criminal activity. The town of Al Musawwara was erased to the ground.

It is now more than a year since the Saudi young activist, Abdul Aziz Awdah had completed his prison sentence. Since his arrest in September 2019 he has been subjected to various forms of repression; he was denied family visits or even contact with them, and was not allowed to meet a lawyer to defend him

UN Special Procedures wrote to investors in the NEOM project regarding the forced eviction and repression of members of al-Howeitat tribe, following a submission by human rights bodies including ALQST and MENA rights. There were a total of nine NGOs who had signed the submission.

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MPs condemn visit by Bahrain's PM, another man beheaded by Saudis

As the khalifi crown prince and prime minister, Salman Al-Khalifa landed in London last week to meet British officials many MPs wrote to the Government to protest his presence. The Liberal Democrat peer, Lord Scriven said: "The UK government should not be rewarding Bahrain with a trade deal that is silent on human rights and ethical trade whilst also using taxpayers money to fund training to some Bahraini institutions implicated in torture and human rights abuses." British lawmakers have expressed their "grave concern" to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak about political repression in Bahrain ahead of the visit. In their letter the politicians questioned the UK government's allocation of £13 million (\$16.6m) to Bahrain over the past decade despite a decline in human rights and democratic standards in the kingdom. They singled out two UK-funded institutions - the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior's Ombudsman and the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) within the

Public Prosecutors Office - that they said are associated with "clear human rights abuses". The khalifi forces in Bahrain have arrested a young native youth, Hussein Ayoub after ordering him to appear for questioning for undisclosed reasons. He was remanded in custody for one week 'pending an investigation.' Another young native Bahraini has also been detained. Reda Ali Al-Sheikh who is an orator and lamenter has been remanded in custody for one week.

Last Friday (16th June) senior cleric Sheikh Fadel Al-Zaki was turned away from Duraz Town by police. He was supposed to lead the Friday worshippers at the Imam Al-Sadiq mosque. It was the second week that the mass Friday prayers were banned as part of the intensified persecution of the overwhelming majority native population.

Political prisoner, Mohammed Abdul Nabi Jum'a has recently been heard on a smuggled audio message pleading for some rights as a human being. He has been denied the

most basic rights of essential needs and medical care.

Bahraini political prisoner Muhammad Hassan Al-Raml is back on hunger strike to protest the ongoing denial of medical treatment. His family said his health is deteriorating. The 63-year old prisoner of conscience had to be rushed to a clinic last month after fainting during a separate hunger strike.

PEN America has taken up the case of political prisoner, Dr Abdul Jalil Al-Singace. It tweeted: "In Bahrain, authorities have withheld medical care from imprisoned academic Abduljalil Al-Singace, who is on hunger strike, & escalated their retaliation against him. Bahraini authorities should stop withholding medical treatment, & should #FreeAlSingace".

On Sunday 18th June the torture officers at the notorious Jau Prison (Bloc 6) raided the cells of the political prisoners and confiscated their belongings. This is to pre-

More political arrests in Bahrain, more beheadings in Saudi Arabia

The spate of arrests and detentions by the khalifi regime in Bahrain has continued unabated. Mohammed ibn Sheikh Hassan Ali Radhi from Al Shakhoura town was arrested on 10th June. A day earlier Yousuf Ghalib from Karzakkan was detained after several houses were raided. From Samaheej town Hassan Abd Ali was detained and remanded in custody for one week. On 8th June Jaafar Muhammad, from the Town of Daih, was taken to the Criminal Investigation Department where interrogators routinely use torture. Nothing has been heard of them

Daily protests have continued in several areas of Bahrain over the past week. From Sanabis to Daih, Demstan, Abu Saiba and Shakhoura the people continued their strife. The protesters called for the release of political prisoners, fundamental political transformation and the end of normalisation with the occupiers of Palestine.

A UN Watchdog has urged Bahrain to release leading academic Dr Abduljalil AlSingace who remains on hunger strike without solid food after 700 days. In a report released on 25 May by a working group from the UN Human Rights Council, experts said Singace had presented a "credible" case of torture at the hands of the Bahraini government. The report also said that Singace was subject to enforced disappearance. He and his family were threatened at gunpoint and were not presented with a warrant or informed of the reason for his arrest. "Taking into account all the circumstances of the case, the appropriate remedy would be to release Mr. Al-Singace and accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations, in accordance with international law" the report said. Husain Abdulla, the

executive director of Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), said: "If the Bahraini government has any respect for the international community at all - or even if it just has any shred of common decency - it will release Dr al-Singace immediately,"

In a statement on Sunday 11th June, the Saudi Interior Ministry said that three men were executed. It claimed that the three men had killed an officer in the capital Riyadh and that they were involved in financing terrorism. The victims were: Abdul Malik bin Fahad bin Abdul RAhmmann Al Ba'adi, Mohmmmed bin Khalid bin Saud AlUsaimi and Mohammed bin Abdul Rahman bin Twairish AlTwairish. Last year, the Saudi regime put to death 147 people, 81 of them on a single day on false charges. The mass execution sparked an international outcry but has not been stopped. Two Bahrainis, Sadeq Thamer and Jaffar Sultan were beheaded on 29th May for their role in opposing the khalifi dictators of Bahrain. Saudi authorities have now executed 52 individuals this year alone. This makes a mockery of their promises to limit the use of the death penalty. On 2nd June Human Rights Watch said it had documented longstanding violations of due process and fair trial rights in Saudi Arabia's criminal justice system, making it unlikely that Sultan and Thamer received a fair trial leading up to their execution.

On 7th June it was confirmed the Saudi young preacher Wahib bin Saleh Al-Sheikh had been detained. He has disappeared from all social media platforms since late February. Saudi dissident Colonel Rabih Al-Enezi received a phone call in which he was invited to the Saudi embassy in London to discuss an offer of \$5m in exchange for his silence. Al-Enezi did not go, fearing the

same fate as Khashoggi.

Human rights activists have raised the case of the disappearance for more than one year of a Yemeni human rights activist and her son in Saudi Arabia. On 17th April 2022, Samira Abdullah Hammoud Al-Houri and her son, Ahmed Mahmoud Ahmed Al-Halili, both Yemeni nationals, disappeared from their residence (located at Apt 113, Building No 1, 3602 Al-Qashashiya Street, Al-Nada neighborhood, Riyadh.) After their sudden disappearance and the subsequent unavailability of their cell phones, concerned relatives promptly reported the matter to the local police station in the area. The police station, upon discovering that the apartment was rented by a Saudi government agency, namely the Special Committee of Saudi Intelligence, decided against entering the premises. In an interview with the ABC News channel today, Sarah Leah Whitson who is the Executive Director of DAWN. and former director of Human Rights Watch's Middle East and North Africa said: "To have over 500 former senior American officials now on the payroll of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, compromises the very integrity of our democracy and the decision-making that our government officials, military and civilian, are elected to carry out". She was referring to the Public Investment Fund (PIF) which is a global and domestic investor. PIF is a key driver of Saudi Vision 2030 led by Mohammed bin Salman.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) sentenced Khalaf Abdul Rahman al-Romaithi to 15 years in prison on terrorism charges following a grossly unfair trial known as the "UAE94" Al-Romaithi was recently extradited from Jordan to the UAE.

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empt the possible marking in July of the Ashura season (the martyrdom of Imam Hussain) by the prisoners. All items that may be used to mark the occasion were taken away including books. The prison officers have been using hate speech against the political prisoners.

On Monday 19th June the Saudi regime committed another crime; beheading a young man from Qatif. Muslim Ahmed Al Milad was accused of opposing the Saudi dictators belonging to anti-regime group. He was born in 1993 in the Eastern Province and has been in jail for several years where he had been severely tortured.

Hanan Elatr Khashoggi, the widow of murdered Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, is suing the Israeli surveillance company NSO Group over the use of the firm's technology in the lead-up to her husband's assassination, Reuters reported last Friday. According to the lawsuit filed Thursday 15th

June in the Northern District of Virginia, NSO software infiltrated Elatr's phone, allowing her messages to be read in the months prior to her husband's murder in Istanbul in 2018. According to a Washington Post report in 2021, the spyware was placed on Elatr's phone while she was being interrogated by security agents at Dubai Airport months be-

fore Khashoggi was killed. The Citizen Lab research group said the spying was carried out by a United Arab Emirates customer, and the US newspaper claimed it was a UAE government agency.

This week Reprieve, who campaigns against the death penalty, is sounding the alarm on behalf of two new child defendants in Saudi

Arabia. Their names are Youssef al-Manasif and Abdullah al-Derazi. They were arrested and tortured into "confessing" to so-called crimes, which took place when they were just children - including attending protests. They were sentenced to death based on torture-extracted evidence. The torture of both Youssef al-Manasif and Abdullah al-Derazi faced is unfathomable. Not only were they held incommunicado but they were also tortured to the point of hospitalisation, which continues to affect them physically and psychologically.

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UK lawmakers urge PM to raise human rights with Bahrain's CP

By MEE staff

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British lawmakers have expressed their "grave concern" to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak about political repression in Bahrain ahead of a visit this week by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa to London.

In a letter seen by Middle East Eye, the politicians questioned the UK government's allocation of £13 million (\$16.6m) to Bahrain over the past decade despite a decline in human rights and democratic standards in the kingdom.

They singled out two UK-funded institutions - the Bahraini Ministry of the Interior's Ombudsman and the Special Investigation Unit (SIU) within the Public Prosecutors Office - that they said are associated with "clear human rights abuses".

The letter said the bodies were established in 2012 to investigate allegations of torture, but the UN has raised concerns about their independence and effectiveness as recently as April.

"Both the SIU and ombudsman continue to receive UK taxpayer-funded support," the lawmakers wrote. "The government must seek concrete evidence from the Crown Prince that the flaws within these bodies have been rectified."

They also raised concerns that systematic torture persists in the kingdom and that 26 death row inmates face imminent execution despite international calls for their release.

Among a list of requests, they called for future funding of Bahrain's Ministry of Interior to be conditional on the release of political prisoners named in the letter and that human rights be central to ongoing free trade agreement negotiations between the Gulf Cooperation Council and the UK.

Lord Scriven, vice-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy and

Human Rights in the Gulf and one of the letter's signatories, said: "The UK government should not be rewarding Bahrain with a trade deal that is silent on human rights and ethical trade whilst also using taxpayers money to fund training to some Bahraini institutions implicated in torture and human rights abuses."

Political prisoners

The letter highlighted several political prisoners currently held in Bahraini jails, including Hassan Mushaima, 75, who is serving a life sentence for leading anti-government protests in 2011.

His son, Ali Mushaima, said that he is concerned about the deteriorating health and unjust treatment of his father, the eldest political prisoner in Bahrain.

Authorities denied his father medical treatment while holding him in solitary confinement for almost two years following a decade of imprisonment for his leading role in the 2011 demonstrations, he said. "The UK government will be shaking hands with the very person responsible for his imprisonment alongside hundreds of other political prisoners including many forced to endure torture at the hands of the regime," Ali Mushaima said.

Sayed Ahmed al-Wadaei, advocacy director at the UK-based Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy (BIRD), said with the visit this week, the British government should change its approach to the kingdom.

"Instead of supporting a repressive regime that uses torture and imprisons those expressing peaceful dissent, Rishi Sunak's government should instead be speaking out on the case of imprisoned academic Dr Abduljalil al-Singace who has spent nearly two years on his strike without solid food over confiscation of his research after being imprisoned since 2011 for his pro-democracy activism."

Saudis execute 2 Bahrainis

Two Bahraini Shi'a men have been executed in Saudi Arabia following what Amnesty International described as a "grossly unfair trial" on terrorism-related charges.

Jaafar Sultan and Sadeq Thamer were arrested in May 2015 and held incommunicado for more than three months, according to Amnesty International. The charges were related to allegations of smuggling explosives inside Saudi Arabia and participating in protests in Bahrain. The two Bahrainis were tried and sentenced to death in Saudi's notorious Specialized Criminal Court in October 2021 following protest-related charges that fall within the Saudi counterterrorism law.

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, as well as other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, continue to use overbroad provisions contained within terrorism laws to suppress dissent and target religious minorities.

Counterterrorism laws in the GCC typically include broad, vague charges and definitions of terrorism used as catch-all provisions to punish peaceful dissidents, political activists, and human rights defenders.

Saudi Arabia's Shi'a Muslim minority has long suffered systemic discrimination and been targeted by state-funded hate speech. On March 12, 2022, Saudi Arabian authorities executed 81 men, 41 of whom are said to belong to the Shi'a Muslim minority, under its counterterrorism law, despite promises to curtail executions.

Bahrain's Shi'a majority also suffers from discrimination. Bahraini authorities have systematically targeted Shia clerics and have violently arrested numerous human rights defenders with Shia backgrounds, including Abdulhadi al-Khawaja in April 2011, who they sentenced to life in a mass trial under their terrorism law.

Overly broad terrorism charges have also been exploited by other Gulf states. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) sentenced Khalaf Abdul Rahman al-Romaithi to 15 years in prison on terrorism charges following a grossly unfair trial known as the "UAE94" mass trials of 94 critics of the Emirati government. Al-Romaithi was recently extradited from Jordan. Human Rights Watch condemned longstanding violations of due process and fair trial rights in Saudi Arabia's criminal justice system, making it unlikely that Sultan and Thamer received a fair trial leading up to their execution. Human Rights Watch opposes the death penalty in all countries and under all circumstances as a cruel and inhumane punishment.

